

# ESG: Indigenous Perspectives

What We Heard

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I certify that the work described herein fulfills the standards expected of a member of the Association of British Columbia Forest Professionals and that I did personally supervise the work.



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## Executive Summary

### Objective

The objective of this research was to provide early inclusion from Indigenous perspectives to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives underway by industry and government in British Columbia. This research will:

- 1) Provide initial input from Indigenous perspectives to help inform provincial ESG strategies moving forwards, and
- 2) Amplify work undertaken by Indigenous organizations regarding ESG.

This report provides a summary of what we heard from the information and perspectives gathered. It results in a number of conclusions and next steps that industry and government need to incorporate in ESG initiatives moving forwards.

**The research in this report constitutes initial feedback from Indigenous participants who shared their personal perspectives. It does not represent the entirety of the Indigenous Peoples' residing in British Columbia.**

This project was initiated and funded by the Construction Foundation of British Columbia (CFBC), a charity whose mandate includes research. Other projects conducted by CFBC have concluded increasing interest in ESG and ESG values. CFBC was assisted by Two Eyed Seeing Consulting CCC Inc. (TESCI), a majority Indigenous-owned company with expertise in working with Indigenous people, that conducted surveys, gathered information, and produced this report.

### Methodology

The research methodology uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model to gather information, as well as defining ethics and guiding principles to do so (e.g., principles outlined by Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession or OCAP™).

TESCI gathered information into a literature review, from Comprehensive Community Plans (CCPs), an online survey, and one-on-one key informant interviews. The project was guided by an advisory group of Indigenous leaders, citizens, and youth who provided additional context on the primary and secondary research findings and contributed their knowledge and experience through a series of sharing circle dialogue sessions.

### Project Components

Current and future perspectives about ESG within an Indigenous context were gathered throughout the course of this project. The literature review provided context from examples of work that have been completed by Indigenous organizations. Qualitative and quantitative data were generated by the surveys, key informant interviews, and the review of Comprehensive Community Plans.

## Key Takeaways

The research informed eight key takeaways:

- 1) **Economic Advantages of Inclusion.** If Indigenous and western perspectives work collaboratively, Carol Ann Hilton's \$30 billion vision moves closer to reality. Working together and establishing a trusting reciprocal relationship will build an attractive environment for investors. It brings Indigenous people closer to economic reconciliation and if international examples are replicated then it offers an opportunity to increase the prosperity of all people who live on this part of Turtle Island.
- 2) **Early Engagement** is key to the success of ESG in British Columbia. By planning and implementing ESG strategies together, ESG stands a greater chance of working. Government should not devise an approach for a Nation and look for input; instead government needs to treat the Indigenous community as an equal. There will not be an easy one-size-fits-all approach to implementing ESG, rather early engagement provides the opportunity to tailor ESG protocols and engagement to individual Nations.
- 3) **Different Perspectives.** Western perspectives about ESG may be different when compared to Indigenous perspectives. The definition of ESG according to western entities (e.g., industry and government) determines a narrow focus on encouraging investment and the marketing of goods and services. ESG according to Indigenous governments may have a wider scope which will include economic benefits, but also include a holistic way of co-existing with the values that have been held by Indigenous communities for thousands of years.
- 4) **Understanding Indigenous Culture, Values and Protocol.** Indigenous people have been ESG investing for years. However, there seems to be a lack of understanding how Indigenous values and protocols can be included when applying ESG principles. In this instance the Two-Eyed Seeing approach can be applied to bring the western and Indigenous worldviews together. From an Indigenous perspective, it is imperative that government and industry listen and learn to understand how Indigenous peoples' [have a holistic connection to the land](#); one that needs to survive.
- 5) **Community Relationship Building and Partnership.** Nations need relationships to be in place before any engagement occurs on government policy and regulations or infrastructure and resource development projects. Improved relationships may lead to economic improvements for communities which in turn could result in reducing the high levels of poverty, suicide, domestic violence or incarceration that have resulted from the intergenerational trauma of colonization. Overall, a partnership is about acknowledging the opportunity of how Indigenous communities can contribute to building British Columbia's economy through applying the articles of UNDRIP and educating decision-makers about Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Most notably, recognizing one voice does not represent all Indigenous perspectives in the ESG realm of doing business.
- 6) **Governance Framework and Co-Management** frameworks are required to share governance effectively. The frameworks need to be developed together, in collaboration and with realizing different Indigenous groups are at different levels of maturity. Creating frameworks now will help lead to shared decision-making from which projects progress. In these decisions, Leadership, Elders, and community all need to be engaged and enable equal participation. If using this model, workable solutions can be determined together if projects face challenges.
- 7) **ESG Education and Capacity Building** to understand ESG, is required for both Indigenous and settler communities in British Columbia. ESG is a new term to most people, although most people understand the environmental and social aspects, and have been practicing these albeit

without being under the banner of ESG. The governance aspect is the least understood and will need work to be fully understood and implemented. In this respect, capacity in Indigenous governments is often stretched; to lessen these effects, government and industry can provide support with funding or other tools.

- 8) Input and Engagement** was difficult over the course of the project. Despite best efforts, the project team found it very difficult to engage with Indigenous people. This is likely due to a number of factors: lack of familiarity with the ESG term, communities have more important issues to deal with, and that communities are short-staffed. To overcome this, engagement needs to be appropriately timed; the end of summer tends to be hunting and/or fishing season, where most (but not all) Indigenous citizens are gathering food. Previously established relationships can be important and useful to establish contacts in communities. Financial incentives help to encourage responses to surveys, and honoraria should be provided to anyone from a community providing information. Given this experience, the provincial government will need to find unique ways to engage and will need to pay careful attention to timing and process. If the government is serious about ESG, it should direct funds into staffing to create dedicated positions to working with Indigenous communities on ESG.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

ESG stands to provide more than opportunity for responsible development; however, it will be critical to fully involve Indigenous communities and to establish partnerships amongst industry, government, and Indigenous Nations to realize this vision. If done well, this stands to create prosperity for all people who live in the area now known as British Columbia.

To begin establishing ESG strategies the provincial government needs to listen to and include traditional knowledge in land management activities. Indigenous communities have a great depth of traditional knowledge and history from interacting and co-existing with the land, built on thousands of years of experience. Government and settler communities need to then learn to co-exist with the lands and resources, rather than manage and use the land for singular purposes (e.g., resource extraction).

There is a lot of work to do in elevating ESG practices in British Columbia while creating a more inclusive process. Below are several concrete steps that government and industry could incorporate into strategies to move ESG forwards. These include:

- **Realize the potential of ESG:** ESG is far more than a way to market products and attract investment. Through ESG, an opportunity is presented for Indigenous people to be fully included in the economy, and by industry and government working with Indigenous communities, has the potential to benefit all people living in the province. Government needs to ensure the full potential of ESG is being realized in the context of collaborating on an equal footing with Indigenous communities.
- **Engage now:** Early engagement is key to success of ESG. If Indigenous people are included as partners and decision makers in the development of ESG, that momentum can help ESG gain traction in British Columbia and lead to more effective and efficient implementation and economic performance. Government is going to have to be willing to work collaboratively, rather than provide a mandate and expect Indigenous communities to work within it. Part of the engagement should include funding for Nations to lead this work with the government.
- **Educate on ESG:** Some Indigenous organizations are willing to engage on ESG now, while others face substantial capacity and/or bandwidth barriers that would limit their ability to engage. Early education and capacity support may spur participation, especially if the

government demonstrates it is willing to listen to Indigenous voices and take a shared approach to establishing ESG strategies.

- **Form meaningful and trusting relationships:** Government and industry need to engage with Indigenous communities and form relationships where decisions can be made together. These relationships need to be formed on the basis of collaboration and equal power in decision-making, while respectfully recognizing and finding solutions to differences between Indigenous and western perspectives. Government must also acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all approach is not going to work for ESG.
- **Value different perspectives:** Government and industry need to acknowledge that Indigenous communities may hold different perspectives or prioritize values differently from each other. These may conflict with western perspectives, and while different, are not wrong. The key to conflict resolution is to determine workable solutions in a respectful manner.
- **Utilize traditional knowledge:** Government and industry need to rely on the knowledge within Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities have co-existed for centuries alongside and interacted with the land in a sustainable manner. Government and industry would do well to acknowledge the wisdom held has been passed down through generations. Western science can be used in collaboration with traditional knowledge, and this collective will likely hold the key to a sustainable future.
- **Learn current capacity and bandwidth of communities:** Each community will have different capacity and bandwidth in the number of staff they have, the extent to which their traditional knowledge is known, the advances Nations have made in particular areas, the data they have available, among many other aspects. Government and industry need to learn what the capacity and bandwidth of each Nation is and determine how best to support those communities, sharing resources to bridge inequities.
- **Support capacity either from outside or from within:** Government and industry have an opportunity to support Nations. Sometimes funding is not enough, industry or government support within a community could also be a viable option, gathering wise practices from other Nations and sharing process and resources to enable greater engagement.

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# Introduction

## Background

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) is an approach for investors to ensure their projects are fiscally and socially responsible, and appropriately governed. Government and industry have started to adopt ESG. Some industries have adopted ESG more readily and are using ESG to demonstrate good practices. In 2021 the British Columbia Business Council produced a primer to facilitate discussion about ESG (British Columbia Business Council 2021a). Also, in 2022 the provincial government released the StrongerBC Economic Plan that describes how ESG may be included at the provincial level (British Columbia 2022a).

ESG is designed to help British Columbians develop, promote, and market environmentally and socially responsible goods and services. Currently a universally recognized standard or framework - whether Canadian or British Columbian, is required to be applied by business and regulatory bodies.

Indigenous perspectives are required to inform ESG standards and practices and are fundamental if ESG was successful in British Columbia. Inclusive ESG standards and practices benefit Indigenous communities and their connection to the land and provide significant value to other entities - be it businesses, governments or the general population, as environmental and social sustainability become more and more of the priority to fight global climate change and to protect the environment for those generations yet to come.

To raise awareness of Indigenous perspectives for ESG, the Construction Foundation of British Columbia (CFBC) initiated this research project. CFBC is independent from both the Government of British Columbia and the Federal Government of Canada. CFBC self-initiated this research after recognizing the need for early input from Indigenous perspectives into provincial ESG initiatives and strategies.

As such, research to gather Indigenous perspectives on ESG was conducted over the course of several months in 2022. And while this work does not speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples, it does provide an Indigenous lens that, we hope, will help to inform, and ultimately shape, the provincewide ESG implementation in government and industry; thereby ensuring Indigenous ways of knowing are not only incorporated, but that further Indigenous input, knowledge and collaboration help to inform and strengthen provincial ESG standards and ensure diversity and inclusion.

The research conducted is summarized in this report. It is provided over several sections, including methods used, defining ESG, providing an overview of what we heard, and then summarizes that in themes, and draws conclusions.

## ESG Centre of Excellence

In the Stronger BC report (British Columbia 2022a), provincial government committed to develop an ESG Centre of Excellence ('the Centre'). The Centre will "facilitate ESG investments in B.C., to attract socially and environmentally conscious investors, and diversify markets for B.C.'s world-class goods and services under a respected and trustworthy ESG brand." This will support long-term growth for British Columbia's good and services.

The ESG Centre of Excellence will deliver voluntary and accessible services to ensure ESG does not provide additional burden to businesses (especially small and medium-sized enterprises). The Centre could support British Columbia-based companies to optimize their business and market their competitive advantage globally. The Centre could also equip businesses with the knowledge, tools and networks required to sustain an ESG strategy and reporting. International interests for export and investment will also find a single window to access ESG resources and data.

