

The Growing Importance of Indigenous Relations in the Canadian Energy and Mining Sector

Why organizations should invest in
meaningful Indigenous relations



Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge all the traditional Indigenous lands we are all on from coast to coast to coast. The lands of First Nations, Inuit and Métis who have been here since time immemorial. We acknowledge our use of land as a sign of our ongoing commitment to the recommendations of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As EY continues our journey, we challenge you to find your part to play in reconciliation.

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Introduction

At EY, as part of our mission to build a better working world, we hope to help our clients and the organizations we work with improve their Indigenous relations.

Through our engagements and conversations with our clients, Indigenous relations leaders, and our internal Indigenous Professionals Council, we have compiled research on the importance of Indigenous relations and some of the benefits that can result from positive relationships with Indigenous communities to help organizations build a business case for investing in Indigenous relations.

This is specifically important to Canada's energy and resources organizations given the abundance of natural resources available across the country and the growing importance of responsible development and mitigating environmental and social impacts. Recent developments have shown – and are highlighted in select case studies throughout this report – that this includes engagement in free, prior and informed consent and participation from impacted Indigenous Communities.

Effective Indigenous relations in energy and resources organizations have numerous benefits, which we discuss in detail throughout this report. These benefits include environment, social, governance (ESG) and diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) performance, increased investment (from public and private markets, grants, incentives and government agencies), a broader and more diverse labour force, building credibility and trust, and advancing reconciliation.

One of the most important benefits for organizations is real and meaningful participation from communities, which can take numerous forms – including equity participation, supply chain inclusion and employment – and is increasingly becoming a key requirement for maintaining or accelerating permitting timelines with regulators.

Additionally, we have consolidated and refined our knowledge as it relates to Indigenous relations leading practices into an Energy & Resources Indigenous Relations framework to help organizations in Canada as they navigate building long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

WHILE WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP COMPETENCY WITH INDIGENOUS RELATIONS, THOSE IN THE ENERGY AND RESOURCES SECTORS MAY DETERMINE THAT IT IS WORTHWHILE TO MAKE A FOCUSED EFFORT INTO SEVERAL OF THE FRAMEWORK'S COMPONENTS.



There are several major highlights for organizations to consider in building out an Indigenous relations competency:

1

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS IS ABOUT SUSTAINING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS.

Many organizations engage with Indigenous communities on an as-needed basis, but true Indigenous relations are about building and sustaining long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with Communities.

2

IT'S IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE FIRST NATIONS, INUIT, AND MÉTIS PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HAVE THEIR OWN CULTURES AND PRIORITIES.

According to the Government of Canada, there are more than 650 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in Canada.¹ There is no roadmap or one-size-fits-all approach to Indigenous relations, as each community has its own unique history, culture and priorities.



3

OPEN ENGAGEMENT OF EACH COMMUNITY IS CRITICAL.

Engagement to learn and educate oneself on the unique and diverse culture, history and lived experience of each community will support building an open and trusting relationship. To build healthy relations with an Indigenous community, and to receive free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) on any potential projects, you must understand their unique culture and circumstances. FPIC is a principle protected by international human rights standards that grants Indigenous Peoples the right to be thoroughly informed about any development affecting their lands and resources, and to provide consent prior to the commencement of the development or action.

4

THE CONTEXT OF INDIGENOUS HISTORY IN CANADA IS CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE.

We must reflect on and acknowledge the past to see the best path forward. The history of relations between European settlers, the British Crown, the Canadian Government, Canadian corporations and Indigenous Peoples in Canada extends for over 500 years and is incredibly complex. It is not possible to fully cover the entire history in this report, though a summary is provided on the next page. We encourage you to conduct your own research to enhance your understanding. Resources are available through [First Nations in Canada](#)¹ by the Canadian Government or through [Indigenous Canada](#),² a free course offered by the University of Alberta.



EY IS FOCUSED ON ADDRESSING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA AND ADVANCING RECONCILIATION.

Our efforts include providing jobs, education and scholarship opportunities, supporting Indigenous businesses, and rethinking our traditional ways of working through internal policies, training and development, and third-party certifications. EY teams are dedicated to supporting organizations in their Indigenous relations journey and advancing their competencies in alignment with the highlights above in their day-to-day operations.

Context and history summary

The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Métis and Inuit.¹ These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. These are the three groups defined as “Aboriginal” Peoples in the legal context.

The early history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada included cooperation and key economic relationships between Indigenous Peoples and European settlers as separate nations. However, because of rapid changes to the political and economic landscape, there was a significant shift in the dynamic between settlers and Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples were forced to dramatically change their ways of life, coerced into giving up the rights to the land they had inhabited for thousands of years through treaties, and forced to undergo a systematic attempt by the Canadian Government to destroy their cultures.

These dynamics changed the course of Canada and set the foundation for the country as it is today. The treatment of Indigenous Peoples during this time is one of the darkest periods in Canadian history and the effects are still impacting Indigenous communities and their relations with the rest of Canada. However, in the past several decades, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have found legal ground to better safeguard their rights and have started on the path to self-determination. There are still instances in which treaty rights have not been recognized for generations, and the legal recourse Indigenous Peoples have sought has been to uphold the prior agreements.

Looking back on the Indigenous history in Canada, it is clear that Indigenous Peoples are integral to Canadian society, but the impact of residential and day schools and attempted assimilation have left deep and lasting wounds. While Canada has made some progress towards acknowledging and seeking to reconcile its history with Indigenous Peoples, as a society, we still have a long way to go. For organizations operating in Canada, and particularly organizations involved in the development of resources and infrastructure, Indigenous relations should be treated as a priority to form strong, trust-based relationships with Indigenous communities to help projects succeed.



