

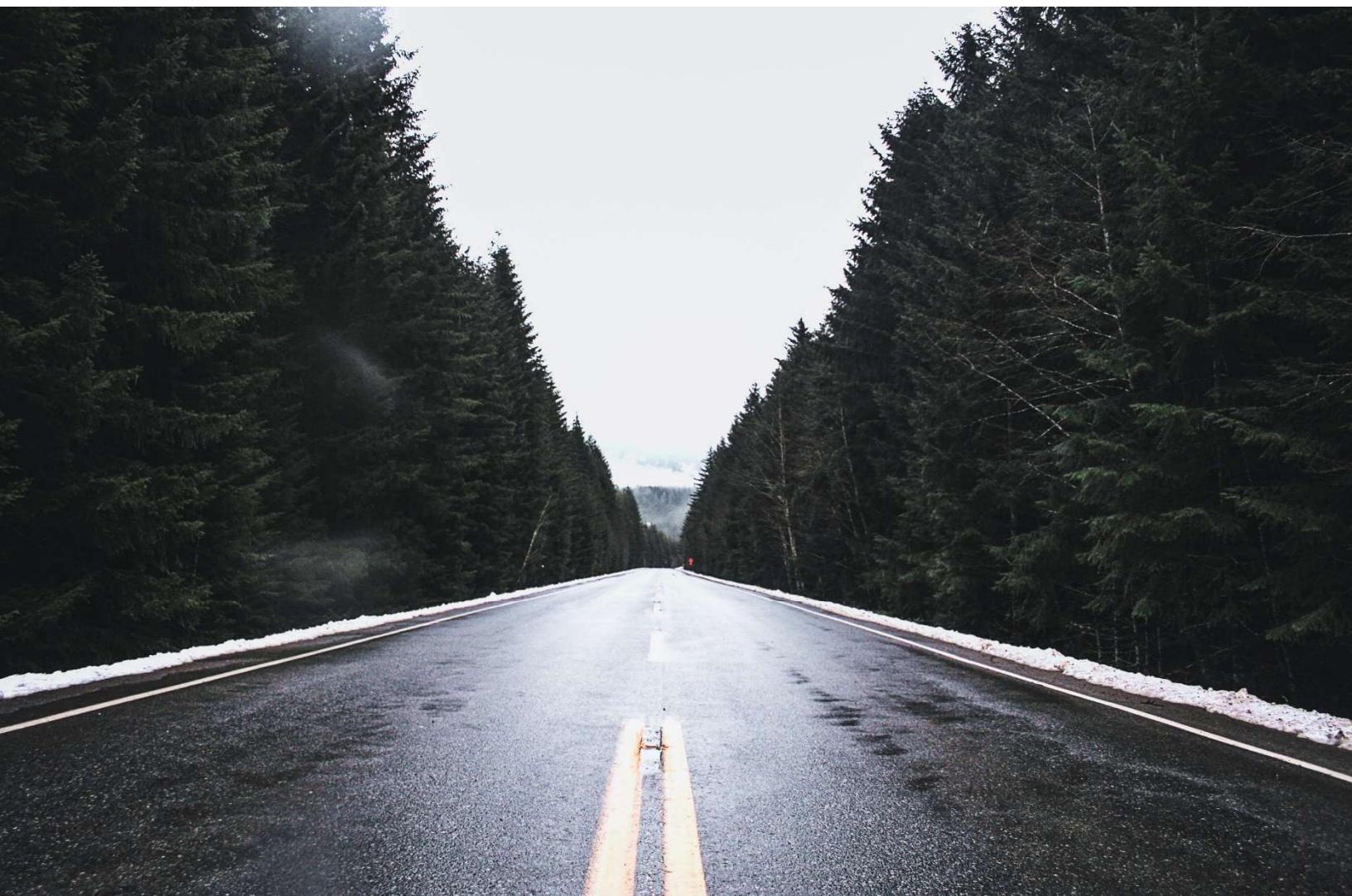
Short-Term Risk Assessment Analysis

Political Risk Assessment

Incorporating Indigenous Frameworks into Traditional Business Landscapes: Thoughts, Considerations, and Risks

Prepared by the Leadership & Democracy Lab, University of Western Ontario

Published April 2021



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ABBREVIATIONS

LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LPR	Labour Participation Rates
PPCP	Public-Private-Community Partnership
OKIB GC	Okanagan Indian Band Group of Companies
EPCOR	EPCOR Utilities
B.C	British Columbia
EAO	Environmental Assessment Office