The intended audience for the content, conclusions, and next steps in this report are for government (and industry), rather than the Centre.

## Objective

The objective of this research was to provide early inclusion from Indigenous perspectives to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives underway by industry and government in British Columbia. This research will:

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- 2) Amplify work undertaken by Indigenous organizations regarding ESG.

This report provides a summary of what we heard from the information and perspectives gathered. It results in a number of conclusions and next steps that industry and government need to incorporate in ESG initiatives moving forwards.

**The research in this report constitutes initial feedback from Indigenous participants who shared their personal perspectives. It does not represent the entirety of the Indigenous Peoples' residing in British Columbia, and should only be seen as a guide to further and deepen conversations with Indigenous peoples and populations within British Columbia.**

## Methods

To initiate the project, CFBC retained the services of Two Eyed Seeing Consulting CCC Inc. (TESCI), a majority Indigenous-owned company. TESCI employs Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, each of whom have extensive experience working with Indigenous communities and with ESG. TESCI provided a research methodology, established an advisory team to guide the project, conducted a literature review, and gathered information from a survey and through key informant interviews.

The research methodology uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model to gather information, as well as defining ethics and guiding principles to do so (e.g., principles outlined by Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession or OCAP™). The methodology provided a research framework to guide the project team to achieve the research objective. This consisted of ensuring that information was gathered from a range of sources including Indigenous citizens, business owners, and leaders. Through participatory action, this method defined the target audience of the survey and key informant interviews, described the survey and interview design, and provided overarching research questions. The methodology also defined how the data collected would be used, provided limitations, and anticipated outcomes.

## Literature Review

To initiate the project, TESCI completed a literature review to determine work that had already been undertaken by Indigenous organizations and communities relating to ESG. This collated technical reports, news articles, and information from podcasts. Work began with a review of literature published by Indigenous organizations in British Columbia and Canada. The review also examined information about ESG strategies from other countries with Indigenous populations (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, United States of America, etc.). The report served as a baseline for the project team on which key informant interview and survey questions were based, and also provided a list of possible interviewees.

## Sharing Circle - Advisory

During the work for the literature review an advisory team was formed to guide the project. The team was composed of Indigenous organizations, leaders, and members of Indigenous communities. The advisory group and project team gathered in a virtual 'Sharing Circle' twice over the course of the work to provide guidance and direction for the research and research questions, share knowledge and perspective on the project, and to give input. In the first meeting the advisory team was provided an overview of the project; they were asked about how they might define ESG, asked for wise practices currently used, and how Indigenous voices can be amplified when working with government. Input generated through these Sharing Circles informed how the project team framed questions for the interviews and survey. In the second meeting preliminary results from the survey and key informant interviews were provided to gather feedback and discuss validation of the findings. TESCI used a graphic recorder to draw an interpretation of the responses heard at both meetings.

## Survey and Key Informant Interviews

A survey and several key informant interviews were also conducted. Collectively these sought to gather initial Indigenous perspectives about ESG and validate findings determined from the literature review. The survey was intended to gather perspectives from a broad cross-section of Indigenous citizens to deepen the understanding of the values and priorities and engage a wider participatory engagement in the discourse about ESG. The key informant interviews were determined to create a balance from a diverse set of representatives - consideration for gender representation, inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, and regional representation was a part of the research design. A standard interview guide was created from which interview transcripts were created.

TESCI also conducted a review of Comprehensive Community Plans (CCPs) to determine community-level objectives and goals in the plans that are directly related to ESG. This provided insight into how Indigenous communities set objectives and goals for values identified through a planning process

(Indigenous Services Canada 2021). These can be quite different from the values settler communities hold. For the purpose of this project, Comprehensive Community Plans from 15 Indigenous communities from across British Columbia were investigated to determine how the goals and objectives in these plans align with ESG values.

## What We Heard

Current and future perspectives about ESG within an Indigenous lens were gathered throughout the course of this project. This section summarizes input from each of the components of the project and provides context to the Key Takeaways and Next Steps. The literature review provided context from examples of work that have been completed by Indigenous organizations. Qualitative and quantitative data were generated by the surveys, key informant interviews, and the review of Comprehensive Community Plans. The results are summarized and presented below.

### Literature Review

#### *What Does ESG Mean?*

ESG by its current definition is a western term, is relatively new to most people, and not well understood. It is yet another strategy that is being promised; the government needs to work to define ESG to accomplish ESG+I (Indigenous perspectives and values). Early engagement to establish objectives and goals for ESG in collaboration with Indigenous communities will likely be more successful than introducing a government-led definition of ESG.

Questions may be raised about whether ESG is required at all. Indigenous communities and businesses have a great depth of traditional knowledge and history from interacting with the land for thousands of years, by only taking what is needed and working with the land. Provincial government and industry needs to listen to, and include, traditional knowledge in their activities and integrate this within ESG metrics and reporting.

The government needs also to determine who ESG is being designed for. The current definition appears to be that of attracting investors to British Columbia; however, there is greater opportunity in ESG. It could be used for government and industry to collaborate effectively and meaningfully with Indigenous people but only if Indigenous peoples are included as partners and decision makers in the design of ESG. In doing so environmental, economic, social, and cultural values could be improved for all the Citizens of British Columbia.

### Defining ESG

ESG is relatively new and still evolving in British Columbia, and also has broad application meaning that a single definition is difficult to determine. An initial definition was determined from literature mostly produced by non-Indigenous organizations. ESG refers to three central values in measuring the sustainability and societal impact of a company or business. The factors each address key issues:

- Environmental: how environmental risks are managed across the supply chain and in direct operations including, but not limited to climate change, water quality, land use, and animal [preservation](#);
- Social: how relationships are managed with employees, suppliers, customers, and communities. Also considered are human rights, community consent, consumer relations, diversity and inclusion, and health and safety; and,

- Governance: assesses a company's leadership, reporting, and board structures. These include, but are not limited to, executive pay, board representation and systems/structures to mitigate discrimination, bribery and corruption.

These are increasingly considered important to industry operating values equal to, or of greater importance, than profit (First Nations Major Project Coalition 2021a; West Moberly Corporate Alliance 2022).

These core values help industry and government navigate and balance the benefits to the planet, people, and profit. These values provide a set of standards for a company's operations that socially conscious investors use to screen potential investments and evaluate a firm's collective conscientiousness for social and environmental factors (Centre for Training Excellence in Mining 2022).

The landscape around ESG values and requirements is evolving quickly. Industry needs to balance economics (revenues and profits) with social and environmental impacts and the evolving needs and demands of workers and Indigenous citizens. In order to be successful, work is required to create clarity about what ESG means and consider each of the aspects as equally important. For example, the social factor is often overlooked in favour of environmental and governance factors. While considering the balance of each, additional work is required to create a holistic view, without placing ESG values into silos (Centre for Training Excellence in Mining 2022).

In this work, industry, government, and ESG regulatory bodies can acknowledge under-represented skills that may be used to inform ESG values. For example, traditional Indigenous skills (e.g., trapping, fishing, and hunting) can be aligned with the environmental and social stewardship movement. These traditional skills provide both a high level of essential skills that should always be valued; working safely with equipment, troubleshooting, and adapting to the environment, while also emphasizing the significance and importance of environment and community (Centre for Training Excellence in Mining 2022).

## Different Perspectives

Both the StrongerBC Economic Plan and the definition from the literature review are for the majority western. Part of the ESG project set out to determine Indigenous perspectives for ESG. Carol Anne Hilton wrote *Indigenomics: Taking a Seat at the Economic Table* (Hilton 2021). In the book, she used a quote by David Suzuki to provide an example of Indigenous perspectives of the land and how it is valued from an Indigenous perspective:

*“The way we see the world shapes the way we treat it. If a mountain is a deity, not a pile of ore; if a river is one of the veins of the land, not potential irrigation water; if the forest is a sacred grove, not timber; if other species are biological kin, not resources; or if the planet is our mother, not an opportunity – then we will treat each other with greater respect. Thus, the challenge is to look at the world from a different perspective.”<sup>1</sup>*

A second quote provided during this project, while more economic focused, provided a different perspective than that of the typical western view. This was:

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<sup>1</sup> Hilton (2021).

*“First Nations have never operated in a western worldview of definition of wealth. Wealth to us is shelter, food, our family. If we have those things, we are wealthy. How do we bring this together and make moves to honor what we see as wealth for First Nations?”<sup>2</sup>*

In both these quotes, the perspectives move beyond a simple definition of market services and products. These draw attention to differences between western and Indigenous perspectives and the values held by each. Indigenous people want to have opportunities to go hunting, fishing, to preserve cultural knowledge and support their families in this generation and for many generations into the future, but also require equal inclusion to the economy of what is now known as Canada.

Indigenous people were co-existing with the land and were able to subsist with the lands and resources, had established social structures, and generated an economy long before settlers arrived. Government needs to look to Indigenous people to lead land management, rather than the government making policy and process and asking for input.

### Advantages of Indigenous Inclusion in ESG

Equal inclusion was provided for in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. Call to Action 92 includes economic reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015). This includes:

- 1) meaningful consultation, to build respectful relationships, and to obtain the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before developing projects; and,
- 2) that Indigenous people have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

Economic reconciliation will offer the opportunity for Indigenous people to re-establish an economy and to have equal opportunity to their settler counterparts. In fact, Indigenous inclusion is predicted to offer a \$30 billion addition to the economy (Hilton 2021). Other countries with an Indigenous population have reported increased economic growth based on including Indigenous values. In Australia, Deloitte (2014) predicted that through Indigenous inclusion the Australian economy was predicted to experience a gain of approximately \$24 billion (in 2014). For example, Aotearoa (otherwise known as New Zealand) has been home to Māori for over 1000 years, after arriving from Hawaiki (100% New Zealand 2022). Māori people represent 17.1% of the population (Stats NZ 2021) with a 2.4% increase between 2020 and 2022 (Stats NZ 2022). New Zealand law acknowledges Māori language by including Māori words in legislation. Māori culture has also been promoted by the New Zealand government to build the tourism economy, helping to build over 500 Māori businesses (NZ Māori Tourism He Toa Taiktini 2020).

By including Indigenous perspectives in ESG, otherwise known as ESG+I, economic growth is likely for everyone. Current opposition to projects and lack of confidence in government by Indigenous people is preventing both from fully participating in that economy. Foreign companies and/or investors could become reluctant to invest in the province if continued project opposition is experienced. British Columbia has the opportunity to be an attractive place to invest, with an already low carbon economy and legislation in place to support Indigenous peoples. Together Indigenous people, proponents,

<sup>2</sup> Key informant interviewee

and government can all make British Columbia a desirable place to invest by offering certainty for investors who will look for returns and safety, not challenged by risk (Business Council of British Columbia 2021b).

First Nations have watched natural resource extraction and construction occur on traditional lands and want to control the way that occurs and be integrated with the economy (Public Policy Forum 2021). Indigenous people have proven to be highly resilient in the face of economic exclusion. What is needed is an improved economic framework to build a new story from; one that is inclusive, includes reconciliation and that provides tangible growth in the Canadian context (Financial Post 2021).

Space needs to be created for Indigenous business in British Columbia's economy. Structure and tools to overcome barriers and limitations need to be established to ensure Indigenous economic strength. Rather than relying on hand-outs like impact management and benefit agreements, Indigenous people could instead be offered to be involved in a more substantive way through partnerships or ownership equity (British Columbia Business Council 2021c). Through this, Indigenous people become fully involved in projects and at the same time opposition to the project declines (albeit a community may have to discuss projects with its citizens or among its neighbours).

