



**University of Manitoba: “What’s the Big Idea?”**  
**Series 4, Episode 3: ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION**

**TITLE**

**INTRO MUSIC FADES IN**

**INTRODUCTORY MONTAGE**

**ANGIE BRUCE:**

How do you build Canadian sovereignty without stepping on Indigenous rights?

**PETER POMART:**

You know, that's the question of the year, if not the decade.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53AkfUc9fBc>

“Now, it’s not just what we build, it’s also how we build. We will build inclusively, in full partnership with Indigenous peoples, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, every step of the way.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5azBSM10VPA>

“This bill claims to include First Nations in the unified economy, but in reality, it undermines treaty and inherent rights by assimilating us into a system we did not create or consent to. That is not modernization. It is colonization in 2025.”

**PETER POMART**

Globally, when you look at projects that are extractive, they are overwhelmingly on Indigenous territories. And we can't ignore the fact that under international law, Indigenous peoples have to be given the opportunity to not just consult.

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY**

So, we were always economic leaders. We understood trade. We understood currency and the value of goods, in terms of how it sustains us, how it sustains our livelihoods and our people for years.

**DIANE ROUSSIN**

We were the original philanthropists because we were always giving. And when you're in an economy or in a world where there's constant giving, it's abundance thinking, right? I think that Indigenous people have been really weighed down with that scarcity approach, in our economy.

**INTRODUCTION**

**MUSIC FADES IN**

**MICHAEL BENARROCH:** Welcome to What's the Big Idea? I'm Michael Bennarroch, President and Vice Chancellor of the University of Manitoba. Normally, I am your host, but in this episode, Angie



Bruce, UM's Vice President Indigenous, has the mic. Angie is a proud Red River Métis and a nationally recognized leader in Indigenous research. She has extensive experience guiding Indigenous-led projects for all levels of government and community organizations. She sat down with three leading alumni, for a special live event to discuss Canada's future, through the lens of economic Reconciliation.

Across Canada, Indigenous nations are driving transformative change. We're on the cusp of a new economic future, one that can be just and inclusive. Enjoy this critical conversation on what economic Reconciliation really is and why we need to get it right.

## **MAIN INTERVIEW**

### **MUSIC FADES OUT**

#### ***Applause***

**MICHAEL BENARROCH:** Please welcome Angie.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Thank you everyone. Good evening and welcome to What's the Big Idea? I'm so excited to be with you here today. We're here to have fun and learn a lot. Tonight, we are gonna explore this idea of economic Reconciliation. We're gonna look at new ideas, we're gonna challenge some perspectives, and hopefully, we're going to inspire you to think differently about what lies ahead.

Before we meet our incredible panelists, I wanted to take a bit of time to frame tonight's conversation because it is one that is steeped in history. So, we're here to talk about economic Reconciliation, a topic for me that goes beyond policies and numbers. It's about creating pathways to equity, it's about looking at sustainable partnerships and relationships, and it's really about ensuring that every one of us has an opportunity for growth and wealth, in this country. For generations, policies like the Indian Act have prevented Indigenous people from building wealth and from fully participating in Canada's economy. And let me be clear, those policies still exist today. We still work within a framework of the Indian Act and many historical federal policies that impact Indigenous peoples' ability to participate.

So, what are we talking about here? We're talking about when we want to create wealth, one of the underlying perspectives of that is looking at assets, our ability to grow assets, to purchase assets, and then to leverage those assets. And in particular, in a business context, to use those assets as collateral to build wealth. The Indian Act ensures that Indigenous people do not have the ability, on reserve, to own their houses. It does not give the Indigenous governments the ability to leverage assets that they may have, their land. And so, this really is putting us at a disadvantage. So, this is the underlying context. How do you create generational wealth without the ability to own assets? I think the other thing for me is also looking at, from a government perspective, the inability for taxation or to issue bonds. So, how are our governments, our Indigenous governments, creating wealth when there is a systemic issue around how they can generate that wealth? So, with that, I think I wanted to bring up a couple of key things that are still happening today.



The gap is real. Indigenous people make \$9,000 less a year than non-Indigenous people, to this day. So, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people make \$9,000 less. 11.8% of First Nations and Métis people live below the poverty line. That is double that of non-Indigenous people.

So, I think the conversation about economic Reconciliation is vital. And I think it is a pathway forward. So, with that, I'm so excited to call on our thought leaders to come out and have this dialogue and conversation. So first, I'd like to call Diane Roussin.