Executive Summary

Indigenous groups are well poised to contribute both to their own communities' economies as well as the Canadian economy through the First Nations Fiscal Management Regime. However, many Indigenous groups have largely been left out of conversations pertaining to the environment, social inclusion issues including female economic participation, governance frameworks, and public private partnerships. Indigenous stakeholders have the potential to be some of the leading contributors in relation to how business opportunities are approached given their unique and cultural traditions. This is especially salient in light of reconciliation efforts, as business and political leaders should be emphasising more participation for Indigenous groups.

By identifying risks and mitigations pertaining to the environment, various social issues, governance frameworks, and new partnership models, this report outlines examples of what Indigenous organizations,

federal and provincial governments, private sector actors, and other economic stakeholders may want to think about when engaging in economic activity with one another. Some of the examples relate to how the private sector should approach matters with Indigenous groups. Other examples outline considerations Indigenous treaty nations should think about prior to partnering with the private sector. Additionally, new forms of partnerships are discussed to increase transparency and overall business continuity while respecting reconciliation efforts.

First, environmental impacts are considered, followed by social and governance considerations. This report then concludes by analyzing a new form of public-private-community partnership. Each segment draws on specific examples which can inform the reader about how to potentially approach risks and implement their mitigations.



Figure 1: The Nisga'a, Canadian, and B.C flags behind the welcome poles outside of the Gitlaxt'aamiks village government office

The LNG Industry in British Columbia

British Columbia (B.C.) is currently the second-largest producer of marketable natural gas amongst the Canadian provinces, with abundant natural gas resources and the most economically viable natural gas wells in the country.¹ Accordingly, there has been a push to develop liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facilities in B.C. to supply the demand from Asian markets² as investor focus has shifted to specifically LNG exports.³

In 2012, B.C. issued their Natural Gas Strategy which identified LNG exports as a provincial priority for economic growth and listed the province's plan to promote the industry.⁴ However, the LNG industry in B.C. remains controversial; for the B.C. government and industry investors it represents a promising source of economic revenue, but for Indigenous communities in the region it raises concerns about disproportionate environmental impacts to their lands and the capacity for the provincial government and industry proponents to adequately consult with their Nations when assessing adverse environmental risks of a proposed project.⁵

Following the mitigation of these disproportionate risks, resource development in B.C. has the potential to benefit all stakeholders involved, including government, industry, and Indigenous groups. This can occur through a transparent, collaborative environmental assessment process, which can be adopted to adequately identify and mitigate adverse environmental risk of LNG pipelines on Indigenous communities.

Risks: Significant Residual Adverse Effects on Environment

Any proposed LNG project in B.C. must undergo either a provincial Environmental Assessment (EA) or federal EA process, and sometimes both, in order to obtain approval. The EA processes usually entail a survey of potential effects of a project on a series of environmental Valued Components (VCs); only those impacts that cannot be avoided or minimized and may cause substantial adverse changes are deemed to be "significant impacts".⁶



Figure 2: Image of a tank pad at the LNG Canada Site located in B.C.

A study conducted by the Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI) in 2016 of the EA reports of 18 natural gas or LNG projects in B.C. found the following environmental issues associated with LNG development in the province to be significant:

- Significant residual adverse effects related to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.
- Significant residual adverse effects and cumulative effects to rare, threatened wildlife species, namely caribou, grizzly bear, and harbour porpoise.⁷

Further, the study noted the potential for cumulative adverse impacts of LNG projects on Indigenous communities' interests, including changes to environmental, social and economic values caused by the combined effect of past, present and potential future activities. This includes the potential for adverse impacts to water quality, harvested foods, traditional land use for resources, and physical and cultural heritage. However, cumulative effects assessments are often inadequate in delineating these risks.⁸

Risks: Problems with Environmental Assessment

Notwithstanding the potential adverse environmental impacts mentioned above, it has been found that B.C.'s EA process may be inadequate in