Most Indigenous organizations cannot access capital funds, so have a very difficult time generating funds to become part of a project. Despite this distinct barrier, Indigenous people are starting to be more involved in the economy. For example: Nisga'a Nation is in the preliminary stages of construction on their own Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline - [Ksi Lisims](#). Also, Tahltan own 5% of all run-of-river projects in the Golden Triangle<sup>3</sup>. In addition, many First Nations are becoming involved in [clean energy projects](#) including: solar, hydroelectric, wind, biomass, transmission, and energy efficiency, among others. Furthermore, initiatives to build a green economy for Indigenous communities are underway in Canada (Environmental Journal 2022).

## ESG Standards

ESG standards are typically set by investors for investors, and while some are genuinely working with Indigenous communities, some are looking to get a check mark in a box in their ESG report or using ESG as a tool to confirm project compliance with a standard.

ESG standards currently in place have been criticized because the term 'Indigenous' has been introduced as an impact value to be measured (e.g., how much displacement or how many people live under social assistance) and not as part of the overall framework/design. This has the danger of reducing Indigenous values and input to little more than a checkbox exercise that will mean little to Indigenous people who are being measured.

Furthermore, many ESG standards have been created. So much so that work is being undertaken to consolidate standards. This in itself is a point of confusion for Indigenous and settler communities alike; it can be difficult to work out what is included in the standard and how this applies to the work being undertaken. If the standards come from a foreign country the standard may not have involved consultation with Indigenous people, which then represents future risk. For example, one standard

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<sup>3</sup> The Golden Triangle describes a mineral region in northern British Columbia, between Terrace, Dease Lake, and Stewart: <https://digigeodata.com/area/golden-triangle/>.

only considered Indigenous peoples concerns material if the Indigenous people entered into a court case (Business Council of British Columbia 2021c). This approach is not good for the economy, the proponent, or the First Nation.

Many industries talk about ESG, offering it as a way to demonstrate they have worked with Indigenous communities. However, there is little uptake and First Nations have candidly spoken about the lack of input they have had in ESG in British Columbia or in standards used for projects proposed in the province (Business Council of British Columbia 2021c). Indigenous communities host projects and are concerned about the lack of Indigenous involvement and how project proponents have worked with Indigenous people. This level of Indigenous input and lack of confidence represent significant risk to projects.

This provides a false sense of security for investors as fulsome input from Indigenous communities and peoples may not be integrated to include both western and Indigenous world views. Furthermore, there are multiple standards, some of which do not align with the interests and rights of Indigenous people. These standards are being amalgamated by the World Economic Forum and IFRS, again without any Indigenous input.

Noticeably, in many of the reports reviewed in the literature review, only a few mentioned Indigenous values and working with Indigenous people. And, when mentioned, was typically infrequent or was overshadowed by other topics. There was also no mention of Indigenous involvement in the design of the reporting. This will need to change in the future, to bring the I into ESG for a framework that truly provides the kind of assurance investors and others are looking for. Once established, British Columbia in conjunction with Indigenous people, should create ESG action plans (similar to those produced by Closing the Gap in Australia; Closing the Gap 2022) or policies created with communities to support the implementation of ESG strategies.

Some Indigenous communities and organizations have established protocols for proponents to follow when considering implementing projects. These should be included in an ESG standard. These include:

1. Tahltan protocols;
2. West Moberly Corporate Alliance has established an ESG strategy (West Moberly Corporate Alliance 2021); and,
3. Ross River Dene First Nation has established a cultural orientation and protocols (Council of Yukon First Nations 2015).

The conversation about ESG standards needs to be started between Indigenous communities and government and industry. There are common values that need to be identified, so that the work completed to date is not disregarded. However, industry and the government need to recognize that the value systems held by Indigenous people contain differences. Work will be required to identify and understand these and then work together to develop standards. Furthermore, some communities are further ahead in using ESG than others. Government and industry will need to be flexible and prepare to use a dynamic approach when working with Indigenous communities.



## Sharing Circle Meetings

The purpose of the Sharing Circle was to provide input on ESG values and to provide possible connections to other potential respondents to share their perspective.

Two Sharing Circle meetings were held on 8 August 2022 and 4 October 2022. Meetings were conducted via videoconferencing. At the first meeting, 9 participants attended, plus the project team (including facilitators and note takers) as well as a graphic recording artist. The second meeting was less well attended as previous participants were unavailable, although it consisted of 7 participants plus the project team and graphic recording artist. For each meeting honoraria was provided for those who attended.

The first meeting had a set agenda although no accompanying slide deck, instead the project goals and other information was provided verbally. The project team devised a series of questions to lead the discussion and added sub-questions to generate and lead further discussion.

At the second meeting the project team presented a summary of the surveys and key informant interviews conducted to date. This meeting served as a validation of this information, and to determine strategies to encourage greater participation. The meeting was conducted with a slide deck which helped to guide discussion.

The graphic recording artist took notes on a shared screen and produced one graphic recording for the first meeting (Figure 1) and another for the second meeting (Figure 2). These were shared after the meeting with those who attended, and revisions made based on feedback received.

The graphics are a representation of the discussions held during both Sharing Circle meetings. Some of the key points the graphics represent include:

- Put the “I” in ESG. Indigenous perspectives on ESG must be included – not as stakeholders, but as equal partners; make the circle bigger to include multiple perspectives, focus on coming closer together, and collectively determine the roles that each party can play.
- Relationships must be intentional, transparent, and informed by the legacies of colonialism and racism.
- Indigenous voices have a unique gift; there is a close and long-standing connection with the land. Incorporating this knowledge must be more than simply fitting/conforming into a western body of knowledge. This is too narrow.
- Create a structure for working together and sharing information both ways; this will support informed decision making, based on common values. Develop concrete steps to give life to the structure created.
- Establish ESG protocols early on – incorporate traditional knowledge, define what is meant by Indigenous perspectives, collect, and share information. This may mean deconstructing what has already been created.
- Working together starts at the very early stages. It begins with individual communities. And it begins with intentional and honest conversations between government, industry, and communities.

Sharing Circle participants offered input based on their lived experience from either working with government or industry to ensure that membership is included in the decision-making process when

it comes to approving projects within their Traditional Territory. However, this may not always be the case. Diverse perspectives included the inequities of accessing government funding if members are residing in an urban, remote, or rural location; domestic or foreign investors believe Indigenous voices are not important, government programs or services are limited especially when designed as a check-box exercise; and Indigenous communities are different with varying degrees of capacity.

To truly incorporate Indigenous voices and perspectives into ESG initiatives and strategies the government needs to start the conversation with all Indigenous groups and industry to fully understand the common and different value systems. This approach will lead to the co-creation of ESG Principles making British Columbia even more of a leader. So often, Indigenous voices and perspectives are an afterthought - particularly when the government is designing and implementing new programs and services. Key points brought forward by Sharing Circle participants included:

- Consider how ESG is applied today affects the next 7 Generations
- Support Nations with developing internal communication systems to create efficiencies that can expedite the community decision-making process
- Support Nations with gathering Traditional Knowledge from their Elders to incorporate into databases of other forms. Data can be used to support Land Use Plans and setting the Boundaries for Protected Areas. Historically, gathering and storing data has been challenging
- Support Nations to systematically scale-up their operations
- Share information in ways that everyone in the community can understand, as membership are the ultimate decision-makers

## Surveys

The survey was completed in two iterations - totaling 23 usable responses. The first iteration was sent out on 22 August 2022; it consisted of an introduction about ESG and the purpose of the survey, with 11 questions plus an additional question asking whether the respondent wanted more information about the project. The survey link was sent to the Sharing Circle advisory committee for dissemination and also shared by the project team on social media (e.g., LinkedIn), and CFBC's website.

By September 21, 2022, the survey received 15 responses, 6 of which were not useable as the respondents did not complete the survey past initial questions about gender, location, and ethnicity. The remaining respondents answered these questions and also gave responses to 5 multiple choice questions and 6 open ended questions.

TESCI worked with the Sharing Circle advisory committee to determine strategies to elicit further responses. Suggestions included:

- to reduce the reliance on describing ESG in the introduction as it is not a well understood term and could reduce respondent confidence to complete the survey. The wording was reduced and made more conversational in order to attract more respondents.
- to provide incentive to complete the survey. Wording was added to the introduction offering a prize draw for a \$100 VISA gift card to a single respondent.
- reducing the number of open-ended questions. Two open-ended questions were removed from the survey.



Figure 1: Infographic from Sharing Circle meeting 1

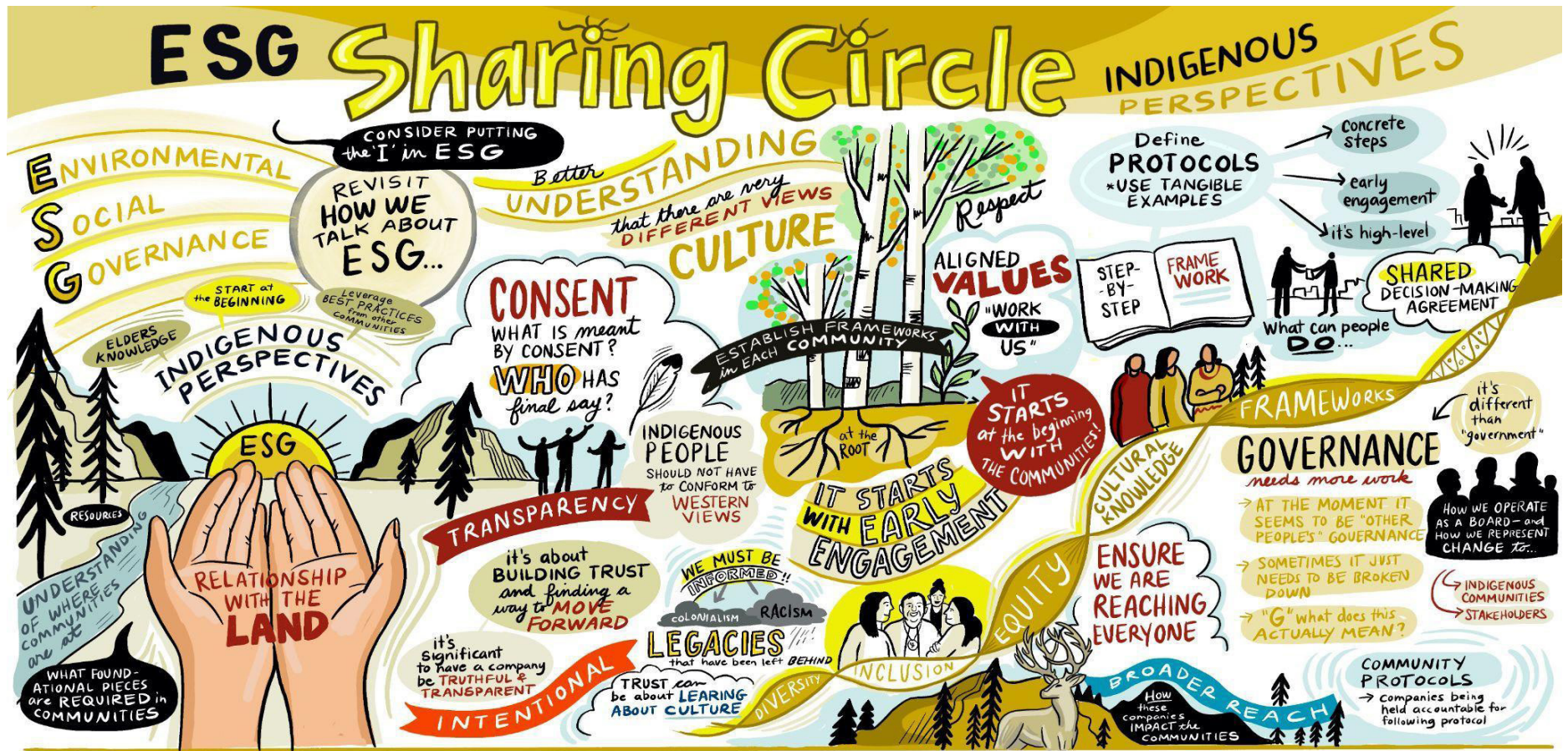


Figure 2: Infographic from Sharing Circle meeting 2

The second iteration of the survey was sent out at the beginning of October, it was readvertised on social media, CFBC’s website, and sent out to the Sharing Circle in an attempt to generate more responses. By November 15, 2022, 207 responses were received. However, most of these were removed after checking phone numbers provided, IP addresses, and from removing duplicates. Area codes for phone numbers and IP addresses showed the majority of the responses had a foreign origin in the US, China, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. This reduced the total number of usable responses to 23 (including from the first iteration of the survey).

