

The initial thoughts on this document that community identified was that is shifting, whether intended or not, a harmful colonial approach to indigenous relations from the government of Canada to industry through more rigorous regulations. This document suggests that we can create enough regulation to impose on industry that it will force the healing of the relationship between indigenous peoples and settlers. Healing cannot be accomplished with a mandated checklist.

What is lacking in this document is the acknowledgement of our relationship with the Crown. i.e. The acknowledgement that Canada (and therefore by default - industry) and indigenous people are partners and stewards on this land. Functional partnerships do not attempt to substitute genuine relationship building and communication with an incomplete and shallow list of demands from one partner and the forced (or in some cases - considered) meeting of those demands by the other; especially when the message is stripped of all humanity and delivered by a third party and very technical/legal governing body.

Indigenous people need to have ownership stakes in these infrastructure projects, this is the only sincere way of achieving the intent of the reconciliation, and the indigenous participation in the Canadian economy. This aligns the interests of industry with the interests of indigenous peoples and will facilitate relationship building. All of the things that the OPR paper is trying to address with regulatory duress would be discussed internally and planned for between partners working towards a common interest.

Forcing ownership stakes on indigenous peoples and industry at this point in time, however, could also be problematic. You need to understand and trust your partners.