
DESAUTELS SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK



RECONCILIATION & DECOLONIZING BUSINESS WORKSHOP

WITH JONATHON ARAUJO REDBIRD

EVENT INTRODUCTION

Welcome,

On Friday, February 19th, 2021, DSN proudly presented our Reconciliation and Decolonizing Business workshop, hosted by Jonathon Redbird.

This in-depth, interactive workshop explored topics of decolonization, reconciliation, and the power of Indigenous knowledge in today's business world, from the perspective of an Indigenous entrepreneur and youth business leader.

Jonathon Araujo Redbird, band member of Saugeen Ojibway Nation with ancestry from Wikwemikong Unceded. Jonathon has been an entrepreneur for nearly 2 decades; developing key skills in finance, corporate strategy, networking, leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Jonathon has visited over 250 Indigenous communities across Mother Earth learning and teaching on his journey. Jonathon is passionate about personal development focusing on heart, mind, body, and spirit to improve self and community.

Jonathon has completed his Master's Degree in Management, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship from Smith School of Business, Queen's University. Jonathon was awarded Entrepreneur of the Year (2019) from the Toronto Regional Board of Trade for his many developments in innovation including but not limited to: UAV Delivery Technologies; innovating supply chains within the Cannabis sector and on-reserve; and conducting the foundational work to raise \$8.2M for the City of Toronto's Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the world's largest indigenous business incubator.

Jonathon has worked with many peoples from many sectors and believed the key to success is empowering good people with strong advisors to support strategic planning that led to innovation in a good way, wisdom. Jonathon's aspiration is to support Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities in becoming the world leaders on via innovative socio-economic impact, create real equity for the people.

This event was delivered live via zoom for free, all Management/non-management McGill students were invited. Considering the workshop's interactive nature, the session was not recorded. Instead, this report has been summarized by Directors of Events, Mary Zhang and Alyssa Obrand, with Jonathon's endorsement, for future review and further learning by those who attended and not.

Regards,
Desautels Sustainability Network

SUMMARY

1 . What is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is a term that has been around for decades, but the ideas of **decolonization** and **indigenization** – even the terms themselves – are very new, and have the potential to do more than “reconciliation”. Reconciliation is difficult because it implies the redoing of conciliation, which actually did not even exist in the first place. There was **no recognition of trying to work together in harmony** with one another and the earth. Desautels/McGill has a long way to go in reconciliation/decolonization. It is discussed little in courses, and there is not even one Indigenous professor at Desautels. In truth, **all major institutions need fundamental reform**, and that is done through these types of knowledge campaigns.

In order to move forward, we need an **ally-ship that is proactive and genuine**, however the genuine aspect is what can be very difficult to arrive at. A big part of achieving this is through Indigenous people welcoming settlers/immigrants into their culture, which they are currently doing, and that is a respect to the original treaty of working together, and can show an understanding of the **symbiotic relationship** through which we are all connected.

The Crown lands in Canada should be given back. Indigenous people regaining the ability to **legally manage their own land** is the first step to genuine reconciliation. This is slowly coming into fruition with new **legislation and institutional changes**. There are many demonstrations of the capacity of Indigenous people to manage their own lands. Currently, what we have is a very paternalistic relationship, where Indigenous people have to prove their ability to manage their own lands since they were unjustly deemed “too savage” to do so before.



SUMMARY (CONT.)

2. The Indigenous Economy & Decolonizing Business.

Indigenous enterprises are just now becoming a part of the modern economy. Generally, Indigenous ways of life emphasize a symbiotic relationship with land: there is no jail, and no land ownership. It is a **community-based economy**, where no one is superior. The Indigenous economic ideology is the "**One Dish One Spoon**" Original Treaty, meaning "**One Earth One People**", where we collect and feed off of "one spoon", and we work together to enjoy Earth's bounty. When looking at the Canadian treaties that were signed with colonizers, we must ask ourselves if they were reflective of these values. Largely, the answer is no. **Indigenous leaders were manipulated** into signing the treaty under largely compromising power dynamics.