Environmental Assessment (2018) Timeline

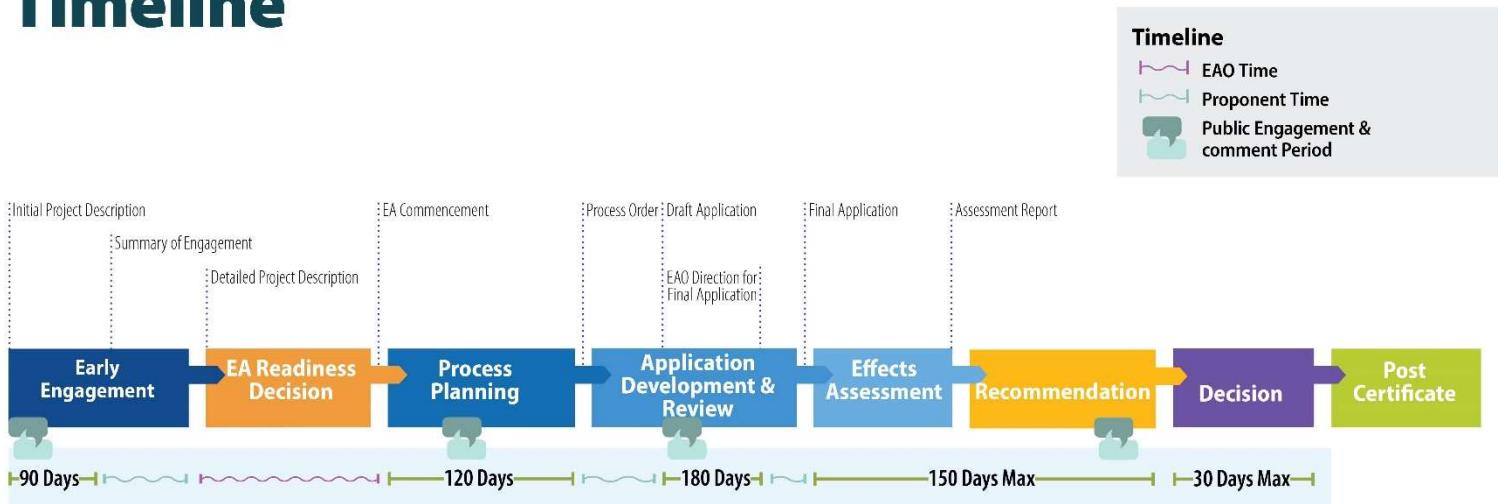


Figure 3: The 2018 Environment Assessment Process for evaluating potential environmental, social, economic, health and cultural effects

deducing and thus addressing the true environmental risks of LNG projects on Indigenous interests. Murray et al. argue that environmental evaluations of large-scale LNG project developments can be controversial as decision-makers⁹ have to weigh promised financial gains against potential environmental (and social, cultural) impacts; they found in their study that even when quantitative impact thresholds were exceeded, weak or flawed reasoning by industry proponents was frequently used to justify still designating impacts as non-significant to enhance the likelihood of project approval.¹⁰

This suggests a bias within the EA process which precludes adequate evaluation of environmental risk and increases the likelihood of projects entailing adverse environmental risks being approved. Further, the EA process in B.C. substantially lacks incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), traditional land use (TLU), and other Indigenous Peoples considerations.¹¹

Currently, the duty to consult within provincial law does not legally bind the industry to do anything beyond carry out consultations with Indigenous groups that may be affected by a project; Tong argues that these consultations have simply become another arbitrary step in the project application process and fail to involve Indigenous communities in decision-making about the project or any attendant environmental risks that may affect them.¹²

Mitigations

The 2016 study by CERI establishes a number of mitigation strategies relating to the aforementioned significant residual environmental effects of LNG pipelines in B.C. with an eye to avoidance first, and then minimization, restoration, and offset of risks through various environmental management, monitoring, and emergency accident response plans (see CERI 2016). Moreover, Economic Benefit Agreements (EBA's) with nearby Indigenous communities are recommended here.¹³ EBA's allow for evenly distributed benefits among the Nation and other stakeholders.

