

*Welcome to Zero In presented by Deloitte Center for Climate Action. Your host for the program is Bonnie D. Graham. This program will set up your business for the future with topics centered on accelerating climate action. We'll focus on core climate challenges and insights designed to move you to the next stage of your climate journey. Now here is Bonnie D. Graham.*

**Bonnie:** Welcome to Zero in presented by Deloitte Canada. I'm producer and host Bonnie D. Graham. Very honored to be here with a special guest today and a very important topic. My guest is Jason Rasevych he is a partner at Deloitte Canada within the financial advisory practice and he is the National Leader of Indigenous Client Services. Today, we're going to be talking about Indigenous Led Approaches to Climate Change. Before I give my overview on the topic Jason, please introduce yourself. Give us your background. I know you have a vast amount of knowledge and a personal involvement in our topic today so talk to us. Jason, welcome.

**Jason:** Thank you Bonnie. It's a privilege to be here today to talk about this important topic and share some insights. My name is Jason Rasevych. I'm a Ginoogaming First Nation member which is a small Ojibwa community about 330 kilometers northeast of Thunder Bay, Northwestern Ontario where I'm calling in from today respecting and acknowledging the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe people of Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850 Fort William First Nation and as well as the community that I'm from and their relationship with the government in James Bay Treaty Number Nine. With Deloitte, we have over 50 offices across Canada which reside on many of the unseated, seated and traditional lands of First Nation Metis and Inuit people. We're all treaty people. I'm very pleased to be here. I've been involved in business and economic development, leading First Nations for the last 20 years and got quite a bit of experience. I guess insights to share related to the topic of climate change and reconciliation and how we can advance as a country together.

**Bonnie:** Thank you very much. I am truly honored to meet you. You're in it. You're part of this, the population is important to you. Global climate warming is certainly something that's top of mind isn't it Jason to everybody everywhere. If it's not it should be. With your permission, I'd like to read a little bit of background on what we're going to be discussing today is that okay? This is from some of your writings. I'll just leave it at that. Jason writes for Canada to prosper, all Canadians must enhance and elevate their relationship with indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and move forward to a word you use Jason, reconciliation with the more than 630 distinct First Nations

communities and Metis and Inuit. I hope I said that right. You add the true reconciliation can be achieved by embracing indigenous' people stake in the fight against and this is a big topic, the scale, the urgency and the complexity of climate change through their spiritual and cultural connection to the land, the water, the air and their vulnerability to the effects of global warming. I'm not going to get into having greenhouses in the emissions standards and levels but this is so important. There is a such a cultural value here Jason in this conversation scale urgency and complexity through their spiritual and cultural connection. Can you give us a little more background on the indigenous peoples' connection to land, water and air, their stake in this basically? What does that mean?

**Jason:** Well it's really a lesson that I was fortunate to learn at a young age of being out on the family chop line with relatives, with my parents, with my uncles and aunts as well as other elders and knowledge keepers that would come out and practice our traditional rights and our aboriginal and treaty rights that are constitutionally protected. Not too many people know that First Nations peoples are one of the only classes of people that have rights that are protected in that regard. It's somewhat as a process under the constitution but also under a racist colonial document that governs indigenous peoples such as the Indian Act.

When I talk about the connection to the land it is about a spiritual connection and we sometimes see the word indigenous rights or First Nation rights and I just mentioned the constitutionally protected rights, but it is very much a responsibility, an inherent responsibility, an ancestral responsibility as being a steward for mother nature and understanding that nature and humanity and now economies in the indigenous world view are connected as one.

The impacts to the land will impact indigenous people's ways of life whether it be harvesting for wildlife or for traditional sustenance or traditional ceremonial activities, access to land, harvesting of medicines and so forth. That spirituality and that component is a cultural value. It's a special connection that has been ingrained into the indigenous worldview. Now, there is starting to be more awareness that is being raised nationally with corporate Canada because the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action but it is very much led by the elders who are sharing the knowledge. It is an intergenerational knowledge transfer to our youth in the communities to better understand the identity, the culture and the history of that relationship.