The Indigenous economy is based on "**Creativity, Romance, and Sustainability**". There is a focus on local, independently grown and harvested agriculture and "[acknowledging] the spirit of the plant, asking for its spirit to be one with the harvester, and giving gratitude to that plant spirit before harvesting". (The Three Sisters: beans, corn, and squash). As an example, we can look at the bison, deer, elk, and moose in Indigenous cultures, where every piece of the animal is used, and thanks and prayers are given to the animal's spirit. However, the **European domination** destroyed the natural flow of nature impacting the bison/deer/elk/moose food supply and Indigenous food forestry, which also provided herbal preventative medicines of food supply, and removal of Indigenous children and knowledge. Due to residential schools, Indigenous children lost the ancestral plant knowledge. Fish, bird, and animal populations have reduced more than half due to industrialization. Indigenous peoples are now dependent on persevered, boxed, canned foods and bottled beverages, run as nonprofits. This current system prevents food independence and sovereignty. Any **money does not stay in the community**. In the Anishinabeg economic cycle, there is a circular understanding of an economy that was thriving and not damaging nature. Now, we are pushing the edge of nature's limitations, and the earth is going to release "antibodies", thus climate change, the melting of the polar ice (expected to release virus far more infectious and deadly than COVID-19), etc. We need **long-term thinking over short-term profits**. We must be thinking seven generations ahead.

Decolonizing finance means that Indigenous people need **equal access** to the same pool of capital that the settler/immigrant communities have been enjoying. Prior to 2011, the First Nations Fiscal Management Act (FNFMA) was amended by implementing the Financing Secured by Other Revenues Regulations, most Indigenous communities on reserve could not collect capital and get bank loans as their land could not be used for collateral, resulting in Indigenous communities depending on private loans, which come with crippling interests that further disadvantage Indigenous peoples in our current economy. **The Indian Act** controls land, economics, money, citizenship, health care, social care, and education over First Nation and Indigenous peoples; it is managed by an agency that is separate from the federal government, but it is a Crown corporation. This violates the "**One Dish One Spoon; One Earth One Peoples**" Treaty principle. When Indigenous communities start to have access to their own land, they start to gain access to their **economic freedom and economic power** (First Nations Management Act). We must prove to banks that Indigenous people are not as risky to invest in as they think. Instead of leveraging assets, leverage cash flow to access capital, Indigenous business leaders have developed their own bond instrument, giving their communities access to financial capital.

SUMMARY (CONT.)

3 . Building "Real Equity Relations" in Government & Corporate Relations.

Providing "real equity relations" is the most crucial step to decolonizing business. Western governments/corporations always claim to "create jobs" for Indigenous communities, failing to understand that Indigenous communities don't want jobs, they want **sovereignty**, intergenerational independence sustained by **wealth creation which enables self governance**. **Real wealth is sovereignty**; with real wealth people don't live in scarcity or in fear, or abuse, like Indigenous communities currently do. Decolonizing business is about equity change, which means being given **access to the same opportunities** and to be at the same table as the shareholders of those big entities. Indigenous communities are currently the **unrecognized shareholders** of those corporate/government entities that exist/profit/operate in Indigenous territories.

There is a **dual approach** to building real equity relations: Indigenous people need access to the same economics and opportunities, but they also need to heal from 150 years of **children abuse** through residential school, and decades of "Sixties Scoop" Catholic Children Aid taking young children and adopting them to non-indigenous families to assimilate "the Indian Child". Indigenous people cannot heal while still living under scarcity and oppression. The systemic racism, poverty, and oppression continue to entrap Indigenous families in **intergenerational trauma**. To truly heal and move forward, the cycle must be broken. This starts with teaching Indigenous children real wisdom of their families and ancestors, such as life skills, intimacy, spirituality, etc. (The Medicine Wheel of Body, Mind, Heart, Spirit).

Real equity relations means giving everyone a seat at the table. This requires Indigenous people to be elevated to the same level as the individual in power, as shareholders, and then supporting Indigenous communities in investing into their traditional territories: the millions sq kms across Canada. If given the chance, Indigenous communities will invest into new ways of living merging **Indigenous pedagogy with advance technologies** to support Mother Earth and all her children. Becoming **active and recognized shareholders** in an industry does not necessarily mean Indigenous people are fully supportive of the industry's values (ex. Nuclear energy & nuclear waste). But, Indigenous groups should have a new role, with a national duty to consult.

An example of building real equity relations between settlers and Indigenous communities is in New Zealand, where a river was given legal human status. Maori also fought for control of their own citizenship, resurrecting their ancestral gynecology rights; if you can trace your ancestry to Maori ancestors you are allow to request Maori Citizenship. Their goal to **"make New Zealand Maori again"**; for Maori culture be prominent- a statement of collaboration, openness and inclusivity.