However, without reform of the EA process these mitigations represent only small remedies to a much broader problem. Tong suggests that B.C. should develop an Indigenized cumulative impact assessment framework allowing Indigenous groups to have concrete influence in the assessment and decision-making process, as well as pass legislation requiring community consent rather than simply arbitrary consultation.¹⁴

This would not only require the province and industry to facilitate community involvement and dialogue in relation to the environmental risks of a project but would also reduce the risks to industry interests as consent can create stability for development projects and lead to lasting economic benefits and certainty for stakeholders.¹⁵

Employing a collaborative approach to EA processes would enable local knowledge and values to be included when assessing the level of significance of impacts to local communities, and establishing legal repercussions for exceeding thresholds would help reduce subjective justification and enforce environmental thresholds more strictly in the decision-making process, which would further help to strengthen the EA process to adequately identify and thus be able to mitigate adverse environmental effects.¹⁶

If any conclusion is to be made, an ethical approach to resource development¹⁷ is required. As noted, this entails collaborative decision-making processes with respect to environmental assessment to be developed between Indigenous communities and the LNG industry in order to truly mitigate environmental risks of LNG development. Additional requirements include a general shift in perspective concerning environmental assessments and consultations with communities from being seen as simply just a tedious step in the project approval process to one that is committed to the minimization of environmental risks of a proposed project, sustainable development, and economic benefit for all. Industry should have an eye toward protecting Indigenous livelihood and territory, as well as achieving sustainable economic partnership with the Indigenous groups involved.

Female Indigenous Economic Participation

The benefit of educating Indigenous women has remarkable effects on their earning potential, as well as their ability to reinvest nearly a high percentage of their earnings back into their families and communities.¹⁸ This ultimately reinforces the necessity to reduce gender-based disparities in the economy, such as employment, income, and education, especially in indigenous communities.¹⁹ By doing so, this benefits society at large.

A 2019 Indigenous Economic Report analyzed the difference in economic outcomes between Indigenous men and women.²⁰ The first core economic indicator, employment, identified an employment rate gap of only 2.1% in Indigenous communities, compared to 7.3% within non-Indigenous populations.²¹ The explanation for greater gender parity within the Indigenous population was speculated to be a matriarchal social order, differences in age demographics, and greater gender equity within Indigenous identity groups.²²

Evidence of movement toward the closure of the gender gap was observed through labour participation rates (LPR), or the measure of the populations active workforce.²³ Between 2006 and 2016, Indigenous women's LPR increased from 87.8% to 90% and reduced gender disparity in this category by 2.3%.²⁴ Within the non-Indigenous population, the LPR gender gap was higher.²⁵ Unemployment rates across all identity groups were higher among Indigenous men than with Indigenous women.²⁶

The employment indicator concludes that more Indigenous women are seeking and obtaining employment today than in previous years. There is evidence of greater gender parity within the Indigenous population compared to non-Indigenous females. The second economic indicator was income, with a focus on median employment income. The income gap between Indigenous men and women is comparable to that of the non-Indigenous population.²⁷ Relatedly, comparisons between men and women within the same industry uncovered the persistence of the income gap and

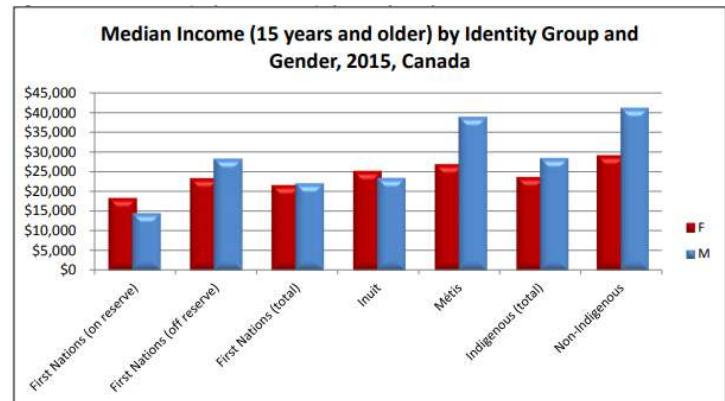


Figure 4: Median income of groups based on gender

gender-based barriers to women's economic prosperity.²⁸ For example, Indigenous men in oil, gas, and mining receive an average of \$89,000 per year, while their female counterparts earn only \$56,000 per year²⁹

Although Indigenous women earn significantly less than men, the last economic indicator, education, shows that women outperform men in the completion of both high school and university degrees, making the income gap strongly attributed to gender-based barriers.³⁰ This is where the majority of the risks become quite clear – Indigenous woman are more educated, yet earn less.