Diane is a graduate of U of M's Faculty of Social Work and a member of Scowman First Nation. She is a project director of Winnipeg's Boldness, championing Indigenous-led solutions for families and communities. A trailblazer in her field, Diane has been instrumental in amplifying Indigenous voices, embedding their perspectives into the fabric of decision-making, across all sectors in Manitoba. She also knows almost everyone. So, if you don't know her, connect. She's a connector. She's somebody that you want to know. And welcome Diane.

### ***Applause***

We are also joined by our alumni, Kathleen BlueSky. She has her master's in business administration from the Asper School of Business. She is a Cree Ikwe from Nisichiwasik Cree Nation. She is the CEO of Treaty One Development Corporation, an organization leading the development of Naawi-Oodena, the largest urban reserve in Canada. She has also worked for First Nations her entire career, serving in high level positions, in many organizations, including the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. And if that's not enough, she is also the CEO of Seven Feathers Consulting. So welcome Kathleen.

### ***Applause***

Finally, I'd love to welcome Dr. Peter Pomart. Dr. Peter Pomart is a member of Mathias Cologne First Nation. He's a lecturer at the Asper School of Business and the former director of Indigenous Business Education Partners. His research focuses on Indigenous jurisdiction and self determination. Specifically, how industry actors can better align their engagement with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. And as I understand it, one of the first Asper PhDs to have examined economic Reconciliation. So, thank you. Here's your panel for tonight.

### ***Applause***

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Alright, so economic Reconciliation has many different facets, and I think it's very complex. So, my first question to you is really, what does economic Reconciliation mean to you? What is the concept? Diane, I'll start with you.

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** Well, I think it means a lot of things. And when we were preparing for this talk, I wanted to make sure and make the point that, absolutely, there's a business end to this, with economic Reconciliation, but it actually needs to show up in a cross-sector way. And so, it needs to show up in government, it needs to show up in community, it needs to show up in philanthropy, it needs to show up everywhere. And I do think it's about a renewed and different reciprocal



relationship between Canadians and Indigenous populations. There's some things we need to make right that haven't been made right. There's some ways forward that we need to lean into, that we haven't been leaning into all these years. And so, for me, it's about honouring and centering a lot of Indigeneity that we haven't, in the past, when settlers first came to Canada. There's a lot that Indigenous people can offer. And I do want to do a little shout out; my mom made me this skirt. This is Jackie Travers fabric, and we went to Dene Cree Designs to buy all of these materials and Jerry Lee Pengman made me these earrings and I'm wearing a whole bunch of Cheekbone Beauty here and I'm wearing Satya on my skin and yeah so, I'm like it shows up, it looks like this.

### ***Laughter and applause***

All our Indigenous entrepreneurs!

### ***Laughter and applause***

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Peter, what does economic Reconciliation mean to you?

### ***Laughter***

**PETER POMART:** Yeah, OK. You know, economic Reconciliation, it's very much a buzzword today, particularly when you look at current legislation, current projects. But I think it's important to not lose sight of the fact that economic Reconciliation is only one piece in a larger puzzle, that puzzle being Reconciliation. And when you want to look at how do we envision a reconciled Canada, it's important to recognize the cross-sectorality of Reconciliation. Business can't do it alone. We can't do it alone. It has to be Indigenous, non-Indigenous nations. Well, how do we create systems change? And that really begins with renewed relationships.

What are the assumptions that we bring to the table as we define abstract concepts like Reconciliation. What are the narratives we tell ourselves? Because those narratives and the assumptions really bring to bear the biases we bring to these conversations. And if we're not interrogating these biases, if we're not interrogating age-old narratives of us versus them, no one's going to win.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Kathleen, in terms of, in your work world and in your life experience, what does the concept of economic Reconciliation mean to you?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** It's really about respecting the rightful place of First Nations in economic development. And I think that there's not enough understanding and recognition of the fact that the wealth that Manitoba and Canada were created on came from our lands.

People don't know that there was colonial imposition that actually prevented our people from participating in the economy. So, we were always economic leaders. We understood trade. We understood currency and the value of goods, in terms of how it sustains us, how it sustains our livelihoods and our people. For years, we were always about sustainability. And, you know, when you mentioned the Indian Act, the Indian Act is the most racist legislation that we have in this



country, and it still is written, in its original form. I think, a few things may have been changed but for the most part, it makes it impossible for First Nations to pursue economic development in an efficient way, and it creates a lot of barriers.