The western world's gift was **speed**, to quickly develop and expand. The Indigenous world's gift was deliberation to slowly and carefully think or talk something through to make a conscious, well-thought decision, considering all of creations. Now that we are at the brinks of **AI, Automation, and Corporate Surveillance** - It is time for Humans to learn from the Butterfly. Do we take a minute to become the chrysalis, to pause and reflect then become the butterfly, sensitive, beautiful, and free? That is the essence of decolonization.



SUMMARY (CONT.)

4. The Future City.

The current trend we live in is of **one dominating the masses**– designed for speed, however not designed to enable multiple perspectives– such as the big, centralized tech firms. The current economy model of extreme capitalism has taken us out of the circular cycle of nature that we ought to live with. As business leaders, we need to go back to nature and take the knowledge that Mother Earth has given us what we need and provides for us. **Regenerative capitalism** means that instead of continuing to support the power rankings of wealth, we move our economic systems to circular economies. Local economies must be locally secure for Indigenous peoples to efficiently trade and engage with other communities. We cannot go back in time, and we have gone down this path for a reason, but we are now at a crossroad: we can continue the path to the 6th Mass Extinction or or take the best of what we have and create a new path. **The Anishinabeg Prophecy of the Crossroad** says that we are coming to a crossroad, where the Western philosophy is the apocalyptic view, and it's up to the Indigenous peoples to rise up out of near extinction and lead us out of it.

There are four stages of the Medicine Wheel in Indigenous wisdom. In the first there is no awareness, nor competency, In the second stage, we gain awareness but we still have no competency, which is where we are right now. It takes **a breakthrough of awareness and competency**, which will depend on local economies that will create sustainability and sovereignty. We need to move away from high-density areas and expand out. Humans are naturally drawn towards one another and to nature. **The future city is sovereign**: we gain our own energy, deal with our own waste, have our own resources and have a local community (The New Economy). For example, this may mean investing in crops rather than gold. We will have to use business to create the future city and the future society to elevate knowledge.

5. What Can We Do as Individuals?

We must try to **connect with Indigenous people** and have conversations, like this workshop.

However, a lot of Indigenous people have yet to recover from trauma and can make it extremely hard to form a connection. There is a great deal of intergenerational trauma, dating back to John A. MacDonald's mission to "kill the Indian in the child". However, you can't kill the "Indian" within someone, that identity always remains. The Canadian government instead abused the child and took them away from their family until there was no child left, through the atrocities of the **residential school system and the child welfare system/foster homes**. Our gift as humans is that we can **create and innovate**, and we need to use that. Jonathon's final recommendation is to find the people who have recovered from their trauma, have conversations, and **build a team** to solve problems together. We should always start with small problems, and build the resources to scale up to larger issues.

MORE RESOURCES

Books:

- **21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act**
by Bob Joseph
- **Price Paid The Fight for First Nations Survival**
by Bev Sellars
- **The Inconvenient Indian**
by Thomas King
- **First Peoples in Canada**
by Alan McMillan & Eldon Yellowhorn
- **Our Story**
by Various Indigenous Authors



Videos:

- **The Other Side of the Ledger: An Indian View of The Hudson's Bay Company**
https://www.nfb.ca/film/other_side_of_the_ledger/
- **PowWow at Duck Lake**
https://www.nfb.ca/film/powwow_at_duck_lake/
- **Encounter with Saul Alinsky - Part 2: Rama Indian Reserve**
https://www.nfb.ca/film/encounter_with_saul_alinsky/
- **Native America**
https://www.primevideo.com/detail/OMRX6RDS7CQRP29MXTG5ZXT7T9/ref=atv_sr_def_c_unkc_1_1_1?sr=1-1&pageTypeldSource=ASIN&pageTypeld=B07QR7WCMK&qid=16173_1_8013
- **MIT: In Conversation with Dr. Duke Redbird (Grandfather of our speaker, Jonathon Redbird)**
<https://youtu.be/TqjKF6ZAGBA>

Websites

- **It's Our Time Education Toolkit: Residential Schools**
<https://education.afn.ca/afntoolkit/learning-module/residential-schools>
- **Indigenous Foundations: The Indian Act**
https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/

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