**LOOKING BACK ON THE
HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS
RELATIONS IN CANADA,
IT IS CLEAR THAT
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
ARE INTEGRAL TO
CANADIAN SOCIETY.**

Importance of Indigenous relations

There are many reasons why organizations across Canada should expand their understanding of the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and grow Indigenous relations capabilities.

Beginning with the benefits, corporations across Canada have an opportunity to advance reconciliation, participate in an economic sector that's experiencing significant growth, support the energy transition with Indigenous involvement, drive ESG and DEI performance, increase project certainty, and tap into a significant and growing labour force.

In addition, there are several costs and risks to not advancing Indigenous relations capabilities. These include reputational damage, loss of credibility and social trust, project delays or cancellations (with the risk of lawsuits and court challenges) and creating an exclusive culture.

We detail several of the benefits and how companies are operationalizing them throughout this section.

CANADIAN CORPORATIONS AND CORPORATIONS OPERATING IN CANADA HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ADVANCING RECONCILIATION

The legacy of colonialism, including residential and day schools, has had a devastating impact on Indigenous communities in Canada. It is the responsibility of all Canadians to advance reconciliation.¹

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report in 2015, it outlined **94 Calls to Action**.³ Call to Action 92, Business and Reconciliation, calls on the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) "as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous Peoples and their lands and resources."

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL CANADIANS TO ADVANCE RECONCILIATION.

¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada defines reconciliation as "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour."²⁹

Adopting UNDRIP as a reconciliation framework would include:³

- ④ Committing to meaningful consultation.

- ④ Building respectful relationships.

- ④ Obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

- ④ Ensuring Indigenous Peoples have equitable access to jobs, training and education opportunities in the corporate sector.

- ④ Ensuring Indigenous communities gain long-term, sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

- ④ Providing education for management and staff on the history of Indigenous Peoples, including the history and legacy of residential and day schools, United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples UNDRIP, treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.

All of these principles are crucial components for corporations to play a key role in advancing reconciliation and they have been embedded into the various components of the Energy & Resources Indigenous Relations Framework.

TC Energy

SPOTLIGHT: COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

TC Energy is a major Alberta-based energy company with energy infrastructure operations across Canada, the United States and Mexico that facilitate the transportation of natural gas, crude oil and other energy resources.

TC Energy is considered a leading organization in the Indigenous Relations space and has been delivering employee awareness training since 2001. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 92nd Call to Action, TC Energy has made a commitment to expand corporate-wide training to board members and contractors.

In addition to Indigenous awareness training, TC Energy supports community-led initiatives that focus on community-specific priorities, including safety equipment, emergency preparedness and cultural events. TC Energy also focuses on capacity building and skill development with Indigenous employees in alignment with project requirements. The company has also established a "project equity framework" focus on identifying opportunities for Indigenous groups to hold a financial stake in its operations.³⁰

This case study illustrates the successful outcomes of the above organization prioritising Indigenous relations. EY Canada does not claim any role in the success of those outcomes through a business or service relationship with the organization.

Suncor Energy

SPOTLIGHT: COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT ROOTED IN TRUST

Suncor Energy is a Canadian integrated energy company based in Calgary, Alberta. It specializes in the production of synthetic crude from oil sands.

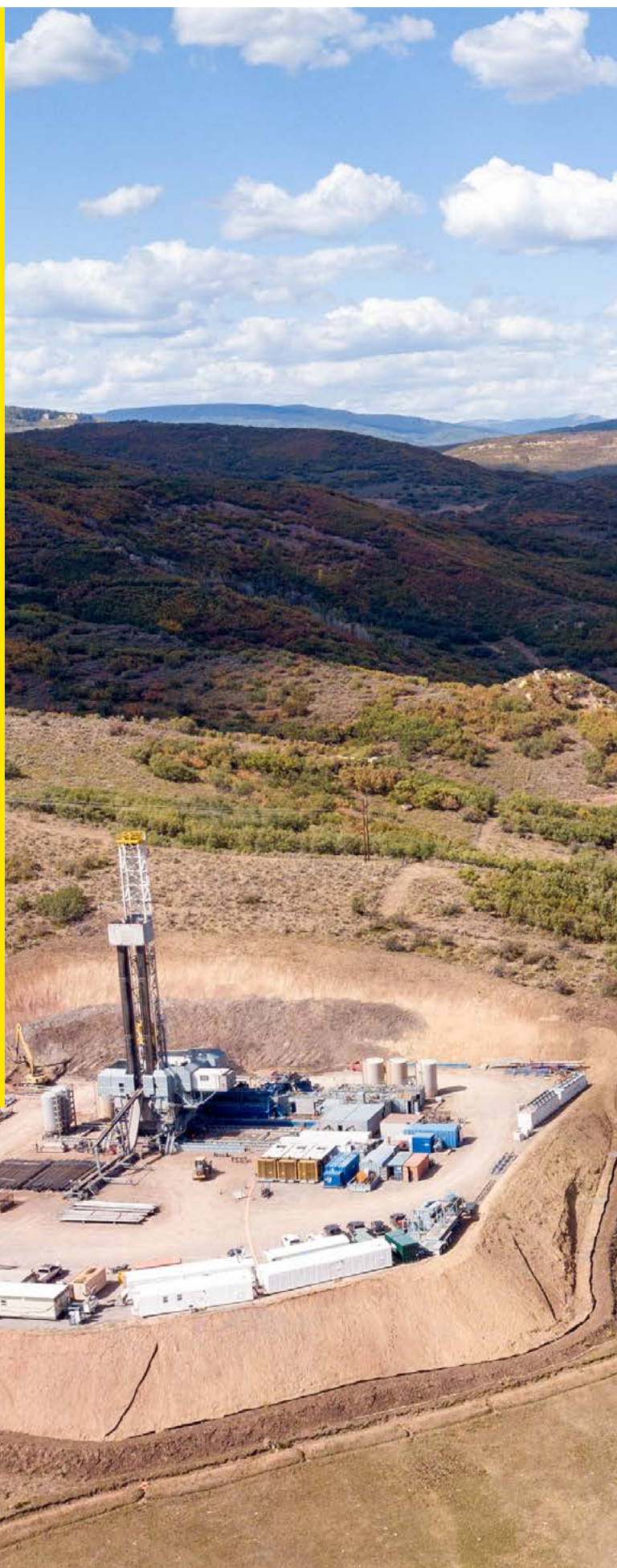
The Fort McKay First Nation is a First Nations government in northeast Alberta comprising five reserves. Mikisew Cree First Nation is an Indigenous First Nations government of Woodland Cree people in Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