And so economic Reconciliation is about finding ways to work around that, to find strategies and to start exploring different legislative options that recognize First Nations people in their rightful place and restoring the balance for them to participate in the economy meaningfully.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** And I think it's really meaningful, right now, when we're in a context where we have both the federal and provincial government talking about legislating big building Canada projects. So, you have this new legislation, Bill C-5. Prime Minister Carney has said, the bill will unleash economic growth with Indigenous partnership, at the center of that growth. So, Peter, I want to know, will it?

**Laughter**

**ANGIE BRUCE:** But more so, how do you build Canadian sovereignty without stepping on Indigenous rights?

**PETER POMART:** You know, that's the question of the year, if not the decade. The fact that you had certain geopolitical forces beyond Canada's control threatening our sovereignty and I mean, we cannot talk about this without unpacking politics. The fact is the Liberal government were on course to not be retaining power. But yet, the threats to Canadian sovereignty launched a renewed interest in, hey we believe the Liberals, under Carney, to be electable. He promised that, yes, we're going to unleash Canada's economic power.

But you know what, globally, when you look at projects that are extractive, they are overwhelmingly on Indigenous territories. And we can't ignore the fact that under international law, Indigenous peoples have to be given the opportunity to not just consult. And, you know, this is going to be one of the challenges, because when you look at the current trends, and based on the history of what's come before, it's been, well, the duty to consult and accommodate is sufficient. But we know now, in the past few years, it isn't sufficient.

Two weeks ago, I was at the Indigenous Bar Association Conference, and they were talking about this very matter. And they likened some of the language coming out around Bill C-5. One of the participants said, it's really interesting because the language is reverting back to duty to consult and accommodate. And so, on the one hand, you have politicians on a parade float pointing forward. Meanwhile, the float is moving backwards. We can't do that because we know that when governments fail to properly engage with Indigenous peoples, when they override their desires, well, that just sets it up for litigation. So, if the intent is, we need to fast track these projects, the fastest way, the best way for clarity, certainty is to do things right the first time. And, he says, Indigenous partnership is at the center of it. Well, partnership begins with relationship.

And I share this in my dissertation, but relationship building begins with that first step. This is what Canada envisions, but by doing things incorrectly from the outset, you have a grotesque outcome. Because the first step dictates how well you can engage in subsequent steps.



With that being said, you asked the question, can we do this while respecting Indigenous rights? Well, that first step had already been undertaken by passing Bill C-5 without consulting with Indigenous nations. United Nations Article Number 19 actually states that nation states need to consult with Indigenous peoples before enacting any legislation or policies that affect them. That's not to say that we can't do it right, but the bar has already been set pretty low. So, I think it's important when Canada moves forward to not forget its obligations under an UNDRIP-compliant framework.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Well, and I think it even has greater impact when you're seeing the economic needs of Canada put before Indigenous rights. And what we see from, I think, a legal framework is that no, you cannot do that. And so, it's going to be interesting to see how these projects move forward and how quickly these projects now move forward.

Diane, we've got it at this high-level looking at it from a legislative perspective, how we're driving these large projects forward. But from a ground kind of level, how is economic Reconciliation showing up in our communities today? What does this look like in real life, beyond the concept, where it's done right?

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** In just listening to Dr. Polmart's comments here, I find it very interesting that um some of what our federal government and Mr. Carney were reacting to was these sort of approaches and this kind of vibe that was coming from the South and we didn't like it, right? And so, we were doing elbows up and yet the solution from the federal government's perspective was to move, in a way, that was actually the same as what was happening in the South. And so, as an Indigenous person, you're like, whoa. You can't be unilateral, you can't just operate in the same way that you're trying to protect against, right? You keep doing that if we're trying to have a better Canada for everyone, moving forward. And I love fractal theory, and you know how there's the pattern from the very small all the way to the very big. I know that in everyday interactions, when we are in really solid, great relationships, we can move very quickly into complexity, you can go deep, and you can go fast.

So, this idea of going fast, to do projects really quickly? Well, if you haven't spent time building those solid relationships, you are going to spin and spin and spin. And there's gonna be so much litigation. There's gonna be people lying down, in front of machineries. Like all of that's gonna happen if we're not doing this in that relational way. And so, if Canada wants to move quickly, in these projects, and there was another batch announced again today. It was nice to see that some of them were definitely Indigenous owned. So, that's great, but not all of them were. And so, there's lots of concern, based on a past history of we haven't been treated very well and there's still a lot of things that have not been made right. We have to be able to walk forward with some level of trust that this is going to happen in a different way. And I don't think we're very trusting right now.

