


Indigenous Conservation Engagement Framework

Version 2.1, December 2023



A photograph of a sunset over rolling green hills. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow and long rays of light. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, there are green hills covered in wildflowers, including small white daisies and larger yellow flowers.

"Land is an equalizer between all peoples; a safe place for cultural exchange and understanding. When we are on the Land, we naturally meet each other through our humanity."

This is where we find ethical space. Because we are all part of Nature, our shared responsibilities to Land transcend systems and colonized protocols.

There is a need for an acceptance of all worldviews and our collective strengths in order to care for ourselves, for each other and for the Land, now and for future generations."

Chloe Dragon Smith, 2020

RECOGNITION AND GRATITUDE

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) works on the traditional territories of many Indigenous Nations. We recognize the Indigenous communities, individuals and organizations who have shared, partnered and collaborated with NCC. It is a tremendous opportunity and privilege to work with and learn from you.

NCC is in the early stages of our Indigenous engagement and conservation learning journey, and we are committed to learning and growing from our missteps. We seek to listen and act with respect and integrity.

We are grateful to those Indigenous Peoples, communities, organizations and advisors that have assisted and guided us on the initial steps of our journey through their participation in and support for NCC's work. Thank you for your patience, wisdom and advice as we undertake our conservation work framed within a commitment to Reconciliation.



ACKNOWLEDGING TRUTH

Indigenous Peoples have stewarded their territories for millennia in a reciprocal relationship with the land. This relationship seeks balance in a natural world that includes humans, their cultures, economies and communities. Colonial practices including conservation have dislocated and disconnected Indigenous Peoples from their territories, and from their roles and responsibilities to the land. Conservation actions have had negative impacts on Indigenous lands, communities and cultures and have perpetuated intergenerational harm.

The increased recognition of Canada's colonial history and impacts on Indigenous Peoples and a growing respect for Indigenous ways of knowing is changing conservation efforts in Canada. Conservation practitioners are beginning to acknowledge the role of conservation in the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their territories and understand how a transformed conservation practice can contribute to Reconciliation.



Photo by Emrys Miller

TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

In a decade marked by global crises of dramatic biodiversity loss and climate change, Indigenous Peoples are leading the way in demonstrating how restoring relationships to land is an integral part of addressing these challenges. A transformed approach to nature conservation not only offers solutions to biodiversity loss and climate change, but an opportunity to build new pathways toward thriving communities and ecosystems, in relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The 2018 Pathway to Canada Target 1 recognized the importance of Indigenous-led conservation, and the Indigenous Circle of Experts report We Rise Together set a path toward Reconciliation through future conservation efforts.

The 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework includes new ambitious targets for area-based conservation and aims to increase the global coverage of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures to at least 30 per cent by 2030 (30×30). This approach will “deliver benefits for biodiversity and human society, while recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.”



WALKING A NEW PATH

NCC's 2018 Indigenous Conservation Engagement Framework (ICEF) outlined a vision to work with Indigenous Peoples to achieve more long-term conservation. Indigenous leadership in conservation has gained extraordinary momentum, and NCC's learnings and our work with Indigenous Peoples continue to grow.

Since 2018, NCC has participated in the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership, an Indigenous-led network that brings together a diverse range of partners to act on the recommendations of the Indigenous Circle of Experts. We are learning from organizations and communities across Canada by supporting the recognition and expansion of Indigenous-led conservation through Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and Indigenous Guardians programs.

We continue to learn by doing and building relationships and conservation partnerships with Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations across the country.

The accelerated targets of the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework cannot be reached without Indigenous-led conservation, and private land conservation organizations such as NCC have a significant role in learning from and supporting these efforts.

NCC's strategic plan 2021-2030 "Toward a Thriving World" renews and extends our ambitious pledge to nature and our commitment to advancing conservation through Reconciliation as partners and allies with Indigenous Peoples.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Four strategic pillars set out the direction in NCC's Strategic Plan to build a thriving world: accelerate conservation, evolve our culture, grow support and optimize our delivery. Embedded in these pillars are the priorities that guide our work.

One of these priorities is to be a trusted partner and ally to Indigenous Peoples through the conservation of lands and waters.

The renewed ICEF 2023 re-commits NCC to our role in supporting Reconciliation through conservation. It identifies our vision, guiding principles, and the strategies NCC will undertake to deliver on our commitments.

ICEF 2023 builds on the success and learnings of the 2018 Framework. It applies to all NCC's areas of work and will be renewed again in 2030.





Photo by Adam Bialo

OUR VISION

NCC contributes to significant and durable conservation outcomes, and to Reconciliation, as a partner and ally with Indigenous Peoples.

We build meaningful relationships founded in mutual respect, and share our capacity, expertise and influence in support of Indigenous-led conservation.

We work in an ethical space to transform ourselves and our conservation practice through recognition and respect for Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, relationships and responsibilities to land.



THE FRAMEWORK

Identifies the broad strategies we will employ to meet our priorities.



STANDARD OF ENGAGEMENT

Provides a pathway and foundation to activate the strategies.



IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Includes policies, guidance, standards, training and tools to execute the Framework.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We recognize and appreciate the broad diversity of and within Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations.
- Engagement with Indigenous Peoples reflect best practices, including principles and learnings from the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- Relationships are based on trust, transparency, reciprocity and accountability.
- Indigenous ways of knowing are respected for their unique insights and contributions to understanding and caring for land.
- We demonstrate humility in our learning, listening and creation of solutions.
- We engage in an ethical space to collaborate, share and learn.

OUR STRATEGIES

NCC will employ four strategies to achieve our priority of becoming trusted partners and allies to Indigenous Peoples in conservation:

BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Being a partner and ally in conservation requires establishing a respectful relationship as a foundation for all of NCC's work.

ENABLE A CULTURALLY COMPETENT ORGANIZATION

Building meaningful relationships requires a commitment to knowledgeable staff, sufficient resources and a willingness to do things differently. This approach needs to be fully integrated across the organization; it is a part of everyone's work at NCC.

NCC WILL TRANSFORM OUR CONSERVATION PRACTICE

to ensure that Indigenous rights, roles and responsibilities are recognized and respected in our work.

NCC WILL SUPPORT INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION

efforts through multiple pathways to accelerate the achievement of our common conservation goals.



ACTIVATING OUR STRATEGIES



BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Activate Standard of Engagement

Build staff capacity and tools to support engagement

Monitor and measure effectiveness of relationships

Centre Indigenous perspectives



ENABLE A CULTURALLY COMPETENT ORGANIZATION

Training and capacity building opportunities for NCC staff

Integration of competencies across all business units

Recruitment, retention and support for Indigenous employees

Establish internal and external Indigenous Advisory capacity



TRANSFORM OUR CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Support Indigenous stewardship and restoration of land relationships

Explore how multiple ways of knowing enhance and expand our understanding of nature

Recognizing Indigenous priorities and values in our systematic conservation planning

Develop processes and mechanisms for land sharing



SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION

Provide technical and capacity support for Indigenous-led conservation

Adapt, advance and share conservation tools

Remove barriers and create pathways for Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas

Communicate our service offerings

MEASURING IMPACT

Performance indicators will measure the effectiveness of these strategies in meeting our goals.



Our relationships with Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations; and



Durable conservation outcomes related to our relationships.





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