In 2017, these Nations acquired a 49% partnership stake in Suncor's East Tank Farm Development, located approximately 30 km north of Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Suncor built a foundation of trust and collaboration with the two First Nations Communities by listening to their wants and needs and understanding the communities' desire for a long-term, stable revenue source. Suncor's collaborative spirit resulted in a mutually beneficial solution and the engagement was a blueprint showing how project proponents and communities can build beneficial long-term relationships.

The partnership also led to additional opportunities for Suncor, including partnering with eight Indigenous communities in 2021 to acquire a 15% equity interest in the Northern Courier Pipeline Limited Partnership and connecting the Fort Hills asset to Suncor's East Tank Farm Asset.³¹

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INDIGENOUS BUSINESS GROWTH AND INCREASED ACCESS TO CAPITAL

While the capacity of Indigenous communities in Canada varies widely from community to community, the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and communities in the economy has grown significantly in recent decades. According to Statistics Canada, the Canadian GDP attributable to Indigenous Peoples was \$54.1b in 2019, up from \$41.7b in 2012, showing widespread growth across almost all industries.⁴ The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) projects this will increase to \$100b by 2024.⁵

While access to capital remains an issue for Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs, the shift in the role of Indigenous communities in major projects, especially in the energy sector, from minor players to beneficiaries of settlement agreements, to active business engagement, to equity owners, has been substantial.⁶

While there is still a long way to go, Aboriginal economic development corporations (AEDCs) are operating and investing in major industrial projects, including natural resources, energy, construction, hospitality, travel and tourism, the arts, professional services, and tech, and there are opportunities for partnerships in all sectors. Organizations with strong Indigenous connections will have the opportunity to develop mutually beneficial relationships with these growing Indigenous businesses.

ADDITIONALLY, INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS ARE CREATING NEW BUSINESSES AT NINE TIMES THE CANADIAN AVERAGE. THE INDIGENOUS BUSINESS COMMUNITY INCLUDES MORE THAN 50,000 COMPANIES, OF WHICH AN ESTIMATED 12% ARE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARMS OF INDIGENOUS NATIONS OR COMMUNITIES.⁵

INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Indigenous communities, governments and organizations in every region of Canada have been active developers of renewable energy projects over the past two decades. Since 2017, the number of medium and large Indigenous clean energy projects has grown by 29.6%, and as of February 2022, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit entities are partners or beneficiaries of almost 20% of Canada's electricity-generating infrastructure.⁷

- ① **THE NUMBER OF MEDIUM AND LARGE INDIGENOUS CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS HAS GROWN BY**

29.6%

- ① **FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT ENTITIES ARE PARTNERS OR BENEFICIARIES OF ALMOST 20% OF CANADA'S ELECTRICITY-GENERATING INFRASTRUCTURE**

20%

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WILL BE KEY PLAYERS IN CANADA'S ENERGY TRANSITION, AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATE WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MORE OPPORTUNITIES AND BETTER POSITION THEMSELVES FOR SUCCESS.



Evolve Power

SPOTLIGHT: MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

In April 2023, Evolve Power (previously Montem Resources), one of Alberta's leading renewable energy and coal development organizations, sold 50% of the Tent Mountain Renewable Energy Complex (TM-REX) to TransAlta to form the Tent Mountain Pumped Hydro Limited Partnership. The intention is for the project to be jointly managed moving forward.

TM-REX exists on the traditional territories of the Piikani Nation. It leverages Evolve Power's existing assets and Tent Mountain, which include a large water reservoir on land owned by Evolve Power, access to infrastructure, high-voltage power lines, gas pipelines and the interprovincial Highway 3. The planned development includes a 320 MW pumped hydro energy storage, 100 MW offsite green hydrogen electrolyzer and a 100 MW offsite wind farm.

One of the major success factors of this development was Evolve Power's preliminary approach to Indigenous engagement. A framework agreement was established with the Piikani Nation that would allow parties to build a long-term, cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship. The framework acknowledges that the Piikani Nation holds certain Aboriginal and treaty rights over the project area and reflects their interest in the future of the project – jobs and economic development.³⁸

This case study illustrates the successful outcomes of the above organization prioritising Indigenous relations. EY Canada does not claim any role in the success of those outcomes through a business or service relationship with the organization.



ESG(I) AND DEI PERFORMANCE

Indigenous relations will be a key component of ESG performance going forward. The National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022² calls on corporations to include “Indigenous” as a component of their ESG goals and to adopt the principles of environmental, social, governance and Indigenous (ESGI) reporting.⁸ Additionally, Indigenous representation is a key component of DEI performance in Canada.

Distributing corporations, governed by the *Canada Business Corporations Act*, are required by law to provide their shareholders and Corporations Canada with information about the representation of Indigenous Peoples on their boards of directors and among senior management.⁹ See below for key findings related to Indigenous Peoples from the 2022 report:⁹

While the representation of Indigenous Peoples in senior management positions and on boards of directors remains well short of the estimated proportion of Indigenous People in Canada’s population, estimated at 5% in 2016,¹⁰ there is a growing trend for increased Indigenous representation in leadership positions.