The compilation of the multiple-choice questions are provided below. The open-ended responses form part of the sections later of this report.

The survey first gathered baseline information about the respondents, 12 identified as men, 9 identified as women, and 1 respondent did not gender identify (Figure 2). The respondents were mostly under 44 years of age, where over one-third of the responses were between 25 to 34 years of age. Seven of the respondents were over 45 years of age. One person chose not to respond to the question (Figure 3). The majority (almost 70%) of the respondents identified as First Nations, with 5 responses identifying as non-Indigenous (Figure 4). The majority of respondents were located on the North Coast (Figure 5). Otherwise, responses were received from across each region of British Columbia.

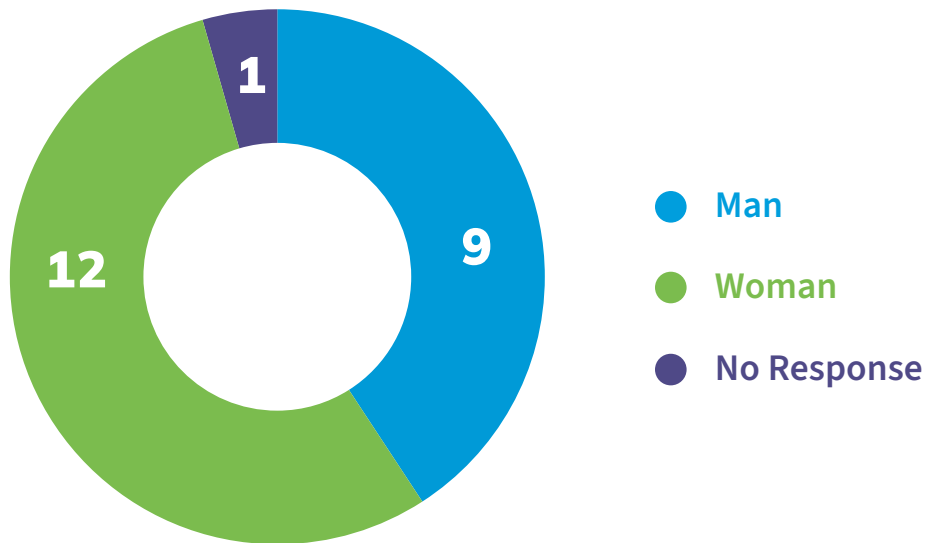


Figure 3: Gender diversity of respondents

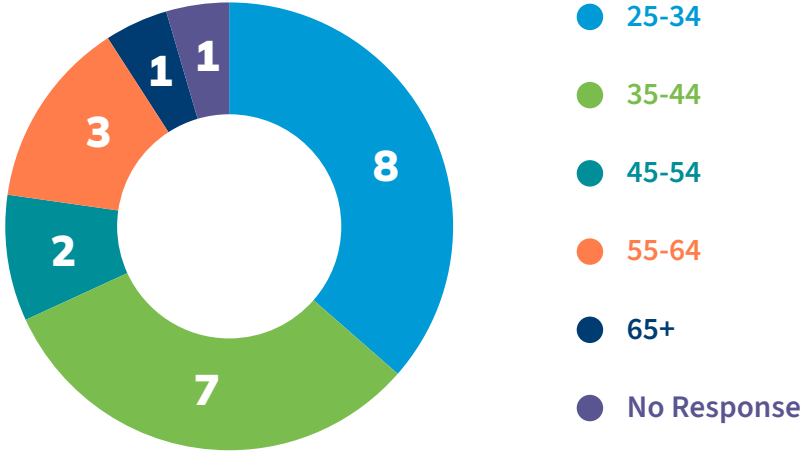


Figure 4: Age of respondents

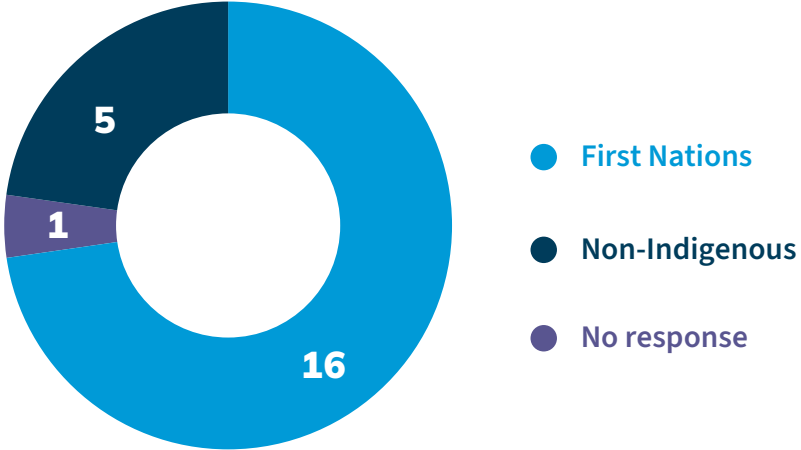


Figure 5: Ethnicity of respondents

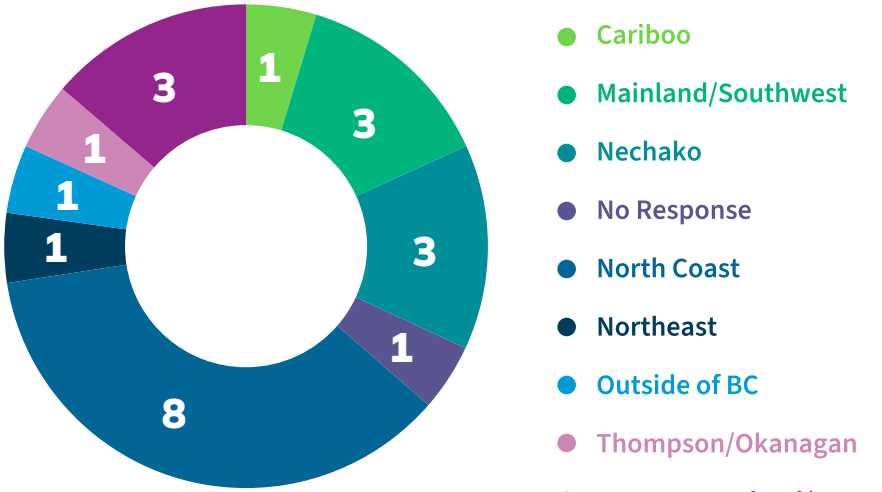
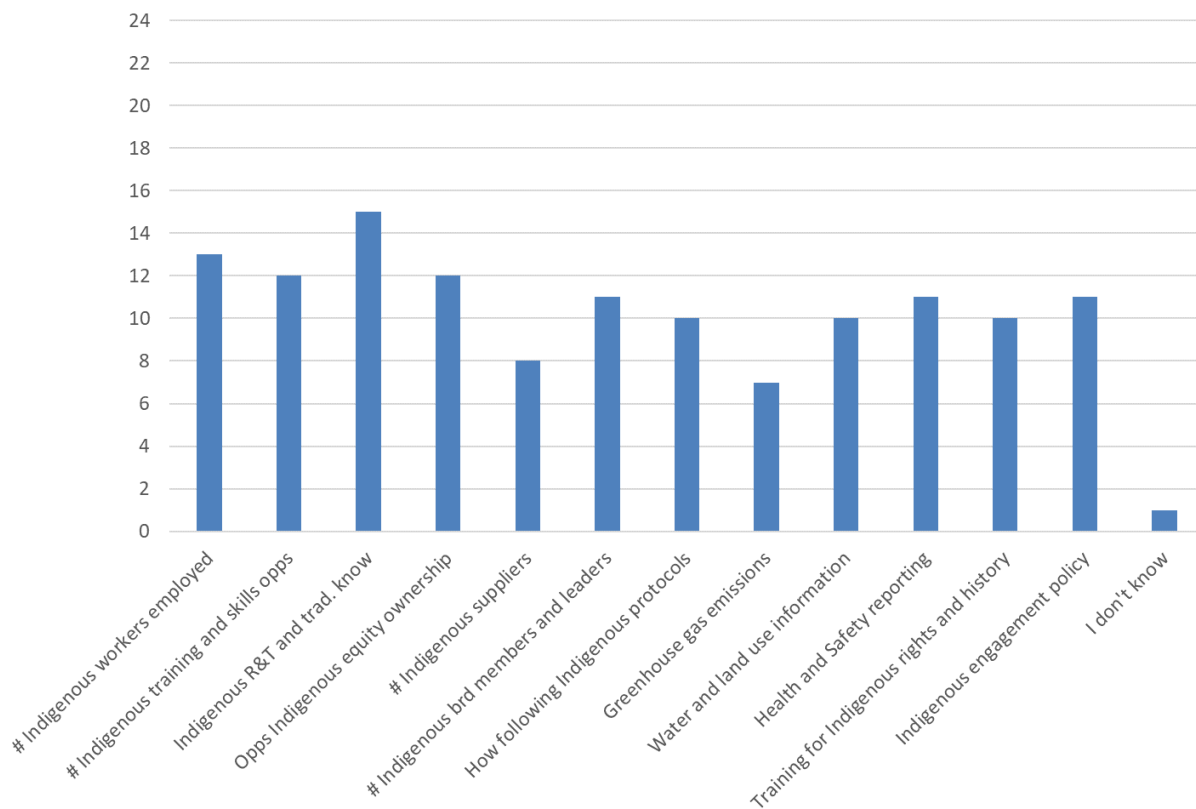


Figure 6: Location of respondents

These responses were followed with a question about the kinds of information that businesses operating in Indigenous communities and/or territories should be providing (Figure 6). The answer that generated the most responses was information on how Indigenous Rights and Title and traditional knowledge are respected. This information is needed to ensure companies are operating in a way that respects inherent rights and traditional values held by a community.

Other answers that generated responses included the number of Indigenous workers employed, followed by the number of Indigenous workers provided with opportunities for skills and training and opportunities for Indigenous equity ownership.

Conversely the answers that received the lowest responses included greenhouse gas reporting requirements and the need for information about the number of Indigenous suppliers. Other answers were relatively even, represented by 10 or 11 responses.



**Figure 7: Information that should be provided by businesses operating in Indigenous communities and/or territories**

The next question determined the priorities held by communities (Figure 8). The responses indicated that the majority of communities are prioritizing training and skills development, followed equally by financing for Indigenous businesses and equity, diversity, and inclusion. Community wellness received 10 responses, with the remaining priorities each receiving less than or equal to 8 (or 35%) responses. Other priorities included climate change, biodiversity, water management, labour relations, among others, which all received lower responses.