**Bonnie:** Thank you Jason. You have inspired me. I want to learn more, I want to know more just from hearing you. Now, as part of the format for this podcast episode I asked you to come up with a quote from a fictional character in a movie or TV show that inspires you to talk about this topic. You and I put our heads together and we came up with a quote and I'm going to tell everybody what that quote is. It's a very powerful, let me see how many words. One, two, three, four, five words.

Those are some of my favorite quotes. I'll give the quote and the background very briefly and then I'm going to ask you to tell us how that relates to the topic. Everybody this is powerful. Get ready. The quote is you can't handle the truth. It was said by the character Colonel Nathan R. Jessup USMC played by the one and only Jack Nicholson. The movie of course A Few Good Men, 1992 American legal drama film based on a 1989 play by Aaron Sorkin. Jason Rasevych, tell me what does this have to do with our topic. Impress us. Go ahead.

**Jason:** It's aligned with the discussion around the truth and reconciliation. Indigenous peoples have been saying for a long time there cannot be reconciliation without the truth. When this quote came to mind it really brought about whether or not there is authenticity in what is being shared related to reconciliation. We all have a role to play as treaty people. As I mentioned that in the intro a treaty was an agreement between crown governments and indigenous people to share in the resources of the land and to share in the benefits of the land and to also guide that relationship.

Many of the treaties that were signed that are the number treaties across Canada are evergreen agreements that have wording that say these this agreement will be in effect as the sun shines, the river flows and the grass grows. It's important to understand and raise awareness of the truth behind how those agreements came to be because we don't see a lot of that in the mainstream education curriculum related to what we're all accustomed to learning in whether it be in secondary school or post-secondary or even elementary.

Now we're seeing a big trend where we see many companies that are investing in cultural awareness training since its sensitivity training. Within Deloitte, within the firm we've licensed the four seasons of reconciliation training through the First Nations University. There's much opportunity for other

organizations and for general public and society to get familiar with the truth behind reconciliation and each and every one of us has a role to play in that.

**Bonnie:** Thank you Jason. Jack Nicholson would be very honored that you're using his quote on this show for such an important topic, seriously. Let's talk a little more. I want to get into the impacts of climate-driven extreme weather on indigenous people. I have a couple of notes here about the extremeness of deforestation, wildfires. We all know they're rampant in so many places around the world, flooding, loss of biodiversity. Can you tell me a little bit about how the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people can help Canada play a role in achieving climate goals and helping Canadian industry? You mentioned the economy, helping the industry fulfill the net zero obligations and I haven't heard obligations used as strongly as I've heard the word goals. Talk to me about obligations. Big topic. Jason, what do you say?

**Jason:** Climate change is not a partisan issue. We see politics come into play at times whether because of the different divisions of powers within government, between the federal government, territories and provinces as well as the role that municipalities play of working with indigenous peoples. When we look at that issue of climate change there is a tie into reconciliation that their strong belief that reconciliation is not a partisan issue as well and that it doesn't matter which party has a political position related to reconciliation. It is not going away because the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 calls to actions are clear. For corporate Canada we're seeing companies take the lead on specifically call to action number 92 which asks corporate Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration Rights of Indigenous People and the free prior informed consent framework.

What that means to indigenous people and we're seeing it in British Columbia where they've actually passed provincial legislation is that before projects are able to advance companies often go to government for permits to do work and to go through the government's environmental assessment and regulatory process and then go to indigenous communities after the fact when their project is fully developed as a business case without considering the indigenous traditional knowledge. What we're seeing now is many companies are being advised by first nation leaders that you can have all of these permits in your briefcase but your project is not bankable and is risky unless it has first nation social license that you're working in and impacting. We're seeing a lot of industries, mining, forestry, oil and gas that are looking to partner with indigenous communities in a way where the indigenous nations are involved in

environmental monitoring and efforts are being made to decarbonize some of these industries to help us meet some of our net zero goals. You mentioned greenhouse gases. There's industries that have been operating with supplies of energy that create issues related to us meeting those goals and having indigenous people as part of that governance system to monitor this and come up with mitigation plans is really important.

When you ask or mentioned some of the impacts of climate change like flooding or wildfires we've seen in the past that first nations have stated that due to fire suppression tactics we're seeing ways where first nations had means of natural disturbances out on the land of being better managed. Now we're seeing these wildfires grow in places like northern Ontario or BC that are impacting the area. There's a lot more that we can do to involve and blend indigenous traditional knowledge with western science.