While there are currently no legal requirements for companies to disclose or report ESG(I) performance in Canada, the Canadian Government announced in its latest budget that it has plans to gradually phase in reporting requirements for federally regulated financial institutions to begin reporting on climate-related financial risks in accordance with the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) framework, impacting how the Canadian economy deals with ESG reporting.¹¹

■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022

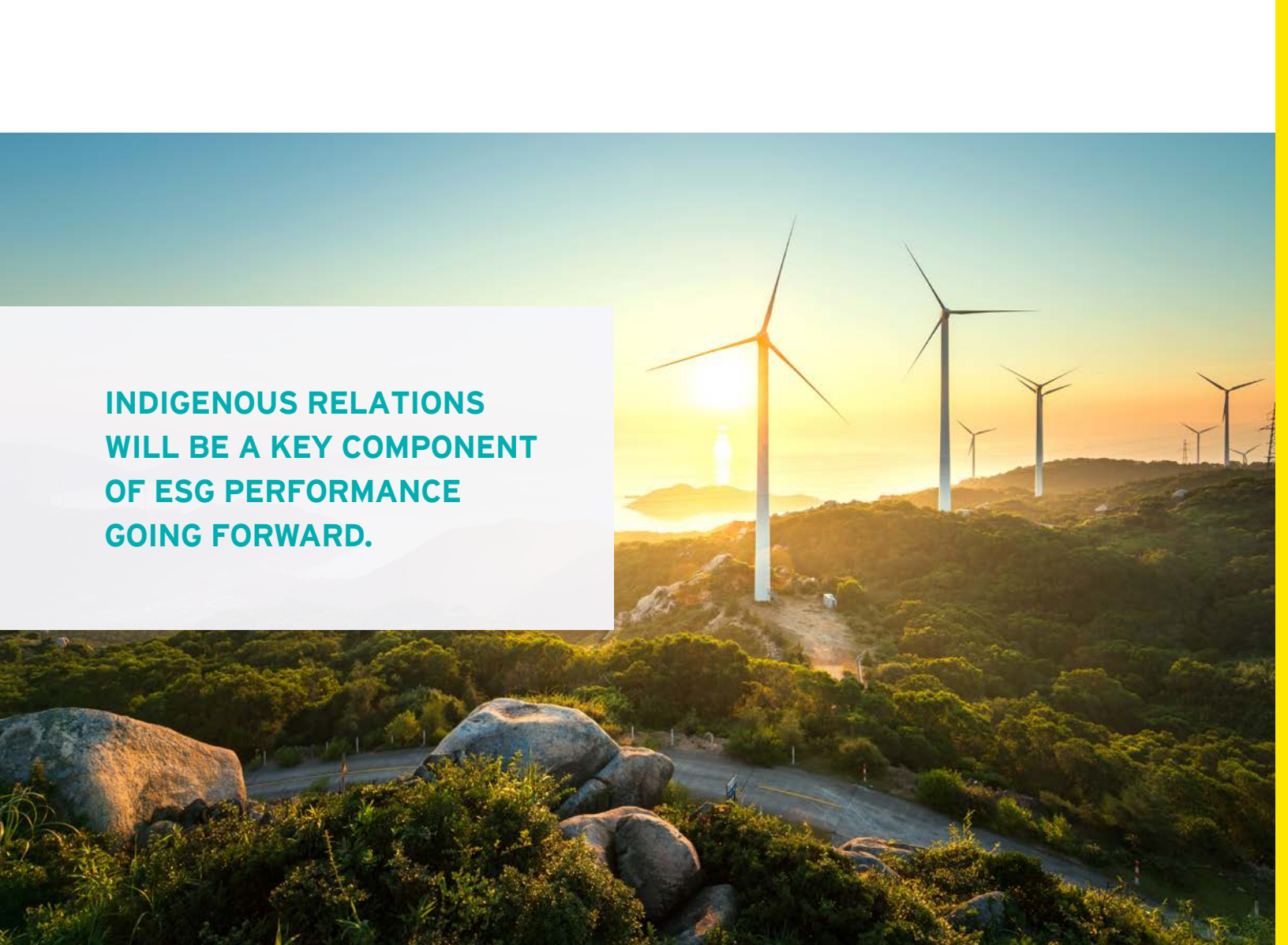
⊙ **% OF DISTRIBUTING COMPANIES WITH AT LEAST ONE INDIGENOUS PERSON ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

1.7%
2.0%
3.0%

⊙ **% OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS HELD BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

0.2%
0.4%
0.4%

² The National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022 (NIES) is a strategy that was developed by a coalition of more than 25 National Indigenous Organizations and is the first such strategy to be built and designed exclusively by Indigenous leaders, institutions, and organizations from across Canada. The strategy has four strategic pathways, People, Lands, Infrastructure, and Finance, with 107 Calls to Economic Prosperity to guide Canadian society toward a more equitable and prosperous future.³⁷



**INDIGENOUS RELATIONS
WILL BE A KEY COMPONENT
OF ESG PERFORMANCE
GOING FORWARD.**

⊙ **% OF DISTRIBUTING COMPANIES
THAT HAVE SET TARGETS
FOR THE REPRESENTATION
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
ON THEIR BOARDS**

1.0%

2.0%

3.0%

⊙ **% OF DISTRIBUTING CORPORATIONS
THAT HAVE ADOPTED WRITTEN
POLICIES RELATING TO THE
IDENTIFICATION AND NOMINATION
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ON
THEIR BOARDS**

26%

32%

28%

Birchcliff Energy

SPOTLIGHT: BUSINESS COLLABORATION AND SUPPLY CHAIN INCLUSION

Birchcliff Energy Ltd. is an Alberta-based oil and gas company with operations concentrated in the Peace River Arch of Alberta, which is in the traditional area occupied by the Treaty 8 First Nations members and by Métis people. Indigenous relationships are highlighted as a key priority in Birchcliff's ESG reporting.