Jesse Green did an urban eclipse video, and I think you can see it on the National Film Board and it's also in the Manitoba Archives. But the whole clean drinking water thing, right? And the devastation we caused to Shoal Lake in order for us to have that clean drinking water. The whole reason for that was because the economics of Winnipeg could not grow. We needed the clean drinking water for citizens, and it was actually the insurance people who wouldn't provide insurance to the



businesses because we didn't have the water to put out fires and stuff. And so, we are expecting our First Nation communities and some of our Métis communities to try to grow economically and they don't have clean drinking water! They don't have housing. They don't have broadband. They don't have some of the basics that are needed to be able to participate fully or equally, in this economy, right? So, we have some addressing to do there to get to the same starting place. And I think those kinds of considerations have to be taken into account with some of these major projects that are being announced.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Looking right here in Winnipeg, the real estate leasing and development contributes one of the largest percentages to Canada's GDP, about 13%. Thinking about that, Kathleen, I wonder how is economic Reconciliation manifesting right here in Treaty One? As the CEO of Treaty One Development Corporation, can you share with us some ideas on how Winnipeg's real estate development sector could incorporate Indigenous perspectives to foster economic Reconciliation for future projects and maybe some key partnerships that you have?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** The first step is right from the design phase. Respecting the Indigenous culture, relationship with the land, relationship with the language, and how does that show up in the design of our communities, of our real estate. At Naawi-Oodena, we do have our own design guidelines for the property. And our partner, Canada Lands Company, who owns a portion of the property, they've adopted the same design guidelines. So, that is one way, one strategy that people can definitely support economic Reconciliation by respecting that we're building this community together and that they're going to honour our Indigeneity, in that build. So, it starts right from this design and planning. And then, in terms of construction, procurement, ownership, we have to have revenue sharing at every step of the process. And that's a model that we call an inclusive business model. That's really the strategy that we want to see partners to employ and come to the table with, we don't want to be having to educate every person that we work with about what this means and how it shows up in our relationships as partners.

I think that for Treaty One, it's definitely been a work in progress. The Treaty One First Nations spent 20 years fighting for the land, so a lot of the relationships were very adversarial, for a long time. And then, just at the flip of a switch, we had to work together with the same people. It was insane. So, there's lots of smudging happening.

### ***Laughter***

Yeah. But I think we're on a good foot now.

I do want to say that the relationship really transformed with the City of Winnipeg. That's really what made everything possible was, under former Mayor Brian Bowman and Michael Jack who was the CAO. We just approached negotiation from a completely different perspective. It wasn't a tit-for-tat negotiation. It was really about the relationship-building. It was about understanding each other's mutual interests. And when we did that, we realized that we had all the same interests. So, yeah. We didn't do a municipal services agreement, we did a partnership agreement, government to government. And it's actually, it's the best partnership agreement in all of Canada. So, it's definitely work that I'm proud of and proud of the people that were involved in that.





People don't realize we've had access to the land for just over two years. It was sitting for 23 years; it was still under Department of National Defense. A lot of people think that it was Treaty One taking long to build, but it wasn't, we just got access to the property in January of 2023, and we had to get a lot of things done, in a short period of time. So, one of the commitments, in the agreement for the land to be purchased by the Treaty One First Nations, was that we would get it to reserve within a five-year timeframe.

And I think there's preconceived threats of what we're going to build or, what's going to happen to the neighborhood, if we build there. And we just need to move past that, and that's part of the Reconciliation is reconciling your own understanding and your own beliefs and attitudes towards working with First Nations people as partners.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** I wonder if you could give us a little bit of an update on what's taking place there because I see a lot of building and construction happening right now.

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** So, we had our grand opening of our gas station, in July. So, that's been great. So, thank you to everyone who buys our gas.

### ***Laughter***

And one of the things about our gas station was that there's gas stations everywhere. And we really wanted to create our own cultural identity, our own vibe at Naawi-Oodena. So, we actually created our own design team. So, we had three First Nations architects, two of them were straight out of university and we're like, here you go. And they were like, oh my god. But they did amazing. And so, they designed the gas station. And again, we had our design guidelines. So, we wanted to incorporate elements of our culture. But we also wanted to really connect with the other things we're going to build. So, it was kind of the foundation for that.

So, we have our gas station. We are building a retail mall right beside it. So, we want to start providing services for the community. And we're also building an apartment across the street. So, starting to create that community. And then, of course, Canada Lands Company had their announcement. So, they'll also be starting on their residential development. So, a lot of stuff will be happening very quickly. Yeah.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Wonderful. So, this is only one development. There's multiple partnerships that are taking place across Winnipeg, in particular, moving these urban reserves, these developments that are happening.