Risks

The economic costs of inequality include a reduction in productivity. This is otherwise income which can be reinvested into Indigenous communities, curtailing economic growth. Indigenous women experience constraints to equal access in education and consequently, entry into the labour force.³¹ As a natural consequence of productivity losses, Indigenous communities will suffer from significant community income losses.³² On a global scale, gender and social inequality amounts to a 16% reduction in community income.³³



Figure 5: Carol Anne Hilton, founder of the Indigenomics Institute and an advisor to business, governments, and First Nations

Research also supports benefits to economic growth and stability as evidenced by a number of factors. First and foremost, Canadian economy would see a boost in GDP by 4% due to improved productivity when Indigenous women participate in the economy.³⁴ Addressing women's economic participation also has positive implications for both improved health outcomes for women and children as well as a higher expenditure on children education; both factors support long term economic growth and by extension, economic stability.³⁵

Pursuing women's economic empowerment also has implications for bank stability.³⁶ Closing the gender gap in leadership positions within banks and bank supervision agencies results in an increase in financial institutions stability.³⁷

Mitigations

Seemingly, educated Indigenous women are in greater supply than their male counterparts. These women can contribute to both their own communities, and the economy at large. Employers should recognize this and leverage it. Education and economic participation must focus on the inclusion of Indigenous women. Firms should take greater steps to bolster education programs, which should be focused on encouraging Indigenous woman to participate in the economy. The result of this is seen clearly, as some Indigenous women have assumed strong leadership positions within organizations such as B.C. Hydro, subsequent to completing the ICD.D program at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto.³⁸

Other more entry level examples include TD Bank and other Canadian financial institutions like CPP Investments offering internship programs solely focused on bringing Indigenous talent into their organizations. To bolster Canada's economic successes, firms must first take notice of Indigenous led programs from leading firms who have already implemented such a strategy. In order to ensure successful entry into the economy, firms should engage in constructive discussions with local Indigenous communities to identify individuals who want to pursue further education in order to contribute to their local communities and economies.³⁹

Governance & Accountability

Indigenous treaty governments differ substantially from Western legislatures such as the House of Commons. Historically more consensus orientated, Indigenous treaty governments differ with respect to their political structures in comparison to Western democracies.⁴⁰ In Canada, these Indigenous treaty nations exist as semi-autonomous entities, which makes matters unique as their legislation, their own constitutions, and inimitable governance structures are specific to each treaty nation, which implies opportunities and challenges to each respective nation.⁴¹

These differences in governance provide unique challenges for Indigenous communities, as much of the economic opportunities they seek are usually in conjunction with non-Indigenous private sector actors. The broadest risk to the communities in which these governments are accountable to is transparency. Indigenous treaty governments and their elected officials sit on and are a part of operating boards, holding companies, and/or joint-venture agreements. In light of this unique overlap between government and

business, if transparency is not upheld between the two, outside organizations or citizens within the Nation may have difficulty maintain a legitimate view towards the Nation, its politicians, and their related businesses. The elected officials who occupy the governance structures both politically and economically are responsible for creating wealth to then redistribute to their own Indigenous communities, therefore transparency is key.

Risks

One potential risk is corruption. As mentioned, Indigenous corporations often use profits to reinvest in the community. Some profits are earned through partnerships with publicly traded corporations, too. If these organization have less perceived legitimacy, a misappropriation of funds could occur or the inability to continue to operate may arise.⁴² Additionally, fruitful partnerships may not come to fruition. Unique expense accounts may exist that decrease the ability to track financials. The costs of corruption extend far beyond the initial monetary loss. Reputational losses will be prevalent. This will diminish an Indigenous treaty governments and their related entity's ability to operate



Figure 6: Indigenous Self-Government (courtesy Province of British Columbia)

with other partners, such as publicly traded companies. The perception of being a bond fide entity to their greater community is required and must be handled carefully.

The reason why this is a risk is due to executive selection and compensation, which presents a challenge.⁴³ In the context of Indigenous bands, the shareholders are the communities of Citizens within the nation, who ultimately benefit from the governance structures of the Indigenous corporations working on behalf of the community. The community approach these Indigenous entities take must remain transparent. Otherwise, citizens may then perceive that non ideal candidates were selected, or worse, that they do not have any influence in the day-to-day operation of the entity. Executive compensation is very much a part of this concern. Chief Ron Giesbrecht in 2014 obtained \$839,000 in salary for a community of 82 people, which was found to be disproportionate at best.⁴⁴

Mitigations

Any mitigation must focus on increased transparency, which minimizes the risk and potential liabilities. This ultimately will benefit Indigenous treaty governments, who can leverage partnerships with other economic stakeholders as a result of increased transparency. One mitigation is for Indigenous entities to publicize their processes and records, similar to that of a publicly traded company they partner with. While some processes may be hard to publish, and others challenging to understand, this will increase external familiarity with the decision-making unique to Indigenous treaty governments. If external stakeholder confidence in Indigenous owned entities is more favourable, this is conducive to a positive business environment for all involved.

