

Senator Klyne - Question on access to capital:

A: My career prior to Tea Creek was as a professional business planner, business plan writer, and commercial negotiator. I worked for First Nations, and I negotiated loans directly with banks. I also accessed these tools you mentioned for my own business. So, I am very familiar with the reality that we face and the many extra hoops we have to jump through to access fewer resources that cost more.

I am aware of the institutions that you mentioned. The numbers tell the story. The base interest at our ACCs is 13%, perhaps higher now - when the mainstream rates were 3-5%, the ACC rate was 13%. Now, let's talk about capital limits. ACCs have very low borrowing ceilings, well below the capital needs to start a farm or ranch. That one FCC loan in BC? It was FCC buying out an ACC loan to a successful Indigenous farmer. They reduced the interest from 13% to 6.5%, but the problem is that the market rate for non-Indigenous lenders at the time was less than that.

Access to financial resources and tools are not fair. We'd like to start with fairness, and then have reconciliation on top of that. I know many, many hard-working Indigenous people who are held back by lack of access to capital and lending tools.

Senator Duncan - Question on flooding and climate change:

A: We are definitely impacted by global warming, climate change, and climate disasters. We suffered record flooding and record forest fires in the last few years. We've learned that local food stocks are essentially less than 24 hours, food leaves the shelves within a day. During Covid lockdowns, stores here ran out of food, and we had people driving over 100km to get food at our farm.

We've had unimaginable heat in the last two years. It has hit +38, +40 Celsius for extended periods. This is heat that was thought impossible a few years ago. In 2020, we had an incredibly cold, wet year. So, the only thing we know for sure is that the weather has become unpredictable.

The good news is that Indigenous Agriculture offers solutions and tools for climate resilience. Another presenter mentioned inter-planting. Also, in our Indigenous food forest, temps were about 10c cooler during the heat waves. The healthy forest regulates temperature and slowly releases water.

As climate disasters ramp up, the issue of food security becomes more acute. I have children, and working toward solutions around climate are one of the many driving factors behind Tea Creek.