So maybe Diane, I'll turn to you because I know you're in a lot of spaces where decisions get made, conversations are being had. Can you tell us some key elements that are critical to ensuring Indigenous voices are central to reimagining urban spaces, here in Winnipeg?

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** Well, I think when Treaty One says we need to fast track certain things, we should fast track those things, if you want to fast track. Who gets to define and determine what is needed to be fast tracked, right? And so again, if that can be on all sides of a partnership. And what Kathleen keeps saying, which is really sitting with me, is design teams and whatnot. And I've heard this saying





from before, the idea that if you change who's in the conversation, the conversation changes. And so then, if you're in that conversation, you bring forward your perspective, you bring forward your worldview, you bring forward your values, your experience, and it's different for Indigenous people than it is for mainstream society. So, when those folks are in the conversation, it's going to be like different starting points, it's going to be different value sets, it's going to be different for the work I do, in the Inner City of Winnipeg, if our community gets to even define the problem, because so many people are defining the problem for them, for our families and our community, then the solution finding is different. But if you get to define the problem, then the solution finding, it unfolds in a whole different way, right?

As Indigenous people, pre-settler, we had thriving systems, right? Health systems, economies, and so on and so forth. And I think, you know, when settlers came here, they didn't see fences and flags and thought, oh, like, there must be no one here. We can just take up space. And then when they realized we were here, it was a systematic removal. And what they needed to do was remove us from the land, right? Because we have this relationship with the land that had to be severed, if you're going to grow the economy in the way that settlers want to grow the economy, right? And for me, I spend my time building relationships because I think it's harder to maybe act badly when I'm accountable to you. So, when I'm in a good relationship with you, I'm going to show up for you and I'm going to go the extra distance for you and I'm going to talk about you, when you're not in the room, like you are in the room. I'm going to act differently. There's so many different ways that you can resource and structure that relationship building, which I think we often overlook.

And so, once you and I are solidly on the same page, I've just seen it time and time again where we can get into that complexity and keep each other intact in the co-creation and in the figuring out of what needs to happen in that complexity. It all still comes down to folks who can't hold for complexity and interconnectedness, as well, are freaking out about polycrisis. The polycrisis is real, so I'm not minimizing how real it is, but how we deal with it. If you can't hold for a lot of moving parts, in a relational way, it's more difficult for you. So, that's where I think that Indigenous people have those muscles and we've been raised like that and have been working like that since time, in millennia, and so it's time for us to now step forward and use those muscles that others might not have been using and it's our time to shine, right? And we can show and demonstrate. And, so again, I just keep hearing Kathleen, and I think about when your team is in the center of those conversations, what you guys do, it looks very different than when they weren't in those conversations, right?

**ANGIE BRUCE:** It strikes me that you're also in multiple conversations. You could be held up at the municipal level, you can be held up at the provincial level, you can be held up at the federal level, and you can be held up by business partners. So, the requirement to be in all of these conversations, for the same people, along with those conversations within your own communities, engaging with your own people about what does this look like and how does this feel. Like the responsibility really has been on Indigenous people, so far. So, Peter, I know that your research has really looked at this and argued that Indigenous people look at business differently, as we've been talking about here. So how do we bridge that? How do we bring that together? What does that look like?



**PETER POLMART:** I recall when I was discussing C-5 that I failed to mention a couple of things that the feds are doing right. So, first of all, they committed \$40 million, over two years, for Indigenous nations to actually improve their capacity to engage in these conversations. So, I don't think that that should be ignored. And it should be highlighted and celebrated because during my research, one very common theme that came out is that Indigenous nations often don't have the capacity to even envision how is this going to impact. So, the fact that the government is leading with that, that's great. They also doubled their loan guarantees so that Indigenous nations can be equity partners, removing access to financial barriers. So, that's great.

Now, going back to the question, I think it's important, as we pursue Reconciliation together, in partnership, that we just do away with the old narratives of Western society knows best. We have the muscles to look at things from a complex, holistic system. I don't think it's necessarily an issue of Indigenous worldviews having to infuse or change Western perspectives, but rather, for both sides to be comfortable with the coexistence of plural systems. And when I returned back from the Indigenous Bar Association conference, they were discussing the fact that the Cowichan Nation will have, you know, land title. And this is going to be one of the conflicts, for us to unfold. How do we have collective ownership of land exist simultaneous and concurrent with the traditional fee simple land?

I shared that insight with my students, in class. And I said, well, you know, we just have to look at what is happening at Treaty One. The fact that Canada Land Corporation is based on fee simple, whereas the other ownership, the Treaty One ownership, is collective. So, if you want to look at what does it look like to pursue two systems simultaneously, with mutual respect, you guys are doing the work. So, congrats to you guys.