Birchcliff leads with inclusive consultation and engagement through the form of community investment to build relationships with Indigenous groups. Specific focus areas for community investment include education, cultural and economic development, employment opportunities, internal awareness and supply chain inclusion.

In 2021, Birchcliff awarded contracts worth approximately \$2.3 million to Indigenous providers to support their operations, including water management, site preparation activities, safety equipment rentals, medical services, drilling equipment rentals, environmental work and remediation services. In addition, Birchcliff is focused, wherever possible, on hiring local employees and contractors, including contractors who are partnered with or owned by members of Indigenous communities.³²

Birchcliff believes that one of the most impactful ways to build solid and sustainable relationships with the First Nations and Métis communities is to establish business collaborations with them.

This case study illustrates the successful outcomes of the above organization prioritising Indigenous relations. EY Canada does not claim any role in the success of those outcomes through a business or service relationship with the organization.



In addition to the legal requirements outlined by the Government of Canada, many non-government associations are implementing ESG(I) and DEI disclosures related to Indigenous Peoples.

ORGANIZATION	INDIGENOUS RELATIONS DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS
The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada (CIAC)	The CIAC updated the Indigenous Relations section of its Responsible Care Codes in 2020 to include new commitments for its members to engage Indigenous Communities through proactive and formal processes. ¹²
The Mining Association of Canada (MAC)	In 2019, as part of its Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) initiative, MAC adopted a new TSM Indigenous and Community Relationships Protocol that lays out five performance indicators and best practices. Each MAC member is evaluated against the protocol, with the results being released publicly every year. ¹³
The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)	In 2021, CAPP released a report highlighting efforts made by the oil and gas sector to train, hire and partner with Indigenous companies, communities and individuals. ¹⁴ CAPP President Tim McMillan also says the report will act as a benchmark for the sector. ¹⁵

Indigenous ESG(I) and DEI factors and metrics will continue to grow in importance as investors, regulators and governments become more scrutinizing of non-economic factors and performance. However, it should be noted that many factors related to Indigenous relations cannot be measured, as they are more qualitative, such as meaningful consultation and engagement.

INDIGENOUS ESG(I) AND DEI FACTORS AND METRICS WILL CONTINUE TO GROW IN IMPORTANCE AS INVESTORS, REGULATORS AND GOVERNMENTS BECOME MORE SCRUTINIZING OF NON-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND PERFORMANCE.

INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION PROVIDES PROJECT CERTAINTY AND INCREASED INVESTMENT

Across Canada, the provincial governments have begun requiring information regarding Indigenous involvement in applications, projects and requests for proposals (RFPs). A few examples include:

2018 | Alberta

ALBERTA ENERGY

Application/Project/RFP:

Petrochemicals, Feedstock Infrastructure, Program application¹⁷

Indigenous involvement:

One of the eight evaluation criteria was “participation of Indigenous communities”

2019 | Alberta

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Application/Project/RFP:

Indigenous Opportunities Corporation

Indigenous involvement:

Formation of the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation to facilitate Indigenous communities’ financial participation in major resource projects.¹⁹

2019 | Manitoba

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

Application/Project/RFP:

Keeyask Hydropower LP

Indigenous involvement:

Option provided for early equity position to First Nations impacted by construction, ownership and operation of the dam.¹⁹

2019 | Ontario

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION (OPG)

Application/Project/RFP:

Renewable power proposals

Indigenous involvement:

Requires bidders to have minimal levels of Indigenous participation.¹⁹

2020 | Manitoba

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

Application/Project/RFP:

Indigenous Procurement Initiative

Indigenous involvement:

Initiative developed through the procurement services branch to increase the participation of Indigenous-owned businesses providing goods and services to Manitoba Government departments.²⁰

2020 | Saskatchewan

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

Application/Project/RFP:

Indigenous participation in pipeline projects

Indigenous involvement:

Funding to support Indigenous involvement in the natural resource sector through profit sharing and participation.²²

2021 | Saskatchewan

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

Application/Project/RFP:

Accelerate Site Closure Program (ASCP)

Indigenous involvement:

Developed the First Nations Stewardship Fund and the Indigenous Business Credit Pool that will direct up to \$50 million of ASCP funding to support First Nations and Métis participation in the program.²¹

2022 | Alberta

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Application/Project/RFP:

Request for full project proposals for carbon sequestration hubs¹⁸

Indigenous involvement:

Part of the business model information requirements (weighting 31.91%) are “benefits to Indigenous communities”

In addition, the Government of Canada is implementing a mandatory requirement for federal departments and agencies to ensure a minimum of 5% of the total value of contracts is held by Indigenous businesses. This will be phased in over three years and is expected to be fully implemented by 2024.²³ Companies without strong Indigenous relations will be more likely to miss out on these investment opportunities and their projects will be at greater risk of termination moving forward.

Kineticor

SPOTLIGHT: AWARD-WINNING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP DESIGN

The Cascade Power Project is a 900 MW combined cycle power generation facility being constructed on a 52-hectare site of Crown land in Alberta by Calgary-based Kineticor Resource Corporation.

A holding company owned by the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, O'Chiese First Nation, Paul First Nation and Whitefish Lake First Nation has invested \$93m for an equity stake in the new natural gas power plant. This deal is backed by a loan guarantee from the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation (AIOC), which is a Crown corporation set up by the Alberta Government to help Indigenous groups invest in natural resource projects.^{36, 39}

Cascade Power was presented with the Canadian Power Deal of the Year for 2020 by Project Finance International in part because of its innovation in First Nations partnership and long-term contracting strategy.³⁹

This represented the first project where the Alberta Government, via the AIOC, played a role in ensuring Indigenous participation in a major project.³⁵

This case study illustrates the successful outcomes of the above organization prioritising Indigenous relations. EY Canada does not claim any role in the success of those outcomes through a business or service relationship with the organization.



