

FIRST REPORT FOCUSES ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND WORKFORCE INCLUSION

The path to economic reconciliation requires more than words; it demands action. Today, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB) launched A Way Forward, Ontario's Path Towards Economic Reconciliation, Equity and Inclusive Growth, a multi-part report series designed to support businesses in their reconciliation journeys.

The first report, released today, focuses on people—the foundation of economic growth - outlining concrete steps to expand Indigenous access to education and employment, foster inclusive workplaces, and strengthen Indigenous leadership. Subsequent reports on finance and capital, procurement, lands and resources, and infrastructure and communities align with the pillars of the National Indigenous Economy Strategy.

"Indigenous people are the youngest and fastest-growing population in Canada, yet systemic barriers continue to limit access to education, employment, and leadership opportunities," said Daniel Tisch, President and CEO of the OCC. "Businesses tell us they see reconciliation as an economic opportunity, but often don't know where to start, or where to go. In this series, the Ontario Chamber and the CCIB aim to give them a roadmap."

A Way Forward outlines rec-

ommendations to help employers, educational institutions, and governments create opportunities, build partnerships, and contribute to a future where Indigenous talent thrives. The OCC and CCIB encourage businesses to assess and implement the steps they can take to advance reconciliation within their operations and across their industries.

Examples of reconciliation pathways related to workforce and education inclusion include:

Expanding Indigenous access to education and employment by establishing dedicated pathways for Indigenous candidates in both education and the workforce, improving financial aid and student support, and adopting skills-based hiring practices that value lived experience and alternative qualifications Indigenous peoples might possess.

Creating inclusive and culturally supportive workplaces by implementing mandatory training on Indigenous history, treaties, and intercultural skills (as per Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #92); supporting remote work by Indigenous employees in rural and remote communities and fostering environments that respect Indigenous perspectives.

Strengthening Indigenous leadership and governance by increasing Indigenous rep-

resentation in corporate leadership, establishing advisory councils with resources and accountability, and integrating Indigenous voices into business and public policy decisions. policy decision-making. "Economic reconciliation is a collective responsibility.

The launch of A Way Forward is a step toward a more equitable future, providing reconciliation pathways, addressing the systemic barriers that Indigenous businesses and communities face, and highlighting the importance of Indigenous inclusion in Ontario and across Canada's economic success," said Tabatha Bull, President and CEO of CCIB. "I look forward to the continued chapter releases, which will touch on other key pillars that drive lasting change and growth."

The OCC and CCIB extended sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions of their Indigenous Advisory Committee and the CCIB Research team, whose insights ensured that this resource is grounded in Indigenous knowledge and experience.

Tisch and Bull also expressed appreciation to lead partners Hydro One, BMO, Bruce Power, CN, and Meridian; the presenting partners, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP); and supporting partners BDC and Ontario Power Generation.



Down And Out

By Wayne & Tamara

I've been in a relationship with a guy for two and a half years. From the start he would walk out and want to end the relationship over stupid stuff, saying, "If it's like this now, what's it going to be like in five years?"

I tried to reason with him. Everybody argues; it's a fact of life. It's how we deal with it. I thought over time he would settle into the relationship and make more of an effort rather than walking out each time. Sadly, over the years these episodes

have continued. If it wasn't down to me fighting for our relationship, we would have split up long ago. Over time he has gone from a chilled-out, loving guy to an egotistical and sometimes aggressive person. All of which I believe is the person he is. He just hid it. I am told to shut up if he doesn't like what I'm saying. I realize his priorities in life are not the same as mine. Only two months ago he proposed to me. All my friends tell me how much he loves me, but how can that be when two months down the line he's walked out again? He has broken our trust in this relationship, but he never sees himself doing any wrong. Why do I love this guy? I'm so confused. Colleen

Colleen, when George Orwell was down and out in Paris, he washed dishes in a restaurant. One day the proprietor said to him, "What is restaurant work? You are carving a chicken and it falls on the floor. You apologize, you bow, you go out; and in five minutes you come back by another door—with the same chicken. That is restaurant work." Why are you so confused about relationships? Let us give you a few hints.

In the bestselling relationship book of the last 40 years, the author says he pretends in his mind his wife is his most important client. He tries to give her the same attention he would give a client. Apparently, pretense is his key to success.

Another couple, both Ph.Ds, observe quite correctly they are internationally regarded relationship experts. They are also authors of their own relationship system. Yet in one book they admit that after years of marriage they were on the verge of divorce. Even with a huge financial and professional stake in the outcome, they couldn't make their own system work. As it turns out they did stay together—after reading a book on astrology and relationships! In the same book they quote a two-page letter of praise from a man who attended their workshop with his girlfriend. The man makes many appreciative comments, but the bottom line is he and his partner broke up anyway.

Then there's the woman who claims expertise in preventing divorce, yet in the smallest print in a book of hers, hidden away on the copyright page, she and her publisher disclaim all legal responsibility for the claims boldly made on the front cover. We could go on and on. So many books and so little wisdom.

As human beings we are easily swayed by what others say or tell us. That is why publishers print blurbs on the back of their books. Psychologist Lauren Slater mentions an experimenter who got others to do odd things—like touching their nose while walking backwards—simply by putting on a white lab coat. We are very suggestible.

There comes a point when we must trust our own experience. For three-quarters of a century experts have been telling us how to make unworkable relationships work, but it's no more than the same dropped chicken served up on another plate.

We live in a sea of misinformation. Trust yourself and swim against the tide of bad advice telling you there is some way to make this bad relationship work.

Wayne & Tamara

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