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** Ironically, we never had to market it as an opportunity. Like I probably got, I would say, 100 calls a week of developers who told me they could build me the moon if I gave them the land.

***Laughter***

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Well, so with that, Kathleen, then looking at how did you make the choices for the partners that Treaty One Development moved forward with?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** So, it's funny because we put them through an interview similar to this.

***Laughter***

Yeah, we did. So, we issued our RFPs, with our construction manager. We would basically go through any kind of RFP process, where you select your top four or five applicants. And so, what we did is we interviewed them and we looked at what, historically, have they done with First Nations, in terms of partnership. Like what was their understanding of working with First Nations, of working on urban reserve. And that's how we picked our partners. And it's worked so far.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Well, I think that's a great example, because of the legislation, because of the legal frameworks now, and because, I think, Indigenous people are standing up and owning those



spaces, that it really is on the onus of companies and their leadership to understand what economic Reconciliation means and what the expectations of First Nations and Métis and Inuit people are. And economic Reconciliation is really a small part of what we need to look at from a Reconciliation. It's really an umbrella piece of that. So, Diane, I actually want to talk to you about how do we think differently in all sectors? How do we take this concept of economic Reconciliation, not just being about big nation-building projects, but work that into our everyday existence, in the work that we do, in the spheres of influence that we have?

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** There's this concept of, well what if we could rematriate the economy? Like what if we could return to an Indigenous-centered economy. What we know it to have been before settlers came. Because I do feel like the polycrisis and the environmental crisis, they're built upon notions and values that aren't going to sustain us. And so, this infinite economic growth model, I think, is not feasible. Like, we need something different. That's just not going to get us there. And it's wreaking havoc now. So, a lot of Indigenous people talk about circular economies, right? So, there's concepts like that out there. There's a group of women who are really laying it down, in the South, a group called Native Women Leads and they've challenged the five C's of capital, and they have their own. And these are the five R's of a rematriated economy: What if when we go to assess credit and if you're worthy of it, what if we were assessing how relational you were instead of your character? What if we were assessing how restorative your initiative is versus the market conditions? What if we were looking at how regenerative is your approach versus what's your capacity? What if we were looking at how revolutionary is it versus this idea of collateral? And what if we were looking at how rooted are you versus how much capital do you have? So, there's people out there that are trying to think about different ways of what might we centre when we're saying economy. I think you also had a company called All My Relations, at one time, and like we're not even human centric. When we think about what's best for economy, we're not just thinking of humans, right? We're thinking about Mother Earth, we're thinking about the water, we're thinking about the animals. And that's what interconnected holistic thinking, because only thinking about humans or privileging humans has gotten us into the messes that we're in.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Well, this has been so exciting for me. I could go on forever. But I'm going to ask my final question. I want to know from each of you, what is your advice to all of us here? To the leadership, in terms of political leadership, business leadership, we have academic leadership here, we have social philanthropists. On how we can help set that stage for economic Reconciliation, what can we do as individuals? Kathleen?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** So, a really important statistic, between 80 and 90% of Manitoba's GDP comes from Treaty One. So, that means that there's very limited land for us to acquire. There's very limited opportunity, in terms of resources, because 29 of the 31 minerals in Manitoba are all in the North, right? So, for us, what that looks like is bringing the opportunities to the table. So, if there's land, you know, sell it to us, or better yet, give it to us. We'll make it work; we'll make it work. If you're selling your business, sell it to First Nations, just because those opportunities are so minimal right now for us, especially in Treaty One, Treaty Two. And that's what we need. We need the



opportunities. We have the know-how. A lot of First Nations have the capital to invest. So, we just have to get there. We have to find those opportunities.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Diane?

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** Well, I've been thinking, we were the original philanthropists because we were always giving. And that was a way, an approach, right? It was always giving. We didn't have the accumulation part of the philanthropy; it was just constant giving. And when you're in an economy or in a world where there's constant giving, it's abundance thinking, right? And so, I think that Indigenous people have been really weighed down with that scarcity approach, in our economy, and you see it now, the big social systems are expensive, right? And Indigenous people are overrepresented in all of them, from the healthcare, in terms of unhealthiness, the child welfare, you name it, we're overrepresented in those systems, and those systems are super expensive and so we cannot continue to participate, in the economy, from that weakness and deficit place. And that isn't about our individual capacity by the way, there are systems that are making those outcomes happen. So, we got to change those systems, and then we can start, thinking about from that abundance mindset, how we're participating in the economy from our strengths, right? So, how are we contributing to the GDP? There's a Southern Chiefs Organization has a thing out, Manitoba Tourism has a thing out, the National Indigenous Economic Strategy, they have a thing out, and they're all tracking and mapping things like GDP and how the Indigenous populations are contributing to the economy, in the positive way. So, we have to put more and more solutioning and more effort and resourcing into those.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** And Peter?

