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# Indigenous Business & Economic Development

## Profile

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We support First Nations, their economic development corporations, and businesses working with First Nations communities and their members to advance projects that honour Indigenous rights, create sustainable prosperity, and reflect cultural values. Our team brings together decades of experience advising on business and real estate law, governance, joint ventures, and regulatory matters that intersect with Indigenous interests and priorities. Whether structuring new ventures or navigating complex negotiations, we deliver practical legal solutions grounded in cultural awareness and respect, based on our shared learning and experience.

Our lawyers act for First Nations governments, councils, and business entities and leaders across industries including land acquisition, development and related transactions, aquaculture, forestry, tourism, and energy. We understand the need to balance economic growth with stewardship and Nation-building. From impact and benefit agreements to land transfer agreements, joint ventures and consent-based frameworks, we help clients drive projects forward while building trust and long-term relationships. We also advise proponents and non-Indigenous businesses seeking to engage meaningfully and respectfully with Indigenous communities.

Our team offers a full spectrum of legal services to support Indigenous businesses and their partners at every stage of development and growth. This includes-but is not limited to-commercial real estate, private company transactions, forestry, energy and natural resources, business succession, employment and labour, general business law, tax, litigation, as well as mediation and arbitration. Whether advising on day-to-day operations, structuring complex transactions, or resolving disputes, we apply a practical, business-minded approach grounded in an understanding of Indigenous governance and values. Our cross-disciplinary team works collaboratively to deliver tailored legal solutions

that align with our clients' strategic goals and long-term vision.

Above all, we work in partnership with our clients. We take the time to understand their goals and community context, offering guidance that is legally sound, strategically aligned, and responsive to evolving needs. By bridging legal expertise with cultural understanding, we help our clients succeed on their own terms-today and for generations to come.

## Services

- > Commercial Real Estate and Land Development
  - > Advising on acquisitions, sales, leasing (including ground and land leasing), joint ventures, financing, and development of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use properties, for both on- and off-reserve projects
  - > Acting as development counsel in support of rezoning, enactment, subdivision and related processes to entitle existing and future development projects, including engaging and negotiating with the relevant municipal and other authorities having jurisdiction, and negotiating easements, rights of way and other covenants and agreements
  - > Drafting and negotiating land use agreements, purchase and sale agreements, leases, partnership and other joint venture agreements, and other development arrangements
- > Private Company Transactions, General Business Law and Corporate Advisory
  - > Structuring and advising on asset and share purchases, mergers, and reorganizations
  - > Supporting Nation-owned and partnered businesses through growth, sale, or strategic restructuring
  - > Structuring long-term ownership solutions that preserve First Nations community interests, in particular for economic development corporations, partnerships and other structures, for both individual First Nations as well as joint ventures between multiple First Nations
  - > Supporting day-to-day operations with contract drafting, regulatory compliance, and legal risk management, and advice on procurement, service agreements, licensing, and operational matters
  - > Acting as external general counsel to Indigenous businesses and boards
  - > Drafting purchase agreements, shareholder agreements, partnership agreements, business charters, protocol agreements, and other structuring and transition documentation
- > Forestry
  - > Purchase and sale of forestry assets, including manufacturing assets and forest tenure
  - > Advising on the day-to-day aspects of forestry operations, including services agreements, attribution agreements, and replaceable contracts
  - > Structuring joint ventures, long-term tenure management arrangements, and project agreements to secure a Nation's economic participation in forestry operations
  - > Supporting sustainable forest management, including through creation of Special Forest Management Areas and other vehicles that facilitate alternative forest management, and through conversion from volume to area-based tenures

- > Navigating provincial forestry regulations and Indigenous governance frameworks
- > Energy and Natural Resources
  - > Advising on Indigenous equity participation in clean energy, transmission, and resource extraction projects
  - > Structuring partnership agreements and revenue-sharing arrangements in mining, oil & gas, and renewables
  - > Supporting project development through permitting, environmental assessments, and consultation processes
  - > Teaming agreements for the joint pursuit of work through government and private party procurement processes
  - > Negotiating consent-based agreements and benefit-sharing frameworks with Crown and industry partners
- > Employment and Labour
  - > Advising on employment standards, policies, hiring practices, and terminations
  - > Drafting culturally informed HR policies, codes of conduct, and employment agreements
  - > Representing employers in litigation, Canada Labour Code complaints, and human rights matters
- > Tax and Indigenous Taxation Matters
  - > Structuring transactions and operations for tax efficiency, including use of exemptions
  - > Advising on GST, income tax, and corporate tax issues affecting Indigenous businesses, administrative entities and Nations
  - > Supporting Nations with tax policy development and negotiation with government authorities
- > Trust Matters
  - > Establishing business trusts
  - > Negotiating and implementing settlement trusts
  - > Advising trustees on fiduciary obligations, trust powers, governance and compliance matters
- > Business Litigation and Dispute Resolution
  - > Representing clients in commercial disputes, contract litigation, shareholder matters, and real estate claims
  - > Advising Indigenous entities on protecting business interests through the courts
  - > Managing complex multi-party litigation with cultural and community sensitivities in mind
- > Mediation and Arbitration
  - > Offering dispute resolution services that align with Indigenous values and governance processes
  - > Representing clients in private mediation and arbitration proceedings
  - > Supporting proactive resolution of conflicts involving business, governance, or project-related issues

**Chair**

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