Cameco

SPOTLIGHT: INCLUSIVE HIRING PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Cameco is one of the world's largest uranium producers and has four major operations in northern Saskatchewan on traditional Indigenous territories with collaboration agreements in place with local Indigenous communities.

Through an array of programs to support students, schools and communities, as well as on-the-job training and targeted recruitment and retention programs, Cameco has continually and successfully increased its Indigenous workforce and has become Canada's largest industrial employer of Indigenous People.

Cameco has been recognized as one of Canada's best diversity employers for many years. The most important takeaway from their approach is the importance of supporting the development of Indigenous talent, including scholarships, apprenticeship programs and career development within the organization.

Cameco's approach provides long-term sustainable benefits through "grassroots" engagement, supporting developmental programs, on-the-job training, and recruitment and retention. Its holistic approach goes beyond establishing a target for Indigenous employment and is a core reason it has had such substantial success.³³

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LABOUR FORCE CONSIDERATIONS

Indigenous communities have some of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in Canada. According to the 2021 Census from StatsCan, the Indigenous population in Canada grew by 9.4% from 2016 to 2021, surpassing the growth of the non-Indigenous population over the same period (+5.3%).²⁴ From 2011-16, the Indigenous population grew by 18.9%. In addition, the Indigenous population in Canada is 8.2 years younger, on average, than the non-Indigenous population.²⁴

With an aging Canadian demographic and a perpetual need for organizations to source new talent, there is an opportunity for organizations to work with Indigenous communities to build skillsets and capabilities to support their current and future talent needs.

The majority (56%) of Indigenous Peoples in Canada live outside of large urban centres (greater than 100,000 people).²⁴ Local Indigenous employees are more likely to remain in their communities and jobs than employees who are not experienced with the challenges of living and working remotely. More local employment means the incorporation of local knowledge, reduced transportation and accommodation costs, and reduced need for a temporary workforce and remote work camps, reducing the environmental footprint of the project.²⁵ Hiring Indigenous People provides a ready labour pool and builds connections with local communities, providing mutual benefits for all parties.²⁶

**INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
HAVE SOME OF THE YOUNGEST AND
FASTEST-GROWING POPULATIONS
IN CANADA.**

An overview of Indigenous relations

Relationships and agreements between corporations and Indigenous groups in Canada have come a long way over the past few decades. However, many corporations do not know how to work effectively, equitably and meaningfully with Indigenous groups.²⁷

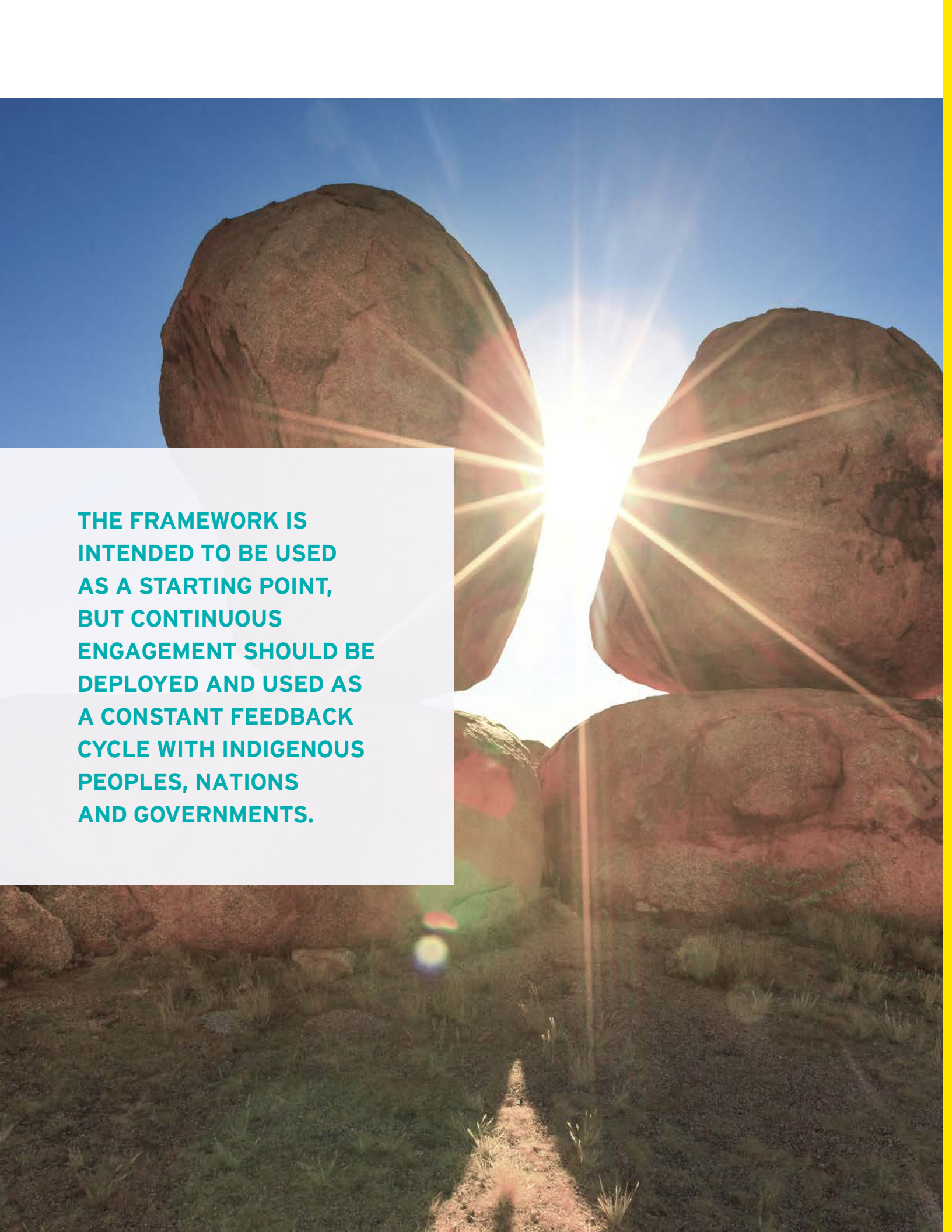
A study that assessed the commitment of over 500 medium-sized and large companies across various sectors in Canada showed that 85% are categorized as “disengaged” as it relates to engaging with Indigenous communities and their awareness, readiness, strategies, consultations and partnerships.²⁸

