

Impact of First Nations and Municipal Partnerships

June 12, 2024

English River Grasswood Reserve

Grasswood Reserve

- Owned since the mid-1990s and purchased under Treaty Land Entitlement
- The parcel is 135 acres with Highway 11 exposure and bordered by railways and the City of Saskatoon
- Approximately 12,000 vehicles a day pass by the property
- Over the past thirty years, ten acres on the south end of the property was developed including the busiest Petro-Canada in the Province

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Barriers to Development

- Overall lack of Infrastructure with two major issues:
 - Limited potable water
 - Wastewater by septic field and pumping

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Development Solutions

- **Des Nedhe (the Development Corporation solely owned by English River First Nation) could not move forward without resolving the wastewater issue first.**
 - **We built a Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) to serve our development, but we had additional capacity. Our regulators are Indigenous Services Canada and WSA.**
 - **We reached out to developers and the RM to provide wastewater services to the area.**
 - **Initially, the surrounding community was surprised that we had built a wastewater treatment facility.**

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Moving to Relationships

First Steps

- The RM of Corman Park proved to be the ideal partner for us. They have powers as a municipality to enforce non-payment, development fee structures, and a database of existing clients.
- We were the ideal partner for them as we took on the costs of infrastructure and as a sovereign First Nation, we could development without extensive external consultation.

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Benefits of Relationship

- **The RM of Corman Park could not develop further without additional infrastructure**
 - Septic systems may leak and the water table in the area is high.
 - The City of Saskatoon has limited potable water and wastewater capacity to service growth within its own boundaries.
 - First Nations and the RM can access different dollars for development.
 - Wastewater and water availability can allow increased densification as identified in the regional plan increasing revenue from tax and attracting additional developers.
 - Land values increase due to available infrastructure.

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Canada Infrastructure Bank

- English River and Des Nedhe Group secured Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) Funding to develop additional infrastructure and compete the business park at Grasswood.
 - \$27MM to develop all internal systems and a force main down Grasswood Road.
 - The process with CIB is extensive and requires development of all engineering and financial modelling.
 - The process required extensive legal agreements and over a year of development.

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EPCOR

- **We are now developing relationships with EPCOR and the RM of Corman Park**
 - EPCOR started as the City of Edmonton's utility provider but is now involved in water and wastewater systems throughout Western Canada and areas of the United States where water supply is constrained.
 - We are assessing demand for additional potable water and wastewater to determine proper sizing for an initial water treatment facility and additional wastewater capacity.

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The Future

- We will continue to develop our relationship with the RM of Corman Park and with EPCOR
- Our business park is attracting high profile potential clients that are primarily interested in custom build/lease situations as they do not want to carry building assets on their balance sheets and the leases are part of ESG, First Nations spend, and reconciliation strategies.
- Other clients are interested in the business park to attract and retain First Nations employees.
- Previously First Nation land was valued less than comparables, but we believe that this is changing.

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Lessons Learnt

- There are people opposed to First Nations being involved in the economy.
- Agreements and developments with multiple stakeholders will still take time and legal can be challenging.
- Municipalities generally do not understand how they can work with a FN to their mutual benefit.
- We likely have the first Services Agreement from a FN to a Municipality.
- FNs can move faster than most partners and access different funding.
- Internal and external resource demands to develop meaningful partnerships leveraging infrastructure will be sustained and high.

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Des Nèdhé Group
An English River First Nation Enterprise