**Bonnie:** Thank you Jason very interesting. I have a big question. Just popped into my head while I'm listening to you. How much education is needed for industries in Canada to be aware of what we're talking about today? If somebody tunes into this podcast in the coming weeks and months we're now in January 2022, full disclosure when you and I are speaking will they say oh, I didn't know that. I need to get on board this effort at reconciliation and the greenhouse gas quest for net zero. Well is this something that's new or is this something that's been going on, this effort to engage, to reconcile, to educate, to inspire, to motivate, all of that? I hope I'm using all the right verbs there. Is this something that's new or is this something that's been going on for a while? That's my basic question. Jason?

**Jason:** It's been discussed over the last five years or even longer, a longer period. Overall I would say over the last decade there's been quite a bit of advocacy as part on indigenous leaders to prioritize some of these concerns but it hasn't achieved traction until as of late with a lot of the advocacy work that's being done provincially and nationally. I believe the conversation is growing. I believe awareness is continuing to grow. I believe there's more commitments. I think part of that as well is related to socially responsible investment and regulations that are changing regarding corporate board disclosures.

Now there's a requirement for corporate boards to disclose their climate change initiatives and their impacts on climate change and what are they going to be doing to mitigate that. It's the same type of advocacy work that's going on from indigenous groups to advocate for corporate boards to disclose their indigenous

relations policy and how they are working with First Nation people related to the calls to action and the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People.

There's a lot more pressure because it's impacting investment. There's a lot more pressure because it's impacting project approval. The conversation is growing. It's undeniable and going back to the comment about you can't handle the truth from the movie is are companies ready to step up and handle this truth. Is government ready to step up and handle the truth? For a long time indigenous leaders are asking for this truth to be a part of reconciliation and that's really important to moving us forward as we enter this new paradigm of the economy and resource development.

**Bonnie:** Thank you Jason. We're almost out of time. What I want to ask you is is there anything else that's top of mind for you that you want our listeners, our viewers who may see the video that you want them to know from you, I'm going to say from your heart, from your experience, from your involvement in this very important topic. What do you want to leave people with?

**Jason:** I can't stress enough the importance of partnership of working with indigenous peoples as early on in the planning processes as possible. At times companies wait until it's a permit application or wait until projects are mature to start negotiating. A lot of the elders have advised me as kind of well when's the right time. We hear the word consultation. When's the right time to start meeting with communities and they've said it's when a company has the thought of doing development on First Nation traditional lands. It's really important to start those discussions early because the relationship is built at the speed of trust and it takes time to build trust with the communities.

The other lesson that I've learned is the thousand cups of tea concept from the elders. Rushing communities to agreements and timelines that are based off of certain goals, business goals doesn't necessarily work well with indigenous people because they need to be resourced to understand some of the legal and the technical aspects as well as business aspects of getting into a relationship with the company. The thousand cups of tea concept is it's going to take time and discussion and all of these cups of coffee, cups of teas, socializing to understand that that relationship needs to develop and grow. Then finally we see that there's a big push with electric vehicles. This is specific to the mining market but there's a goal for us to be a leader in our country related to whether

it be electric batteries for vehicles and the development and manufacturing of that.

There's critical minerals that are here in our country where we can play a bigger role with climate change and that transportation part of it with transitioning to electric vehicles. It's going to be important for the mining sector specifically with critical minerals to develop those relationships with First Nations as true partners to these projects. That may require ownership and equity and approvals for infrastructure as well as we move forward.

**Bonnie:** Jason, what you said, all of the brilliant words you just shared what you said was a relationship grows at the speed of trust. I have never heard it put quite that way before and I'm going to take that with me into my work, my business and my relationships because I think you got to the core. That's really what we're talking about, Jason Rasevych at Deloitte Canada again, very honored and pleased to have you spend this time with me and with our audience. I want to thank you for sharing your knowledge and most of all sharing your passion for a truly important topic so let's wave goodbye.

**Jason:** Thank you Bonnie.

**Bonnie:** Bye bye. Thank you.

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