

RAD Story Lodge | Episode 2

What is RAD? Part 2

Randi Russell: Oki and hello. Welcome to the RAD Story Lodge, a place where you will hear stories from the land and learn from Indigenous communities who are advancing regenerative economies and reshaping the way we think about conservation.

To kick off the series, we wanted to introduce you to our Leadership Circle, the brilliant people paddling the RAD Network canoe. In episode one, we heard from David Flood, Sam Whiteye, and Steven Nitah, who provided context on the purpose of the RAD Network and what brought them to this work.

Today in Episode Two, we'll hear from the rest of the RAD Leadership Circle, Gwen Bridge, Dani Warren and Terry Doward, who share their perspectives on nature-based solutions, the purpose of RAD and why this moment matters.

Terry Dorward: I'm going to speak a little bit of my language. [00:01:00]

My name is Terry Doward. I'm the president of IISAAK OLAM Foundation, as well as the Conservation Director for the West Coast IPCA Support Program. I come from the house of Hiawea here on the West Coast of Vancouver Island in beautiful Clayoquot Sound. My nation is called Tla-o-qui-aht, people that were once different. I was raised by my great grandmother who was from Hoyshton in Bridge River, with the Statliam peoples.

Dani Warren: My name is Dani Warren. I am the senior manager for the Great Bear Carbon Credit Limited Partnership, originally from Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Treaty Six Territory, [00:02:00] Saskatchewan. And I've been living here on the coast of British Columbia for about 15 years. Fortunate to be working within the space I, I am and the communities I work with and, within Great Bear Carbon representing Great Bear Carbon Forest Projects, and on Haida Gwaii and the North and Central Midcoast of the Great Bear Rainforest that are owned by our seven First Nations limited partners.

Gwen Bridge: My name is Gwen Bridge. I am a member of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, which is about two hours northeast of Edmonton, Alberta, here in Canada. My dad is from England, and I grew up in Okanagan and Ktunaxa shared territory in Nelson, British Columbia, here in Canada as well. So, I have

been working with Indigenous Nations throughout North America for the past 25 years, including stints with the Mescalero Apache, the [00:03:00] Makah tribe, the Okanagan Nation, and since starting my consultancy in 2010, various nations throughout Canada as well.

Since Canada has committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People I've been working quite a bit in advising all levels of government around how to best implement the action items and realize the commitments to reconciliation that Canada and various provinces across Canada have made and I've been enjoying it a lot.

Randi Russell: So let's get into it. What do we really mean by nature-based solutions? Broadly speaking, nature-based solutions involve working with nature to develop sustainable management practices that restore and protect critical ecosystems. Under this umbrella, we have natural climate solutions, which focus on the specific goal of mitigating climate change.

As the climate action opportunity has become clear, funding and markets have emerged to [00:04:00] finance nature protection initiatives. We've also seen a specific focus on our relationship to carbon and how we build pathways towards ethical practices to support a thriving planet for generations to come. So nature-based solutions is a new term for how Indigenous communities have been stewarding this land for thousands of years.

Gwen Bridge: Well when I first heard “nature-based solutions”, I was very confused about what it was talking about. I felt sort of intuitively I suppose that it was really perpetuating this distinction or this separation or segregation or externalization of nature from the systems of support for both economies and life.

One of my colleagues had said, well, we should be calling it Indigenous based solutions. Right? Really coming from an Indigenous perspective, that nature is part of all the things that we're working with and not a separate entity to be manipulated in some way for the benefit of humans or as a solution to [00:05:00] some problem.

Now that I'm wrapping my head around it and sort of expanding, you know, okay, well, it just means, you know, how do we, how do we live with nature so nature can do its thing so the Indigenous peoples can continue to manage and live on the land, and that's enough.

Terry Dorward: Much like looking at other concepts like Indigenous Protected Conserved Areas, which we're a part of supporting nations, nature-based solutions is another concept using the English language, but it really has to come from the Indigenous nations themselves on what it means to be a part of the natural world and, how our ancestors did it, but also looking at new technologies, for us as Indigenous peoples that could lead by example.

Understanding that, you know, as Indigenous Peoples, you know, we were once a very wealthy people and that wealth came from a healthy ecosystem.[00:06:00]

We're not seeing that same wealth as our ancestors had, pre-contact. And so as a people, in order for us to get back, if nature-based solutions is a tool to create that healthy abundance once again for future generations, we need to explore these different ways.