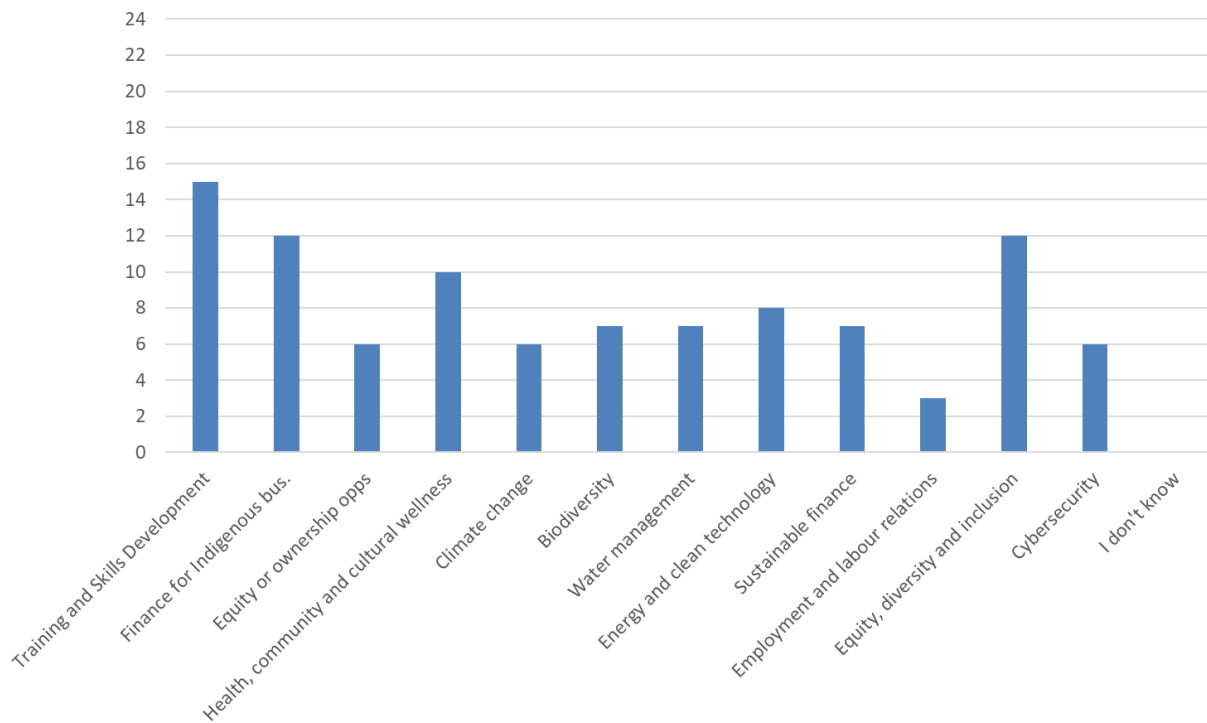


Figure 8: Priorities held by communities

## Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were used to gather in-depth perspectives about ESG. Potential interviewees were determined by the Sharing Circle advisory and from contacts the project team had. Attempts were made to create a balance by interviewing a diverse set of representatives, including consideration for gender representation, inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, and regional representation.

Five key informant interviews were completed. TESCO had planned to conduct 15 interviews to ensure representative perspectives were available for this project. However, the project team was able to connect with just 5 interviewees. As interviews were arranged potential interviewees either cancelled or did not respond after initial communications (via phone or email). Four of the interviewees were Indigenous who worked in Indigenous governments while the remaining interviewee one worked in the forestry industry in a role that included ESG.

This response rate is consistent with engagement levels the project team is seeing across several projects. As the Baby Boomer generation is actively retiring, inflation and stiff competition for employees is driving staff away from Indigenous communities and causing additional burdens on those remaining to carry out the work. This, coupled with the pressures of increased engagement from industry and both provincial and federal governments as they commit to, and fulfill, their reconciliation commitments, is putting immense pressure on staff and Leadership in Indigenous communities and organizations - both for time and expertise.

Despite these low levels of engagement, we believe the insights gained from this work points very clearly to the need for a diverse set of perspectives when informing ESG values and frameworks, and



to support the building of bandwidth in Indigenous communities as they work hard to incorporate, mentor, and train their younger members for the work that lies ahead.

Several **key themes** arose out of the interviews, including:

**Increased awareness, but still not a thorough and common understanding, of ESG** - as more and more industries and sectors begin to incorporate ESG values and metrics into their operations, there is an increasing awareness of ESG in general. That said, more work needs to be done on building an understanding of what ESG metrics are and how they are incorporated into an operation and how these are measured. Also needed is understanding how things are evolving from Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility to ESG – indicating there is now an interest in showing the demonstrated impacts of the work.

**Workloads in communities are hampering the ability to plan, hold accountable and monitor compliance** - as stated earlier, steep competition for human resources is putting extra pressure on communities to keep up with the workload. A structure to support Indigenous communities in their planning, monitoring and enforcement of ESG values will be key.

The **environmental and social aspects of ESG are more widely known**, whereas the governance aspect of ESG is still new to many - both industry and Indigenous communities have considerable experience in setting and working with environmental values and metrics; this has been around for a long time. Increasingly, companies and communities are incorporating and monitoring progress on social values and metrics. That said, the governance elements of ESG need to work for Indigenous governments, which have been and continue to have sophisticated structures. Therefore, the definition of governance may need work or be reframed to ensure it can be fully understood and implemented.

**Indigenous communities need to be supported to do their own internal defining of ESG** - more work needs to be done internally within Indigenous communities to determine and set ESG values, as much as working with government and industry partners to do the same. This will ensure leadership has the backing of their communities when speaking on behalf of the Nation; and will create deeper understanding of ESG values in communities.

**Indigenous communities are struggling to ensure cultural practices are maintained** - knowledge transfer is a big concern in Indigenous communities; ensuring intergenerational activities occur to pass knowledge down to the youth is key. This will ensure practices that have happened for generations, continue to inform the community's relationship with each other, the land, and the world around them.

**Traditional Indigenous knowledge needs to inform ESG metrics** - Indigenous knowledge of the territories is invaluable and predates (but also validates) a lot of western science. Integrating this body of knowledge will not only strengthen the ESG framework but will establish British Columbia as a leader in expanding ESG and setting a new standard for this work worldwide. Doing so will also ensure that Indigenous needs are met alongside industry needs - for example: some Nations are working hard to preserve cultural knowledge and practices and need natural resources (such as cedar, berry bushes, medicinal plants) to continue this important work. In some cases, Nations are actively working to increase the volume of these important resources. Incorporating these values into ESG metrics will ensure industry and government are not working at cross purposes to these priorities.

**Using local values to guide the development of projects** - local knowledge can be used to guide a project all the way through; starting in the early stages of pre-planning, feasibility, and early consultations, throughout operations, and all the way through to closure and decommissioning.

**Appetite for finding new approaches to resource values** - an increased focus on the impacts of climate change is making some Indigenous communities look at other ways to capitalize on their resource values. Forests, for example, can be utilized for their carbon credits, rather than for their timber values.

**Relationships are key** - when a foundation of trust has been built, then progress on ESG work can take place. This includes establishing ongoing and trusting relationships with Indigenous citizens, staff, key knowledge holders as well as elected officials. This will help to **avoid elevating one voice over another** and will provide a balanced and grounded understanding both in community and between community and industry and government partners.

The same can be said for **ensuring trusting relationships are built with multiple communities** - ensuring that one community does not speak on behalf of another. Recognize capacity and resource differences, and respectfully supporting the independence of each Nation will ensure each community speaks with their own voice over their territory.

**Concerns about the longevity of reconciliation** - it will be important to establish a framework for ESG that is based on the foundation of reconciliation and ensures these values are embedded into the work moving well into the future. Applying reconciliation to policies now will ensure these commitments are upheld in the long-term, while continuously evaluating processes and systems with the intention of removing barriers and inequities.

**Reluctance to share and mistrust of how information will be used are still a concern** - there is still the experience by some that consultation with Indigenous communities comes out of obligation rather than a desire for partnership and collaboration. This experience is further entrenched when the province produces new policy or legislation first and then asks Indigenous communities and organizations for their input into what has already been produced. These are seen as band aid approaches rather than proactive planning for inclusion and input. Not only does this further entrench the experience of consultation being an obligation, but it also limits what is possible in the creation of new/revised policy or legislation.

**Relationships will increase understanding and reduce stereotypes and misunderstandings** - despite recent government commitments made to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities, there is still widespread misunderstanding of many Indigenous cultures in British Columbia in the general population. Building a strong foundation of shared western and Indigenous values and commitments into ESG frameworks will help to embed cross-cultural collaboration and partnership as a matter of course moving forward. This will, by virtue of what is being undertaken, decrease stereotyping and increase understanding and appreciation amongst parties.

**Reporting, reciprocal accountability and two-way communication are key to ensuring ESG standards and values are lived** - building a framework that ensures these key elements are integrated into the way ESG work is done will be key. This will hold operators, partners, beneficiaries, and investors all accountable to the agreed-to terms of work. Guidelines and measures will inform how reporting works and schedules for reporting will ensure ongoing dialogue throughout the lifecycle of a project or working relationship.

# Comprehensive Community Plans

## Background

Comprehensive community planning is used to define Indigenous community goals and objectives. The planning framework is focused on seven values: governance, lands and resources, health, infrastructure development, culture, social, and economy (Indigenous Services Canada 2021; Figure 9). The values are not limited or dictated and can be expanded on depending on community ambitions. These values also align with ESG values. Each then has a goal or objective statements (these were used interchangeably across the plans investigated).



Figure 9: Comprehensive community plan values (Source: Indigenous Services Canada 2021)

Typically, Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) values have an overarching statement, with a subset that describes how the community plans to meet the statement. Some of the CCP values align with ESG values (Table 1).

Table 1: Comprehensive Community Plan values aligned with ESG values

Environmental	Social	Governance
	Economy	
Lands and Resources	Health	Governance
	Infrastructure development	
	Culture	
	Social	

Comprehensive community planning also examines the economy, which does not fall as neatly under the ESG categories as the other values. One of the driving factors behind ESG is to improve the economy of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities through responsible collaboration.

By 2021, 130 Indigenous communities in British Columbia (approximately 60%) had completed CCPs (Kobzik 2021). TESCI used the provincial government’s database of First Nations to determine which region each Nation resided within (British Columbia 2022b), from a choice of nine regions. From there, TESCI determined those Nations with Plans, provided by an Appendix in Kobzik (2021). Up to three Nations were chosen per region (Table 2). This required open access to plans; only some are available online. This resulted in investigation of 14 plans whereby the objectives and goals relating to each of the plan values were copied into a database and then common themes determined.

**Table 2: First Nations Comprehensive Community Plans by Region**

Region	First Nation
Lower Mainland	Kwikwetlem; Shxw’ōwhámél
North	Tahltan Band Council
North Central	Stellat’en First Nation
North West	Kitselas; Haisla Nation; Gitsegukla
North East	Fort Nelson First Nation; Doig River
Southern Interior	Neskonlith Indian Band; ?Aq’am (St. Mary’s Indian Band)
Vancouver Island	Wei Wai Kum First Nation; Homalco

### Current work completed by Indigenous Communities for ESG

Typically, comprehensive community planning involves as much of the entire community as is willing to attend. Planning sessions are completed by Indigenous governments with their membership. Given the nature of the planning and the involvement of many people in the development of the plans, they were used to supplement the information gathered from the project’s surveys and key informant interviews. The goal for looking at CCPs was to determine what communities are already doing that aligns with ESG values.

These plans were examined because the objectives and goals align well with ESG values. There are other plans that also align well with ESG values such as 5-year economic development plans, strategic plans, land use plans, among others.