Another potential mitigation is for outside entities to invest in the Indigenous owned entity, increasing equity value in the project both tangibly and intangibly. This would reduce the need for treaty nation profits to be allocated, minimizing the chance of misappropriation and increasing the ability to redistribute funds to the community shareholders. It is likely that this mitigation would also draw significant positive press, as well as improve the condition in the Indigenous community through strengthening reconciliation efforts. However, this mitigation would require more capital and outside commitments, which requires transparency as mentioned above.

A Novel Partnership – The Public-Private-Community Model

Public-private partnerships are a form of collaboration between governments and the private sector, either involving Indigenous owned businesses or other economic stakeholders conducting business as usual. The public and private partner collaborate with each other to plan, design and construct a given project. Yet, there are risks. What if a certain partnership encroaches on the Canadian federal government reconciliation processes? Increasingly, the federal government has come to view the settlement of Indigenous claims less as a cost to society and more as a vehicle for improving Indigenous socio-economic circumstances. This however may be at odds with other business interests, looking to expand their economic footprint. However, reconciliation must be respected because it is a view long held by the Indigenous people and is integral to Canadian history, which the government has recognized as important.

Risks

Partnerships that do not involve Indigenous groups may attract concerns regarding sustainability approaches to the partnership, calling environmental sustainability into question. Indigenous community and business interests may clash, and the process may become messy for all involved. Approaches to sustaining the environment and the community at large differ between Indigenous, public, and private stakeholders. This can often paralyze or destroy the foundation of agreement that has been struck without proper consultation of an Indigenous community.

The private sector is responsible for construction costs, delays caused by labor or social disruptions and thus bears far greater risk. The fact that the private sector is financing the upfront costs of the project provides incentives for it to complete the project on time and on budget since the public-sector partner will not pay for the asset until it is substantially complete. However, intangibles remain that require analysis. Environmental degradation may mean penalties for the private sector partner⁴⁵ To mitigate risk, advance reconciliation efforts, and improve overall social license of business operators, there are some mitigations to



Figure 7: Okanagan Indian Band first Indigenous owned and operated water utility in Canada

these risks which make pragmatic sense for all involved – including Indigenous groups whose voice can be heard.

Mitigations

To hedge risk, mitigations to what were previously known as Private-Public-Partnerships can be transformed into partnerships similar to the first Indigenous owned and operated water utility in Canada, developed by way of Public-Private-Community Partnership (PPCP). For example, a formal agreement signed in December 2020 between the Okanagan Indian Band Group of Companies (OKIB GC), EPCOR and Enterprise Canada displays how this type of PPCP partnership can come to life⁴⁶.

The PPCP will identify commercial opportunities in utilities-related infrastructure, including water, wastewater and irrigation management systems, to provide quality drinking water and ensure adequate firefighting supply to serve the Okanagan Indian Band's reserve lands.⁴⁷

A PPCP takes the traditional Public-Private Partnership model, formed between governments and the private sector, and involves the impacted community or communities at the beginning of the decision-making process. This approach enables communities to directly benefit from initiatives in their



Figure 8: PM Justin Trudeau and Minister of Crown & Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett announcing newly implemented Impact Benefit Agreements with an array of First Nation Treaty governments

region as a full project partner. The OKIB GC water utility is intended to allow for skills training and employment opportunities for community members, in clear alignment with the fundamental right of self-determination for Indigenous peoples in Canada. The professional partnership will support ongoing business arrangements to further socio-economic development opportunities for the Syilx of the Okanagan Indian Band.⁴⁸

This initiative brings OKIB GC in as equal partners at the decision-making tables of mainstream corporate Canada. With shared goals, moving forward to invest in the economic and human resources development opportunities in our region and equipping our members with the necessary training to work with a utility owned and operated by our community.⁴⁹

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Figure 2: Carl Meyer, “BC Liberals Say They Would Accelerate LNG Export Projects”, Oct. 14, 2020,
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<https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/319270/Okanagan-Indian-Band-partnership-creates-first-Indigenous-owned-and-operated-water-utility-in-Canada>

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