**PETER POMART:** So, when I was defending my thesis, my advisor asked me a question and he said, let's suppose, I'm friends with Mark Carney. Let's suppose he asks, I don't have the time to read it. Give me two to three minutes and tell me about what your research is about. And I thought, for five seconds, and my response was, well, if you're not prepared to do the work, you don't have the authority to govern on Indigenous matters. Because there's no shortcuts, when it comes to Reconciliation. You have to, number one, commit yourself to taking the time it takes. And you talk to the elders, they say it takes the amount of time it takes. Reconciliation is hard work but it's something that takes commitment, perseverance, and just having the grit to get the work done.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** So, with that, I am going to turn it to questions from the audience. My friend Eleanor is in the media booth. Do we have any questions for our panelists?

**ELEANOR COOPSAMMY:** Maybe if the panel could get into the idea of treaty land entitlements, maybe explain a little bit more about what those are and the concept?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** So, essentially what treaty land entitlement is, it's connected directly to the treaties that were signed between the First Nations and the Crown. And so, when those treaties were signed, a certain amount of land was set aside to be protected for the First Nations, for their use and benefit. And what happened was the Crown never actually fulfilled the majority of those obligations. And so, there was a shortfall.



So, treaty land entitlement is essentially how much land each First Nation is entitled to. And we have a framework agreement, in Manitoba, between the First Nations, the province and the feds, to reconcile that. So, it's probably been about 29 years since that framework was established, and over a million acres of land remains outstanding. And as I mentioned, like, Southern Manitoba is almost completely occupied and developed, so it leaves very little opportunity for the First Nations to actually get their treaty land entitlement. Actually, that was the foundational legal argument for Treaty One getting the Kapyong Barracks. And they didn't get all of it. We got 65% of it. But that's what it is.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** It takes 15, 17, 20 years, in some instances, to find land and go through this process. There's a Schedule B, in treaty land entitlement, which gives a percentage, like money, to be able to purchase land to offset land that is not Crown.

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** Yeah, it's held in trust and there's a lot of criteria for First Nations to actually utilize that trust to purchase land. So, it can only be used to purchase land.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** And would that land now, in terms of the escalation in real estate and pricing now, impact your ability to purchase land?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** Absolutely!

**ANGIE BRUCE:** So, you're getting less land now because you can't move treaty land forward.

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** Yeah.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Yeah, it was one of the biggest things and a big challenge, in particular, when it comes to the municipal relationships. You're right, I think it was a key piece to many treaty land entitlements not moving forward, and that relationship has been a stumbling block, in terms of moving that. So, it's exciting to see that the City of Winnipeg has really stepped up to the plate and has working with you in partnership in that way.

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** Yes, for sure.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Eleanor, any other questions?

**ELEANOR COOPSAMMY:** Can you speak a little bit more to how educational institutions can collaborate with Indigenous communities and governments to promote economic Reconciliation in urban development projects?

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Peter?

**PETER POMART:** So, in 2011, I believe, the University of Manitoba had issued an apology for its role in the residential school system, to enact change. And part of that was, hey, you know what, we educated the lawyers, we educated the politicians, we educated the clergy people, the architects



of the residential school system. So, as it relates to how do we move forward, it begins with the curriculum that you offer. How do you change structures? Well, it's a long game.

So, the conversations that you have, in your classrooms is going to orient them to the long-term reality of Reconciliation, right? The conversations you pre-empt because no, sorry, that is reflective of an old paradigm. It's the research that you fund. It's how you evaluate the research proposals for funding. Is there an Indigenous person at the table, reviewing these applications for funding, for Indigenous research, to ensure that it's done in a good way and is reflective of Indigenous values, respects self-determination? So, universities are just one of many institutions responsible for advancing Reconciliation.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Yeah, for me, there's a responsibility because we're the educators. We're the educators of 31,000 students that then go out into the economy, that then go out into their spheres of influence. And so, I think, there's a responsibility on us, as an educational institution, to be able to talk about concepts, to really create the knowledge, from an Indigenous perspective, to create that understanding of, when you walk out into those spheres, when you walk out into that world, you have to understand your responsibility, as a Canadian, you have to understand your responsibility, in your career and the positions that you hold, to and with Indigenous people.. And I think the University of Manitoba is really leading in this perspective.