According to the same study, only 25% of companies have strategies for Indigenous employment, business development or community development, and only 10% have implemented strategies.²⁸

To support energy and resource organizations across Canada in building awareness and informing an approach to creating sustainable and mutually beneficial relations with Indigenous Peoples, built on trust and respect, EY teams have developed the following **Energy & Resources Indigenous Relations Framework**. The framework was developed through our research and experience on numerous engagements working with different companies, Indigenous groups and other relevant parties. It provides a snapshot of the core elements of mutually beneficial Indigenous relations, including engagement, business collaboration and financial participation, all centred around a core of cultural awareness and respect. It's depicted in a cyclical nature to show that this is not a linear journey, but rather a continuous commitment that becomes embedded in an organization's governance.

The relative importance of any component or subcomponent is dependent on the unique relations being developed between an organization and an Indigenous community. This framework is for consideration and does not preclude other factors not shown. The framework is intended to be used as a starting point, but continuous engagement should be deployed and used as a constant feedback cycle with Indigenous Peoples, Nations and Governments.

There is significant complexity involved in building Indigenous relations. Each Indigenous community in Canada is unique, and the relationships they have with different organizations will vary. **There is no standard approach or a one-size-fits-all answer.** This framework is intended to provoke thought around approaches to consider. As such, it is crucially important for organizations to build competency and invest time and energy into getting to know Indigenous groups and communities at the individual level before identifying and presenting opportunities. Building trust includes acknowledging and owning missteps and committing to fostering a long-term relationship regardless of opportunities.



**THE FRAMEWORK IS
INTENDED TO BE USED
AS A STARTING POINT,
BUT CONTINUOUS
ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE
DEPLOYED AND USED AS
A CONSTANT FEEDBACK
CYCLE WITH INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES, NATIONS
AND GOVERNMENTS.**

EY Indigenous Relations Framework

Relations with Indigenous Peoples means fostering and sustaining resilient, long-term relationships built on truth, mutual respect, trust, commitment, accountability, responsibility and a recognition of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples as people and communities with their own unique cultures and priorities.



The framework is depicted in cyclical nature to show that meaningful Indigenous relations at any organization is not linear, but rather a continuous commitment that becomes embedded in an organization's governance with cultural awareness and respect at its core. Continuous engagement is used as a constant feedback cycle with Indigenous communities for each of the sub-components.

1

CULTURAL AWARENESS & RESPECT

INTERNAL INDIGENOUS AWARENESS & EDUCATION - Understanding, teaching and actioning Indigenous history, cultures and worldviews, as well as inclusivity and anti-racism training, at each level of the organization's hierarchy.

INDIGENOUS CUSTOMS & PROTOCOL - Recognizing, understanding and respecting the unique and individual perspectives, traditions, communication styles and ceremonies of Indigenous Peoples and each of the communities with whom relationships will be built.

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - Incorporating territory acknowledgments into business practices to recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples as the original caretakers of the land and to acknowledge that their cultures, ceremonies and traditions are intrinsically intertwined with the natural world.

2

BUSINESS COLLABORATION

EMPLOYMENT - Including hiring, retaining, mentoring and developing Indigenous talent as a focus of the organization.

SUPPLY CHAIN INCLUSION & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - Engaging Indigenous businesses and including them in the business operations, objectives and networks.

COLLABORATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT - Through fruitful dialogue early in project planning, incorporating Indigenous knowledge into project plans that recognize the impacts on the lands, Indigenous Peoples and neighboring communities from an Indigenous perspective.

3

FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION

EQUITY PARTICIPATION - Engaging in collaborative conversations with Indigenous Peoples, communities and their financial partners to develop working interests in projects to receive bipartisan approval.

REVENUE SHARING - The sharing of revenue from projects with impacted communities to provide Indigenous communities with long-term, sustainable benefits.

NATION INVESTMENT - Working with Indigenous communities and leaders to understand issues and provide financial support and/or in-kind support in targeted ways.

4

ENGAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING - Acknowledging the unique capacity, needs, realities and future plans of each Indigenous community through meaningful consultation and agreement.

INTERACTION - Continuously engage, and allocate time and resources to support the needs of impacted and neighbouring Indigenous Peoples before, during and after projects.

CONSENT - Obtaining the free, prior, informed consent of impacted Indigenous Peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

Conclusion

Organizations expanding their understanding of the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and growing Indigenous relations capabilities are still in the very early phases. Continued advancement is expected to be led by energy and resources organizations.

Future resource development and execution will be led by enhanced relationships with Indigenous communities, ongoing and continuous engagement, and mutually beneficial opportunities between project proponents and communities, whether through employment, financial participation, training and development, or supply chain inclusion.

WHAT ARE EY TEAMS DOING?

EY teams are focused and active in addressing their relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This includes providing jobs, education and scholarship opportunities. It also includes supporting Indigenous businesses and traditional ways of working through internal policies and providing opportunities for entrepreneurs.