Below is a synopsis of ambitions taken from CCPs aligned with each of the ESG values. While CCPs provide the aspirations within the community, ESG has a higher-level role to play in government to government or Indigenous government to industry relations. This higher level is less obvious as the Plans tend to focus mostly on internal goals and objectives. However, the Plans provide the kind of work that communities are prepared to do and will provide examples of expectations that communities may have of the provincial government for ESG.

## Environmental

The Environmental value under ESG describes how environmental risks are managed across the supply chain and in direct operations including, but not limited to climate change, water quality, land use, and animal preservation. The information below is mostly obtained from goals and objectives provided under the Lands and Resources sections of comprehensive community plans. Where relevant goals and objectives under other values of the Plans were brought into the Environmental value.

The majority of CCP goals and objectives that aligned with the Environmental value mentioned that the First Nation sought to be active on the land, to act as stewards, and to treat the land with care and respect. That the land and the environment deserves to remain in a healthy condition and that through sustainable use, precious resources and environmentally sensitive lands can be used by future generations. This may be achieved through responsible and respectful management and stewardship.

Plans also mentioned further exercising Rights and Title as a way to exert greater control over activities that occurred on the land, but also that many of the Nations were planning to establish referrals and guardian (or other similar) programs. Referrals enable First Nations to have a greater say in how the land is managed through provincial government consultation and provide increased protection to areas that may be important to a community. Nations need to adopt software to track referrals, which forms a database of responses that in turn leads to greater understanding of lands and can incorporate different technologies (like Geographic Information Systems). Software is commonly used (e.g., CedarBox or Community Knowledge Keeper), but costs up to \$10,000 per annum to maintain, and requires a comprehensive database of spatial information, all of which needs to be funded by the Nation. Establishment or improvements to guardian programs further establish the means by which First Nations actively monitor lands to protect lands, water, and natural resources throughout reserve lands and traditional territories.

Some of the plans mentioned protecting resources within the traditional territory from natural disasters like fires and floods, implementing planning to mitigate impacts before they occur or programs to reinvigorate forests and plants following a natural disaster (e.g., reforestation after fires or salvaging dead trees). Other values mentioned included water, fish, wildlife, spiritual values, cultural resources, sacred sites, ancestral remains, and that these should be protected now and that all values should be available for future generations. Many of the entries mentioned First Nations willingness to co-manage lands with municipal, provincial, and/or federal governments, as well as private landowners.

Communities state that sustainable resource development within territories should align with all the values a Nation holds. As such some Nations are producing their own materials and information to describe stewardship principles for development with the territory or on reserve land. These ensure that traditional values are understood and incorporated into co-management of resources in traditional territories. Several Plans also mention the need for long-term planning to support environmental stewardship and alternative practices to clear cut forestry should be utilized where possible.

The land also offers spiritual support. The goals and objectives of some First Nations are to reconnect with the spirit of the land and all living things. Taking the opportunity and ensuring necessary resources to practice and assert treaty as well as inherent rights and participate in cultural and traditional activities is a goal for several Nations. To help with this, some Nations want to establish

hunter training programs or provide resources to have people hunt for and then share with others in the community. Holding regular and ongoing culture and hunting camps for the community is another common priority.

Some communities also want to adopt new and emerging renewable energies to power communities and become self-sufficient.

## Social

The Social value of ESG describes how relationships are managed with employees, suppliers, customers, and communities. Also considered are human rights, community consent, consumer relations, diversity and inclusion, and health and safety. The Social value is represented in CCPs by culture, social, infrastructure development, and health values. Relevant goals and objectives under other values of the plans are also brought into the [Social](#) value.

The Social value is likely the most important value. Healthy and happy communities can more easily attend to environmental values and to governance priorities. Plans mentioned wanting to take pride in, and care for, their communities and to foster communities to include a role for each citizen. And [also](#) to ensure happy and healthy relationships with each other and promote that throughout communities. Furthermore, communities continue to take pride in where they live and to host community clean up days, create trails and establish greater access to harvesting grounds (for fishing, hunting, and gathering).

The majority of the objectives and goals focused on revitalizing language and culture in communities. To ensure that language is being used every day and is visible within the community (on road signs) and within the traditional territory. Part of the revitalization is to ensure that learning language is fun and enjoyable for children. Communities also need to ensure that those who live away have access to be able to learn the language, so making lessons available on multimedia platforms will be required. Aside from language the preservation of culture is very important; traditional stories will be documented, or maps made to determine the extent of traditional territories. These will be used to protect and reclaim heritage, and by doing so increases awareness of heritage so that proper protocol may be taught.

Other priorities include re-establishing culture into everyday life and increasing awareness of culture throughout the traditional territory. Some communities previously had unique cultural roles; these also need to be re-established. There is opportunity to educate youth about a Nation's history and the presence it holds within and outside of the community. There are also desires to include land-based teaching at local public schools and to use intergenerational learning to revive traditional cultural activities on the land and to establish an Elder and youth mentorship program for traditional teaching. These can include reconnecting to tradition, ceremonial, cultural practices, and proper protocols through regularly hosted events and to provide opportunities to learn about traditional medicines and healing. Also, that education goals included increased access to higher education and that students should receive high quality education so they can pursue careers that interest them.

Part of the social initiatives aim to provide new infrastructure in communities. New construction includes community centers, cultural centers, spaces for Elders and youth, learning center, treaty research center, daycare, longhouses and/or big houses, as well as playgrounds, baseball fields, parks, walking and biking trails, and sidewalks. All [these aim](#) to provide improved spaces for citizens to come together to learn or to provide recreational opportunities. Through construction of community

halls classes can be held on a range of subjects to encourage learning. Some spaces will include mentoring opportunities whereby Elders will teach youth traditional practices. Communities also want to ensure that all citizens who want to live in a community have access to housing and to a range of housing options (rent, rent-to-own, and ownership), as well as create a housing and infrastructure maintenance plan. Other infrastructure development will be to pave roads, provide street lighting, fire hydrants, ensure the continued maintenance of sewage treatment facilities, ensure access to clean drinking water, and provide access to phone and internet connections. Many communities are also exploring the possibility of using or converting to renewable energy, such as installing solar panels.

The social aspect also includes aspirations for community healing. Community wellness can be addressed by providing training and through counselling services to address trauma through healing (especially as a result of colonization, residential and day schools) and to treat and overcome addictions (drugs and alcohol). Citizens who require medical attention are provided transport and are accompanied by a support person if needed. Adequate childcare needs to be provided and available in the community. Health and fitness, good nutrition, and food security and knowledge are addressed to support general community health and wellness. Family support services are provided in a respectful, timely, confidential and organized manner. Access to birth control, safe sex education and sexual health is available. Citizens in need are provided with the support they need to address conflict and crime, and to maintain a comfortable standard of living. Special attention should be paid to Elders to ensure they remain included in the community, especially those who are housebound, this may include acknowledging their birthday with a present, and ensuring someone visits them regularly. An aspect of this will also be to build enforcement capabilities to address and reduce crime in communities.

Skills and training development needs to be encouraged by providing courses and workshops on a range of subjects. To also encourage that career fairs can be hosted with schools, education, health and social development, and opportunities for training can be discussed. And following those initiatives, job opportunities need to be provided. These programs may also help people graduate from social assistance to gainful employment. Through these initiatives citizens will achieve their full potential.

### **Governance**

The Governance value assesses a community's leadership. These include, but are not limited to executive pay, board representation and systems/structures to mitigate discrimination, anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The information below is mostly obtained from goals and objectives provided under the Governance sections of comprehensive community plans. Where relevant, goals and objectives under other values of the plans were brought into the Governance value.

Indigenous communities typically focus on coming together to make decisions and complete activities together, more so than settler communities. For example, when Tahltan ratified the Seabridge Impact Benefit Agreement, it went to all communities and was voted on. Indigenous communities tend to do this currently on far lower budgets than their western counterparts.

Several key themes were provided throughout the Governance sections of the plans that were reviewed. These included creating accountable and transparent governance structures, providing governance training to councilors, creating policy, improving communications, and developing relationships with other governments.

The majority of the plans reviewed contained provisions to build trustworthy, strong, and transparent leadership that respected both traditional and modern governance systems. Governance systems were expected to be aligned with culture and to be able to make informed and fair decisions that consider the balance of economic, social, environmental, and cultural needs. Leaders are expected to communicate a Nation's right, values, views, and priorities to external parties, governments, and a Nation's citizens.

A second theme that emerged was to ensure leadership received governance training and provided an orientation process. Training can be provided to people who are interested in serving a leadership role, or with elected officials. A program will help leaders provide the best service possible to their community. Governance structures should also be designed that are based in both the elected system and the hereditary system. Once training is completed, leaders could create mentoring opportunities, identifying potential future leaders to train for the future. Systems can be created to build leadership capacity and skills, and for selecting candidates based on interests, strengths, passions, and potential for required roles.

Several CCPs mentioned the need to implement a robust policy framework that will provide clear guidelines for how a Nation's government and administration should operate. This along with periodically reviewing and updating laws, plans, standards, and policies. This will ensure that legal requirements and policies remain current and modern to be proactive in the face of change. Specific policies that were mentioned included creating roles and responsibilities for leadership and to publish an organizational chart, and that a Code of Conduct and Ethics should be created to hold leadership accountable.

As part of the accountability process to ensure that leadership is fulfilling its responsibilities, some plans contained objectives that required the creation of key performance indicators for sections of the plan. By providing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound tasks, the community can have greater trust and confidence that leadership is operating effectively. In this role as well, one plan called for a process for receiving and responding to formal requests and complaints.

Multiple plans also provided goals and objectives to develop both internal and external communications strategies. These need to include clear, respectful, and timely two-way communication between leadership, staff, and citizens to ensure informed decision making, transparency and accountability. Invitations are made to participate in community meetings and discussions, and that access to programs and services are extended to all citizens. Many plans mentioned the need to ensure all citizens are included, both those who live on- and off-reserve. Communications can be completed through a regular newsletter provided through the internet or in paper format and that this should contain contributions from all departments.

A common theme throughout plans was the need to establish and maintain long-term relationships with neighbouring communities, governments, and industry. That relationship protocols should be established with neighbouring First Nations and to regularly engage with the local Member of Parliament and with the Member of the Legislative Assembly. Part of the role of improved communication would be to provide information about the First Nation to external parties. By creating relationships and improving communication, mutually beneficial partnerships and functional relationships can be formed which could bring opportunities such as employment.

Financial management was also mentioned several times, to ensure financial strength and independence, but also to ensure budgeting processes are in place, and that community forums could



be held to go through statements and annual auditor reports. Further to this, some plans contained requirements to develop file management and storage systems or to strengthen records management.

Other goals and objectives brought up in plans included establishing clear roles and responsibilities for economic development, including having a transparent relationship between government and economic development corporations. Also to prioritize community healing and conflict resolution processes through administrative departments and to pursue self-governance according to the community's direction.

## What We Learned

The research presented several themes that were common throughout the literature review, survey, key informant interviews, comprehensive community plan reviews, and sharing circle meetings. Full context to these themes is provided above and are summarized below for easy reference.

### ESG Not Well Understood

By and large, feedback in both primary and secondary research states that overall ESG is not well known nor well understood outside of the government and select industries (although understanding is steadily becoming more widespread). ESG by its current definition is a western term and is yet another strategy that is being promised. To achieve success the government needs to work with Indigenous communities to define ESG to accomplish ESG+I, and for it not to become another 'checkbox exercise'. Early engagement to establish objectives and goals for ESG in collaboration with Indigenous communities will likely be more successful than introducing a government-led definition of ESG.