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** If I can add. I was doing some work in the inner city of Winnipeg in a school that had 95% Indigenous students in it. But there was not one Indigenous staff. Like, there wasn't a teacher, there wasn't a custodian, there wasn't, like, the lunch lady, like nobody, there was none. And yet the posters all were saying, Indigenous people are important, or something like that. And so, as the parents, we would talk to the parents a lot, the parents would say, the message is that education is important, but you are not, because you don't show up in the system in any way other than being the students, right?

And so, I'm very proud to say that the University of Manitoba, for the first time ever has an Indigenous person chairing the board of directors. And so, yay, U of M!

### ***Applause***

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** But it shows up, again, in so many ways, in the curriculum and you folks, as being leadership at the institution. There's so many ways. I mean education, obviously, is the biggest one, but there's just so many other ways.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** No, agreed. I think all of that is quite critical. So, thank you everyone for your questions here today. So, I'm going to close the conversation now, but I have one final question for each of you. How do we know when we're getting it right and what does that look like? Kathleen, maybe you want to start us off?

**KATHLEEN BLUESKY:** That's really good question. My vision of Naawi-Oodena and seeing it fully built, like we have a lot of graphic renderings, and you know this beautiful dream. So, one of the things about Naawi-Oodena, is that it's a blank canvas. We're trying to create the most sustainable community. We're also looking at innovations and technology to have a very connected community.



And so, it's an amazing opportunity to do something that hasn't been done in Canada. So, that's really part of the dream, as well. And hopefully, you'll start to see that as we build out more and more.

But I think we're doing things right when the development doesn't stop. You know, like now Naawi-Oodena will be fully built and then what are we onto next and you know, just keep going. So, as long as that momentum doesn't stop, we're doing good.

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Peter?

**PETER POMART:** My idea of economic Reconciliation is hand in hand with Reconciliation. And I always share in my classroom, Murray Sinclair said it took us 140 years to get into this mess. It'll take us as long, if not longer, to get out of it. So, what will it look like? We won't even know. But a colleague of mine, Nikki, she shared, in her job talk, last year, about having cathedral vision. And that resonated with me because I always use the Basilica de Familia Sagrada, in Barcelona, as a metaphor for Reconciliation. If that first generation of workers, after 20 years said, argh, you know what? This foundation's good enough. We wouldn't have the beauty that we see today. We know things are going right when the next generation is inspired to carry on her work

**ANGIE BRUCE:** I love that. Diane?

**DIANE ROUSSIN:** For me, it's being this nosy graffiti girl. I have often found myself as the only Indigenous person around a boardroom or in a room or in a space. And I can roll with that, personally. But there's a lot of at times you have to explain a lot of things. You know that you're different when you're in that room. When we're getting it right is when there's a whole bunch of us. You don't have to explain all the time. And that that Indigenous approach or experience is just expected and it's just there, in all of the conversations and all the decisions that are being made. And as part of that, I think that shift I was talking about that we don't have Indigenous people overrepresented in that negative way, in all of those systems. That they are, maybe overrepresented, in the other systems, in that positive way, right? And so, I have two daughters and they're sitting right there and there's gonna be a different, their experience in reality is gonna be different than what mine was, right? And they have different expectations that I'm like, go for it, right? And that's good. And so, they're going to be walking on a scaffolding that we're providing for them, at this point. And I'm so proud of all the leaders and all the people that we have. Because I do some of that national work, I'm sure lots of you do. I almost bragged about Manitoba. There is something about us here, and our leadership here, that goes out across the country and across the world. We are actually building more and more of those leaders and so that's when we know that we're getting it right, is when we're just tripping all over those leaders all over the place.

***Laughter and applause***

**ANGIE BRUCE:** Well, thank you to our brilliant panelists. This has been such an informative conversation. Maybe just my final thing is the biggest piece that I got out of this conversation is it's all about relationship. The first step is relationship. Chi-miigwech, thank you so much and have a wonderful evening.





## MUSIC FADES IN

### EXTRO

**MICHAEL BENARROCH:** I hope you enjoyed this episode of What's the Big Idea? Share it with a friend and stir up your own discussions about economic Reconciliation. Join me next time when I sit down with Zahra Musavi, Canada Research Chair in Biomedical Engineering. Her life led her to have the big idea that we can do simple, effective interventions that can halt and maybe even reverse Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Professor Musavi's story and ideas are ones you won't want to miss. Until then, keep thinking big.