Randi Russell: There's an opportunity for us to rethink the concept of nature-based solutions by centering Indigenous knowledge. We're also hearing a need to cut through the jargon. It's important to make sure that we simplify language so that tools and resources are accessible to everyone.

Dani Warren: We need to demystify, to make the opportunities tangible, make the steps from the start very, very clear, and understand what a project will actually mean on the land. I think the biggest piece for [00:07:00] demystifying is the mitigation of risk. Like just mitigating risk in terms of partnerships, in terms of ownership. And integrity for a project. And what I mean by that is that there are a lot of amazing projects globally, but unfortunately some of them have great effects on the land, but the revenues maybe don't always go back to the communities of where those projects are established. And a lot of that comes to those early days of partnerships. You know, when you are looking at developing a project, who are you partnering with? Who owns the project? Who owns those offsets? Who's selling those offsets into the marketplace once the project is developed.

And that is such an important conversation to have, right from day one.

RAD: Dani brings up a key question. What are the risks and opportunities that come with engaging in carbon markets? And beyond carbon markets, what other pathways exist?

Gwen Bridge: I started hearing about all these projects, working with my First Nations clients, right, to say, okay, [00:08:00] well, people will come in, oh, you

should do carbon and this kind of stuff. Here's your pre feasibility assessment for carbon.

What does that project mean? So Dani's articulated that really well in terms of really thinking through the risks. But what other options are available, what is emerging from the space? How can you create your own mechanism for a market-based conservation mechanism thingy, right? Is that a possibility that exists?

So for me that was really important and I still feel like there's a lot of literature coming out. If you think sort of from the conservation financing space, all these reports, right, are coming out of this watershed financing report and carbon and blue carbon and all these different kinds of things, right? And so it becomes very difficult to make sense and, you know, cohesive and appropriate recommendations to community for that.

And so, you know, the convening of these conversations that you're doing here with RAD and that will continue and that others are doing are really important so that we can say, okay, well, here's the range of things to choose from.

Randi Russell: [00:09:00] let's sum it up. Why RAD and why now?

Terry Dorward: The core purpose that I believe in the RAD network, restore, assert, and defend, you know, how it can best serve us as nations, as a network, a body that works from coast to coast, that's trying to work, and reach out and build that unity, is to, it's to find, you know, those like minded people that are going through their own decolonization process.

You know, understanding the impacts of industrialization, of Canadian colonization. And finding ways to support one another as we evolve as a people and look at land relationships in a new way. You know, breaking away from the Indian Act.

And, I think really [00:10:00] finding ways to, to support alternative economies as well. If we're going to be building strong sovereign Indigenous nations, looking at our own land relationships through our own cultural lens.

We're stronger together, I believe.

Gwen Bridge: I think the core purpose of the RAD Network to me and what sort of was exciting to me about supporting its efforts to help First Nations is that it would focus on knowledge sharing,

We know we have a lot of perspective within nations across Turtle Island even, like we have people who are saying, well, this is all, you know, false solution stuff, all this kind of thing, right? Don't play in this game kind of thing. And then we have people like, we really see this as an opportunity to be able to create betterment for our community and protect the environment.

So there's this range of perspective. And I think we need a non biased set of information and set of recommendations [00:11:00] that will help nations select from that. Um, whether you're a, false solution kind of tribe, or whether you're like, yeah, let's get on board with getting some economic benefit here. There has to be a range of options and opportunities for all First Nations to partake.

And I think RAD is well positioned to do that exploration and set up some of those initial criteria and recommendations for these kinds of things in an unbiased way, right? And so I think that's really important.

Dani Warren: I have been so fortunate to be a part of the RAD Network since its inception and, you know, back when it was just a vision under the CRP, the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership.

And I think the real power behind RAD, what I've experienced firsthand is that knowledge sharing piece. And I think RAD has been an exceptional place for and welcoming holistic space for people across Canada to be able to share what they're doing and, and some of the successes and the challenges. And, it allows [00:12:00] us to understand that while all of our communities are different and our languages and traditions are different – that we are all connected.

And I think it's so needed within the space, just in Canada in general. And it's not just about carbon offsets, it's about nature, it's about culture. It's also about reconciliation. I struggle with that word sometimes, but it is very, very much needed. And I think when we look at the work RAD is doing, that's what reconciliation actually looks like.

Randi: [00:13:00] Thank you for joining us in the RAD Story Lodge. We hope you enjoyed today's episode. To learn more, visit radnetwork.ca, follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn, and be sure to subscribe to the podcast to stay connected and reach out if you have a story to share.

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Randi Russell: And my dog is snoring, so should I move her?