Deputy Ministers Q&A: Implementing Modern Treaties and the Work of Reconciliation
8:40AM-9:30AM
Joanne Wilkinson, Dominique Blanchard, Christine Loth-Bown, Nadine Crooks

Joanne Wilkinson

Joanne Wilkinson discussed the the Review of Laws and Policies Related to Indigenous Peoples. The main achievement to date is the public release of the Principles. Joanne noted that this reflects a transformative shift in how the government intends to interact and collaborate with Indigenous peoples. This approach is founded on respect, communication, and learning to collaborate in a new way.

Dominique Blanchard

Environment and Climate Change Canada sees raising awareness of the key issues and obligations of the department as a means of advancing reconciliation. This awareness building is occurring with people on the ground, be it scientists or human resources employees. Dominique Blanchard emphasized how the intent, interest, and willingness of the department is clear, yet she acknowledged that change is slow and it isn't always done right the first time.

Christine Loth-Bown

The Review of Environmental Assessment Processes can be seen as a means to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The discussion paper, emerging from this review, outlined that the inclusive and meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples needs to occur at all stages of environmental assessments. Changes include the addition of a new phase, which intends to start the dialogue and conversation earlier; the need for greater representations of Indigenous peoples on review boards; and the fact that Indigenous knowledge must be taken into consideration.

Nadine Crooks

Parks Canada sees partnerships with Indigenous peoples and co-operative management of lands as fundamental components in the process of reconciliation. Partnerships with Indigenous peoples exist through Indigenous tourism, Indigenous knowledge building, and co-management regimes. One of the most successful initiatives to date has been Indigenous peoples sharing stories with park visitors; for many this has been an incredibly impactful experience.

Questions

Engagement Fatigue:

- Engagement fatigue can be addressed using different methods that are less ad hoc and more organized.

What does a nation-nation relationship look like from the departmental perspective?

- A nation-to-nation relationship is taking shape in many departments, yet it requires a deep commitment to thinking about what the relationship can look like. It means trying to find ways for personal engagement. Leadership needs to find its way through the bureaucracy that it comes from, we need to shift the culture within bureaucracy.

How does the government view the dismantling of INAC in efforts of being different from any other attempts to dismantle colonialism? Why do they think that previous attempts have failed?

- It signals of the intentions of the government and an acknowledgement of the importance of structures. Having two ministers makes a huge difference in this work, but they are also engaged in the issues. There has never been this level of commitment.