### Meaningful Industry Practices

In several conversations, participants were asked to provide examples of practices industry and government should use that would be meaningful to communities. As an example, in 2014 as LNG proponents explored northwest British Columbia, one company asked local First Nations what their most important issues might be if multiple projects were initiated on the coast. Once determined the proponent established working groups including government and industry to determine solutions. This is a strong example of how industry can work with Indigenous people and government to lead to innovative solutions.

Input from the components of this research included:

#### Government needs to be a part of the conversation

- Need greater depth of engagement; need to be treated as governments
- Trilateral consultation at the beginning; government needs to inform and facilitate conversations, not leaving those to industry and Nations
- Provide comprehensive details on a project
- Establishing working groups: e.g., The Gathering Place at AMEBC
- Work with existing organizations, including Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business; First Nations Fisheries Council; First Nations Major Project Coalition, etc.

#### Commitment to Reciprocal Benefits

- Acknowledge Indigenous contributions, partner with communities on various initiatives,

- promote opportunities for health and wellness
- Mentoring and skills development
- Provide a certain number of jobs to nation or Indigenous citizens
- Provide open funding, without constraints
- Major projects fund what Nations need (infrastructure, jobs, etc.). Also fund community liaison

### **Commitment to Partnership**

- Build workable solutions to project flaws together
- Developing engagement protocols and adhering to them (ie. Tahltan, Kitselas, West Moberly ESG Strategy)
- EDI training and implementation aids

### **Honest and Open Communications**

- Engage First Nations in a mutually friendly manner; not being shy to share objectives upfront while asking for community's objectives for working together
- Acknowledging indigenous contributions, partnering with communities on various initiatives, promoting opportunities for health and wellness
- Industry/government representatives should be knowledgeable about the Nation. Come ready to listen and if possible, able to take action, and provide updates when required

### **Engaging the community as a whole**

- Decisions should go to community rather than simply elected leadership; decisions should be community-driven
- Provide education about ESG and ESG priorities: e.g., where are fish bearing streams and how can they be protected?
- Host and participate in community events, workshops, community tours, use of social media.

### **Existing Practices to be Encouraged**

Recognizing that ESG values can determine how industry and government behave and work with Indigenous people and communities, the project team inquired about some of the good practices that industry/government have demonstrated that should be encouraged.

### **Increased awareness of local culture and traditions**

Good practices that have been observed have been when industry and government have increased their awareness of local culture and traditions. This helps to build trust, especially if industry or government has previously been a bad actor. Genuine attempts to be open to learn and be willing participants will help generate relationships. It should be that industry does not wait for the government to provide approval before approaching a Nation, in doing so industry should try to form a relationship with a Nation because it wants to, not because it needs to. Some proponents include as part of on-site training cultural sensitivity training and also local history to provide an understanding of local culture and customs.

## Collaboration

Industry and government need to use a two-eyed seeing approach to support Indigenous values. Information about projects needs to be provided openly, without withholding key points. Studies should be used to collect data and then aligned with traditional ecological knowledge. The decisions about studies that are undertaken should be completed in collaboration with the local Nation(s), and industry/government should expect that different values may be important among Nations. Any baseline information collected by industry, its consultants, or by governments should be shared openly with the Nation to enable informed decision making. Also, when working on the project the government and industry need to bring decision makers to tables, rather than provide information and then take input away.

Western science in some cases is catching up with traditional knowledge. For example, on the coast of British Columbia, the Kwakwaka'wakw have built loxiwey or clam gardens. These provide habitat for butter clams and other shellfish. These structures increase productivity and create food security. Mariculture has been understood for a long time by Indigenous cultures, but westerners have not asked their Indigenous counterparts about these practices (Nicholas 2018).

## Consent

Nations should be able to govern their lands and have oversight of projects occurring on their lands, rather than conform to western viewpoints. These need to be completed with full transparency and accountability as the project continues, operates, and during closure. During the initial stages a Nation should have the opportunity to be able to say no and to provide a non-consent decision. These decisions should be respected by the government and industry, including a recognition that Nations are governments and have equal decision-making power to their settler counterparts. In order to fully understand consent and non-consent, the government and industry should determine what is really meant by free, prior, and informed consent.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in their Calls To Action (#92) asked, among other requests, that the corporate sector in Canada obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous people before proceeding with economic development projects (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015). The Lake Babine Nation negotiated an agreement (the Environmental Assessment Collaboration Agreement<sup>4</sup>) with the government of British Columbia, part of which provides the Nation with the opportunity to advance reconciliation, social and community well-being, and regional economic growth under environmental assessment legislation (British Columbia 2021). Sections of the agreement provide criteria by which Lake Babine Nation give consent to issuing an Environmental Assessment certificate. Furthermore, sections 6 and 7 under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*<sup>5</sup> provide opportunity for the province to enter into agreements with First Nations to make decisions together.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/working-with-other-agencies/eao-mous-and-agreements/lbn-bc\\_collaboration-agreement-2021.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/working-with-other-agencies/eao-mous-and-agreements/lbn-bc_collaboration-agreement-2021.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/19044>

## Indigenous Perspective

Nations have been co-existing with the land in their traditional territories for thousands of years and have knowledge and wisdom that may be shared. A common Indigenous perspective is that everything in nature is connected and exists in a balance. Government and industry need to listen to and hear this perspective. Government and industry need to expect to learn from and understand Indigenous people. Perspective should be gathered across the range of citizens, leadership, Elders, youth, and traditional knowledge holders when they are willing to provide information.

## Other Input

This includes input provided from the survey, key informant interviews, and from the Sharing Circle that did not fit well in the sub-sections above. Input included:

- Funding to undertake studies should be provided with few conditions. Funding should include capacity for the Nation(s) and for training (other funding streams should be included for infrastructure, training and scholarships, and work placement programs).
- Have a community Elder on the board or working with the board
- Realize every community is in a different place and has different values; find out what these values are
- Put communications in terms everyone can understand
- Products and services should be purchased from Indigenous communities and organizations whenever possible
- Support Indigenous governments and economic development corporations to be successful and advance
- Indigenous economic development corporations need to be included during initial conversations, rather than an afterthought.

## Lessons from Knowing the Land

Land, community, and business are all connected. These connections are extremely important; Indigenous communities understand the land better than most. Understanding this will help contribute towards more holistic solutions to complex problems.

Holistic values provide access to resources for sustenance, trade, and barter. Having a direct relationship with lands and resources provide access to the plants and animals that provide for our needs.

There are always parts of the land base that have increased importance to communities; make sure you understand where they are, it may be an opportunity for you to build respect and show sensitivity to Indigenous well-being and way of life.

Indigenous people are often thinking of the future impact and generations. Any impacts to the territory need to be mitigated to ensure future generations are able to co-exist with the land as they have done for millenia.

## Important Questions Industry and Government Should be Asking

Survey respondents stated this was a big topic and not easily addressed in a short survey. Some of the comments received are provided below:

- How can industry and/or government support the combination of TEK and western science to support co-management and collaboration on projects occurring in traditional territories?
- How can we work with your community and uplift your citizens?
- How can we support growth and what kind of resources can be provided within Indigenous communities to be able to hire and train from within?

Suggestions from Indigenous people who responded included:

- **“First Nations engagement is pretty straightforward.”** Project and government representatives need to talk with Nation’s representatives and have some sort of feedback mechanism so that Nations can be involved in the full feedback loop. This enables full collaboration and contributes towards continuous improvement.
- Agreements need to be negotiated to support major project development on traditional territories, and these need to not only cover expenses and to fund activities before the project, but through the whole life cycle including operation and shut down.
- An on-site office or representative is needed to respond to real-time issues.

## Key Takeaways

This section draws on information gathered throughout the course of the project to provide a series of next steps that governments need to implement or need to be aware of before implementing engagement with Indigenous Nations across British Columbia.

### Economic Advantages of Inclusion

The StrongerBC Economic Plan states *“... that rights, reconciliation and lasting partnerships with First Nations and Indigenous People is a fundamental condition of long-term economic progress”* and *“... that Environmental, Social, and Governance values (ESG) offer a tremendous opportunity for B.C. companies to showcase their advantages”*. It also says, *“Through the StrongerBC Economic Plan, our government is securing B.C. as a world leader for championing corporate environmental, social and governance standards (ESG), helping British Columbians to develop, promote, and market environmentally and socially responsible goods and services.”*

ESG is western terminology, although it has promise if it moves beyond a way to market products. To truly capture the full advantages of ESG the government needs to work with Indigenous communities on an equal standing, and Indigenous people seen as the caretakers or stewards of the land who have centuries of traditional knowledge. If Indigenous and western perspectives work collaboratively, Carol Ann Hilton’s \$30 billion vision moves closer to reality. By working together and establishing a trusting relationship will build an attractive environment for investors. It brings Indigenous people closer to economic reconciliation and if international examples are replicated then it offers an opportunity to increase the prosperity of all people who live on this part of Turtle Island.

### Early Engagement

Early engagement is key to the success of ESG in British Columbia. By planning and implementing ESG strategies together ESG stands a greater chance of working. Government should not devise an approach for a Nation and look for input; instead the government needs to treat the Indigenous community as an equal. It should determine whether this is something the Nation wants, and then

determine in collaboration with the Nation how to best fit an approach to ESG. This can include bringing in traditional protocols an Indigenous community has in place to work with industry and government. There will not be an easy one-size-fits-all approach to implementing ESG, rather early engagement provides the opportunity to tailor ESG protocols and engagement to individual Nations.

Early engagement also allows for the government, if necessary, to introduce ESG concepts to communities and provide ongoing information. Following that an Indigenous community may need time to evaluate and determine what it wants through an ESG strategy. Government should be prepared to work at the pace of the Indigenous community rather than the other way around. Government should, wherever possible, ensure that a single and consistent point of contact is established for the Indigenous community. Government should also ensure that community input is provided from a representative range, from Elders, leaders, knowledge holders, and youth. These represent the past, current, and future of any community.

Any decisions on ESG and the way it is used need to be agreed to collectively, from which consultant is used to facilitate the process, through to high-level strategic decisions. This enables the beginning of a trusting relationship through which all parties involved have equal opportunity and share the power balance.

## Different Perspectives

To be truly successful when engaging Indigenous communities, the government will need to amend its mandate for ESG to incorporate different values and perspectives. Indigenous people have been ESG investing for years, whereas western ESG aspirations are relatively recent in comparison. Also, western perspectives may be different than Indigenous perspectives. The definition of ESG according to western entities (e.g., industry and government) determines a narrow focus on encouraging investment and the marketing of goods and services. ESG according to Indigenous governments may have a wider scope which will include economic benefits, but also include a holistic way of co-existing with the values that have been held by Indigenous communities for thousands of years.

Government cannot approach an Indigenous community with a pre-formed idea of how it should work within the ESG framework. Rather, the government would be better suited to approach the community with the mindset of, *“You have been here for thousands of years, what have you done in the past that works today?”*

In this, the government will have to acknowledge and respect that Indigenous people have different ways of doing things, and that these may lead to the same result or may expand to meet objectives set by an Indigenous government. These may be different than the objectives set by provincial government or industry for the same area. To work together the government first needs to define what Indigenous perspective is and will then need to listen to the wisdom that is shared by Indigenous people when considering ESG. This knowledge will not be passed on easily, although will be helped if time is taken to build trusting relationships.

Furthermore, Indigenous communities may have different aspects of ESG they want to prioritize. For example, social values ensure adequate housing is available, that people are employed or have a means of income, that skills and training are being developed, so that the community as a whole is prepared. Again, different communities may prioritize different ESG values. Government needs to be sensitive to priorities set by Indigenous communities.