We recognize that Indigenous relations are progressive. The strategy is aligned with the Energy and Resources Indigenous Relations Framework and is intended to be an ongoing journey of listening, learning, building relationships, breaking down barriers, and proactively looking for ways to engage and elevate Indigenous communities, create acceptance and promote inclusion.

ORGANIZATIONS EXPANDING THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA AND GROWING INDIGENOUS RELATIONS CAPABILITIES ARE STILL IN THE VERY EARLY PHASES. CONTINUED ADVANCEMENT IS EXPECTED TO BE LED BY ENERGY AND RESOURCES ORGANIZATIONS.

The following are initiatives we currently have underway.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS POLICY >

EY Canada has adopted United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and applies its principles, norms and standards to the firm's business philosophy and activities involving Indigenous Peoples and their lands and resources. We recognize the importance of working closely and building mutually beneficial relationships.

PROGRESSIVE ABORIGINAL RELATIONS CERTIFICATION >

In September of 2023, EY Canada was awarded the Silver level certification in the **Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program** from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB). The designation is a proud milestone in the firm's ongoing commitment to Indigenous reconciliation. The PAR certification is an enabler in establishing relationships with Indigenous Peoples, Nations and Governments by providing meaningful and equitable access to jobs, training and education opportunities.

INDSPIRE SCHOLARSHIPS >

The Indspire Indigenous Futures Awards, bursaries for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students, help open doors through education. Scholarships are offered to Indigenous students across Canada pursuing post-secondary studies in commerce, accounting, finance, STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and Indigenous languages.

INDIGENOUS PROFESSIONALS COUNCIL

EY teams have established an Indigenous Professionals Council (IPC) that represents and empowers First Nations, Métis and Inuit professionals by prioritizing reconciliation, relationship building and inclusive spaces. The IPC provides activities and access to programs for Indigenous employees, with invitations provided for all employees. Further, the IPC keeps a finger on the pulse of communities across the country and within EY.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCESS NETWORK >

The EY Entrepreneurship Access Network addresses the disparity experienced by Black and Indigenous business owners. We're committed to breaking down barriers for Canadian entrepreneurs to lead to creative and innovative solutions. The network helps bridge disparity gaps so these leaders can access the learning and networks to transcend the barriers and achieve professional and personal success.

EY RIPPLES >

Ripples is an EY global corporate responsibility program. EY people use our knowledge, skills and experience to positively impact lives around the world through in-kind support. Initiatives span numerous social and environmental topics, including Indigenous relations. Specific initiatives include the development of an automation system for a healing lodge, the organization of an event for International Women's Day, and the development of a budget and revenue forecast for an Elder's Knowledge Circle to share residential school survivor stories.

ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

In addition to specific initiatives, we've rolled out Indigenous Awareness Training, which focuses on Call to Action 92 of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We close all our offices across Canada on National Day of Truth and Reconciliation to encourage our people to educate themselves and reflect. And we continue to offer education opportunities such as lunch-and-learns and leadership learning events.

We believe that as individuals, an organization and a country, we are stronger because of our differences, and we value the diverse perspectives our people and their experiences bring to building a better working world. We are committed to making Indigenous voices and experiences acknowledged, welcomed and celebrated. This commitment is woven into all aspects of our business, from recruitment to our people policies, to who we work with and how we give.

WE BELIEVE THAT AS INDIVIDUALS, AN ORGANIZATION AND A COUNTRY, WE ARE STRONGER BECAUSE OF OUR DIFFERENCES, AND WE VALUE THE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR EXPERIENCES BRING TO BUILDING A BETTER WORKING WORLD.



Critical considerations for your organization

Canadian energy and mining companies have an important role to play in the path towards reconciliation and supporting Indigenous communities across the country. Consider the following questions regarding the role you would like to take today and in the future:

- ③ Does your organization understand the unique capacity, needs and realities of Indigenous communities that you impact through your operations?
- ③ What role does your organization want to play in reconciling with Indigenous communities, and what is your strategy to enable this? What areas require investment?
- ③ Should Indigenous relations become an organizational focus, and are you positioned to do so?
- ③ How is your organization embedding cultural awareness and respect into your architecture?
- ③ Is your organization taking a holistic approach or a one-dimensional approach? Which is more suited to the organization?
- ③ How are you making Indigenous relations meaningful and continuous, rather than simply a one-off initiative?
- ③ What are the costs and risks of improper execution of developing an Indigenous relations strategy and, conversely, what are the benefits of proper execution?
- ③ What areas of the Energy & Resources Indigenous Relations Framework are a priority for your organization and why?



How EY can help

Indigenous relations are critical to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous communities across Canada, and offer win-win opportunities for the Canadian population as a whole. The Indigenous population is expected to grow more quickly than the non-Indigenous population over the next 20 years.

Growing a local Indigenous employment and supplier pool leads to increased optionality, builds capacity and economic growth in Indigenous communities, and allows for different groups to focus on core capabilities. Developing allyship with Indigenous communities can also be a significant enabler in project execution.

EY teams are dedicated to supporting organizations in both the public and private sectors along their Indigenous relations journeys through our broad offering:

- ④ **Transformation Strategy Services:** Operation model design, market research and analysis, and Indigenous relations strategy.

- ④ **Climate Change and Sustainability Services:** ESG strategy and disclosures, and public and private sector policy.

- ④ **Supply Chain and Operations Services:** Supply chain strategy and Indigenous procurement targets.

- ④ **EY-Parthenon:** Corporate strategy, transaction strategy and execution, negotiations and financial advisory.

- ④ **Transformation Delivery - Infrastructure:** Investment support and advisory for major infrastructure projects and capital procurement strategies. Supports all aspects of project development, including project scoping, design, governance, delivery and oversight.

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