## Understanding Indigenous Culture, Values and Protocol

Across British Columbia, there are 204 First Nation communities participating in different levels of economic development opportunities, however, there seems to be a lack of understanding how Indigenous values and protocols can be included when applying ESG principles. In this instance the Two-Eyed Seeing approach can be applied, which is a concept that comes from Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall from Eskasoni First Nation and is defined as bringing the western and Indigenous worldviews together for creating a shared vision and common goals where all partners benefit.

From an Indigenous perspective, it is imperative that government and industry listen and learn to understand how Indigenous Peoples' have a holistic connection to the land. This includes looking at long-term impacts to the environment which directly affects the cultural ties to the land and traditional food sources. The challenge is striking a balance between upholding Indigenous culture, values and protocols with economic development activities occurring in Traditional Territories. With respect to the environment, Traditional Environmental Knowledge can be applied to land use planning and be incorporated into the western ways of doing environmental studies and impact assessments. Keep in mind, a one-size fits all approach cannot be applied as not all First Nation communities have established protocols or technical expertise when working with government or industry.

Furthermore, different First Nations values may not align with values of industry and government. As indicated by one interviewee, "***First Nations do not operate in a western worldview of definition of wealth (e.g., financial wealth). Wealth to Indigenous people is represented by shelter, food, and family.***" The land provides this wealth; and the challenge is to facilitate this worldview in collaboration with industry and government's worldview of wealth in a way that honours both.

## Community Relationship Building and Partnership

With economic reconciliation efforts happening across the country, Nations are commenting that relationships need to be in place before any engagement occurs on government policy and regulations or infrastructure and resource development projects. More specifically, relationships can be further developed with all Indigenous citizens, not just with elected leadership, with the intention of understanding their way of life and providing value to their socio-economic stature. These steps can lead to a better understanding about Indigenous perspectives, more importantly, learning about their objectives and community priorities. By sharing objectives early and providing mechanisms to capture future insights for improvement are ways to establish trust and transparency.

With respect to partnership, equity ownership can be an outcome from an established partnership between industry and First Nation communities that improves the quality of life for their membership. This would reduce the often-existing high rates of poverty, suicide, domestic violence or incarceration that resulted from the intergenerational trauma of residential schools. Overall, a partnership is about acknowledging the opportunity of how Indigenous communities can contribute to building British Columbia's economy through applying the articles of UNDRIP and educating decision-makers about Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Most notably, recognizing one voice does not represent all Indigenous perspectives in the ESG realm of doing business.

## Governance Framework and Co-Management

When Indigenous communities have efficient governance structures and systems in place investment coming into the Territory connects to ESG. If the money invested in a project goes into programs and services, it helps fund values connected to that program or service. For example, if money comes into a Lands and Resources Department it helps to fund the Environmental value. Or if money is invested into the education and training department it inherently applies to the Social value. Helping to build these systems and structures will improve the daily lives of the people.

To enable and share governance effectively, a framework needs to be developed together, in collaboration. However, government and industry must realize that different Indigenous groups are at different levels of maturity. Creating frameworks now will help everyone moving forwards. Once established this framework determines a foundation from which relationships and trust can grow. These lead to shared decision-making from which projects progress. In these decisions, Leadership, Elders, and community all need to be engaged and enabled full participation. In this model if projects face challenges, workable solutions can be determined together.

Co-management between governments will ultimately lead to increased success and prosperity for all citizens. For example, in Canada, Carol Ann Hilton and others have predicted that by including Indigenous people in decisions would result in an increase of \$30 billion to the economy. This was mirrored in Australia whereby approximately USD\$24 billion (in 2014) were predicted.

Co-management enables First Nations to govern Traditional Territories and have oversight, rather than providing information that is used by industry and government. It also adds opportunity to work towards solutions in collaboration, to enable consent/non-consent decisions. Co-management creates avenues for projects to receive Indigenous approval while also providing opportunity to oppose projects. This approach recognizes Indigenous rights to prevent practices that could be detrimental.

## ESG Education and Capacity Building

Overall, a greater understanding of ESG is required for both Indigenous and settler communities in British Columbia. ESG is a new term to most people, general understanding of ESG, the terminology, process, standards, and implementation need to be shared more widely. Most people understand the environmental and social aspects and have been practicing these albeit without being under the banner of ESG. How the different aspects of ESG work individually and/or together and the relationship with the financial community (e.g., investors) is not well understood. Of each aspect, governance is least understood and will need work to fully understand and implement.

Capacity and bandwidth within communities is often stretched, with administrative and business staff managing multiple portfolios and communities experiencing fatigue from meetings and surveys. To lessen these effects, the government and industry can help. They can seek to understand capacity requirements in Indigenous governments and provide funding or other tools to support people and lead to situations where projects are supported. Each Indigenous community has interests on the land that need to be determined, although each are at different stages of collecting this data. Funding to support collection of traditional ecological knowledge and/or baseline information about specific resources would enable Nations to comment and support with greater confidence. It could also be incorporated into land use planning with provincial and municipal governments so Indigenous interests are avoided.



Usually when funding is provided it is usually for a project with a defined scope, conditions, and reporting requirements. All of which provide barriers to applications. By removing these barriers, government and industry would create capacity within Indigenous governments and economic development organizations. Data collection and information systems leads to the creation of new roles that will enable employment at Nations, leading to greater prosperity in communities.

## Input and Engagement

Over the course of the project, despite best efforts, the project team found it very difficult to engage Indigenous people in the project. This is likely due to a number of factors: lack of familiarity with the ESG term, communities have more important issues to deal with, and that communities are short-staffed. Meetings and engagements need to be appropriately timed; the end of summer tends to be hunting and/or fishing season, where most (but not all) Indigenous citizens are gathering food.

Previous relationships can be important and useful to establish contacts in communities. The members of the project team have been working with Indigenous communities for at least 2 or 3 decades and have amassed a network of contacts who are known personally to team members or are contacts through previous or current projects. Despite these relationships participants in each of the information gathering phases were few.

Typical process to reach out included email followed by a phone call, resulting in some cases with willing participants, although only a few people followed up. Some people said that they did not feel knowledgeable enough to discuss ESG. Although often if further explanation was provided, people were able to see the linkages to their knowledge-base and became more comfortable. Interviewees were also offered and paid an [honoraria](#) of \$200. Further participation in the survey was encouraged by providing a \$100 gift card. Although this resulted in increased responses, it was later determined that the majority of these were not likely to be legitimate. This means that the government is going to have to carefully consider how to engage with Indigenous people when it comes to include Indigenous perspectives in ESG.

Given this experience, the provincial government will need to find unique ways to engage and will need to pay careful attention to timing and process. Also, despite offering, some participants turned the honoraria down and participants collaborated with the project team on their own time. Offering money to share knowledge is appreciated; however, it takes time to participate in projects such as this. This bandwidth to participate is often lacking among people who have a great deal of responsibility, and no matter how willing, find it difficult to spend the time on important projects.

Encouraging participation in ESG will present a significant challenge to the provincial government, although it may not experience the same personnel (i.e., government likely has more staff available than CFBC and TESCI), budgetary, and time constraints that CFBC and TESCI were working with. If the government is serious about ESG it should direct funds into staffing to create dedicated positions to working with Indigenous communities on ESG.

## Conclusions

ESG offers an approach to engage with Indigenous communities more thoroughly in developing a more sustainable and equitable economy within British Columbia. The StrongerBC Economic Plan has provided several commitments regarding ESG. Although these need Indigenous inclusion from

the beginning with opportunity to determine what ESG means to Indigenous people and how that perspective can be incorporated into strategies moving forwards.

ESG offers more than opportunity for responsible development, it will be key to fully involving Indigenous communities and establishing partnerships amongst industry, government, and Indigenous Nations. Together this stands to create prosperity for all people who live in the area now known as British Columbia.

The aim of this research was to provide initial input from Indigenous perspectives and to share what was heard during this research project. Hopefully it will help inform provincial ESG strategies moving forwards. The research undertaken during this project gathered input from a wide range. However, this provides examples of the kinds of challenges, limitations, and input that a longer study may fully determine. The research in this report constitutes initial feedback. It does not represent the entirety of the Indigenous population of what is now known as British Columbia. Government will need to fund, initiate, and complete further work to fully determine representative Indigenous perspectives about ESG.

This research involved gathering information through interviews, a survey, and from published plans that were available online. The project was guided by an advisory panel comprised of Indigenous leaders, youth, and Indigenous citizens. The outcomes of this research are described below in the context of how the government should include an Indigenous lens(s) and perspective on ESG early on and continue engagement mechanisms for continuous perspective.

British Columbia has the opportunity to be an attractive place to invest. Together Indigenous people, proponents, and government can all make British Columbia a desirable place to invest by offering certainty for investors looking for returns and safety, not challenged by risk.

To begin establishing ESG strategies the provincial government needs to listen to and include traditional knowledge in land management activities. Indigenous communities have a great depth of traditional knowledge and history from interacting and co-existing with the land, built on thousands of years of experience. Government and settler communities need to then learn to co-exist with the lands and resources, rather than manage and use the land for singular purposes (e.g., resource extraction).

There is currently great opportunity in ESG, it could be used for government and industry to collaborate effectively and meaningfully with Indigenous people. In doing so environmental, economic, social, and cultural values could be improved for all the Citizens of this portion of Turtle Island.

## Next Steps

There is a lot of work for the government to do. Below are several concrete steps that government and industry can incorporate into strategies to move ESG forwards. These include:

- **Realize the potential of ESG:** ESG is far more than a way to market products and attract investment. Through ESG, an opportunity is presented for Indigenous people to be fully included in the economy and by industry and government working with Indigenous communities has the potential to benefit all people living in the province. Government needs to ensure the

full potential of ESG is being realized in the context of collaborating on an equal footing with Indigenous communities.

- **Engage now:** Early engagement is key to success of ESG. If Indigenous people are included as partners and decision makers in the development of ESG, that momentum can help ESG gain traction in British Columbia and lead to more effective and efficient implementation and economic performance. Government is going to have to be willing to work collaboratively, rather than provide a mandate and expect Indigenous communities to work within it. Part of the engagement should include funding for Nations to lead this work with the government.
- **Educate on ESG:** Some Indigenous organizations are willing to engage on ESG now, while others face substantial capacity barriers that would limit their ability to engage. Early education, and capacity support may spur participation, especially if the government demonstrates it is willing to listen to Indigenous voices and take a shared approach to establishing ESG strategies.
- **Form meaningful and trusting relationships:** Government and industry need to engage with Indigenous communities and form relationships where decisions can be made. These relationships need to be formed on the basis of collaboration and equal power in decision-making, while respectfully recognizing and finding solutions to differences between Indigenous and western perspectives. Government must also acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all approach is not going to work for ESG.
- **Value different perspectives:** Government and industry need to acknowledge that Indigenous communities may hold different perspectives or prioritize values differently. These may conflict with western perspectives, and while different are not wrong. The key to conflict is to determine workable solutions in a respectful manner.
- **Utilize traditional knowledge:** Government and industry need to rely on the knowledge within Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities have co-existed for centuries alongside and interacted with the land in a sustainable manner. Government and industry would do well to acknowledge the wisdom held has been passed down through generations. Western science can be used in collaboration with traditional knowledge, and this collective will likely hold the key to a sustainable future.
- **Learn current capacity of communities:** Each community will have different capacity in the number of staff they have, the extent to which their traditional knowledge is known, the advances Nations have made in particular areas, the data they have available, among many other aspects. Government and industry need to learn what the capacity of each Nation is and determine how best to support those communities, sharing resources to bridge inequities.
- **Support capacity either from outside or from within:** Government and industry have an opportunity to support Nations. Sometimes funding is not enough, industry or government support within a community could also be a viable option, gathering wise practices from other Nations and sharing process and resources to enable greater engagement.

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