



# A Framework for Advancing Reconciliation

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## 1. Statement of accountability

Ecotrust Canada is committed to building respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities and peoples. We are committed to upholding and respecting Indigenous governance, rights, and title in the places we live, work, and dream together.

We acknowledge that over our 25-year history of working with Indigenous communities, there have been times when we have done so without free, prior or informed consent. In the past, Ecotrust Canada has approached projects with Indigenous communities on a project-by-project basis during which proper protocols may not have been consistently appreciated or followed. By not engaging in consistent, structured, safe, and open partnerships with all Indigenous communities with whom we have worked, we have perpetuated harm. We understand that our work, and how we go about it, is informed by colonial ideology, and subject to colonial bias. We acknowledge that sometimes our public-facing material gives the impression that we are farther along in our path toward Reconciliation than we may be in reality. Finally, we acknowledge that we have not always created culturally safe conditions in our partnerships with Indigenous communities.

This document expresses our aspirations and our plan to do better, and to be an active participant in Reconciliation in all our work. We commit to evolving and updating this Framework as we learn and grow from our successes as well as our mistakes.

## 2. Our commitment

Today, Ecotrust Canada is committed to strengthening our relationship with Indigenous communities based on respect, humility, and reciprocity. We acknowledge that we must take responsibility for our own ongoing process of Reconciliation, which includes immediate and ongoing education, critical reflection, seeking and acting on feedback and changing practices, policies, and organizational structures. We acknowledge our responsibility to create a culturally safe environment, within the organization and in our partnerships, as we do this work. We commit to applying our organizational values of curiosity, kinship, trust, courage, accountability, and justice to this process. We know at Ecotrust Canada that our work is only as good as our relationships.

### 3. Working definitions for this framework

Communicating our understanding and intentions regarding Reconciliation can be challenging given that the words we choose can mean many different things to different people. For the purposes of this framework, we offer the following working definitions, which we expect will continue to evolve, much as we expect the framework itself to change over time:

- **Reconciliation:** Reconciliation entails the redressing of the wrongs and harms of our colonial past and remedying the mechanisms and structures by which wrongs and harms continue to be produced and reproduced. Reconciliation also holds within it an aspirational goal — the peoples of this land being able to come together to create a future empowered by self-determination.
- **Decolonization:** Decolonization, at a minimum, entails an action which has the effect of restoring some measure of what was unjustly taken or substantially remedying some harm that resulted from colonization. As colonization involved the forcible occupation of lands, displacement and oppression of peoples and their identities, and active suppression of legal orders and values, then anything which might rightly be called decolonization must include an attempt to redress at least one of these sources of harm.
- **Decolonialization:** Decolonialization refers to disentangling harmful colonial ideas and practices from how we live and operate, both individually and institutionally. We use decolonialization to distinguish from the

more substantial, restorative, undertaking of decolonization (see “Decolonization” above) so as not to detract or trivialize the latter.

- **Kinship:** Kinship, as used in this document and at Ecotrust Canada, is an idea and concept rooted in Indigenous Knowledge and described extensively by Robin Wall Kimmerer where nature is not viewed as a resource but like an Elder “relative” — recognising kinship with plants, mountains, and lakes. Living in kinship centres on the interdependency between all living beings and their habitats and on humans’ inherent reciprocal relationship with the animals and plants around them.
- **Indigenization:** We are committed to supporting and facilitating Indigenous self-determination, ensuring both decolonization and decolonialization are advanced with, and wherever appropriate by, Indigenous peoples. This entails respecting, understanding, and integrating into our work as much as possible the values, traditions, and ways of knowing of our Indigenous partners.



## 4. Our Purpose – Why we are undertaking a process of Reconciliation

Our staff, board, and our Indigenous partners, all have different lived experiences, but we are all rooted in our love and respect for our communities and for the ecosystems that sustain us. We are drawn together by our desire to create well-being for our communities and to end destructive colonial economic approaches that focus on extraction and create divisions and inequities wherever they are applied.

As we carry out our mission working with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, Ecotrust Canada aspires to be an effective ally for Indigenous communities and governments. Ecotrust Canada also believes that Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing are critically important to our mission — specifically in finding on-the-ground solutions that

demonstrate the interdependence of human, cultural, and ecological well-being. Further, Ecotrust Canada asserts that a reversal of colonial-rooted economic systems, particularly as they relate to natural resource exploitation, will allow for the re-establishment of economic connections between people and place, and the creation of alternative economic models that improve human and environmental well-being.

In this way, we are engaged in Reconciliation because our mission demands it and depends on it. We believe that an ‘economy that provides for life’ is best achieved in a multi-cultural, [multi-juridical](#) society.





## 5. Our Goals for Reconciliation

Based on the definitions above in Section 3 of this Framework, Ecotrust Canada (EC) seeks to advance Reconciliation with Indigenous Nations in Canada by taking actions in three areas;

EC will actively *decolonialize* by,

- Committing to a rigorous and ongoing education process with our staff and board to fully understand and appreciate the past, present, and potential future impact of colonialism.
- Advancing economic relationships and outcomes that support different understandings of well-being for humans and non-humans alike.
- Practicing full transparency, co-creation and/or equitable sharing of resources with communities when positioning for financial donations.

EC aims to contribute to *decolonizing* by,

- Supporting partner Nations and communities as they build authority to govern their lands and waters, and to assert what is their right.
- Supporting Nations and communities in co-creating knowledge products that strengthen rights and title and practicing of the Nation's laws, jurisdiction, and protocols.

EC will encourage *Indigenization* by,

- Creating an environment within the organization that is culturally safe for many ways of knowing to come together.
- Creating a process of co-creation within our Indigenous partnerships that prioritizes the expression of community-defined aspirations, principles and values, outcomes, and evaluation.





## 6. Ecotrust Canada Reconciliation Action Plan

### 6.1 Context

Ecotrust Canada clearly acknowledges and continually strives to understand the truth of Canada's colonial past and present. We strive to ensure the organization's mission, strategy, structure, and operations are consistent with, and oriented toward, creating a future that reconciles that truth with creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for Indigenous Nations and People.

*At Ecotrust Canada we understand that Reconciliation is an ongoing commitment, as opposed to a timebound process with discrete deliverables. We will endeavour to actively learn and adjust our process as lessons are learned — as we both succeed and fail along this path.*

### 6.2 Objectives

#### 6.2.1 Organizational Communications

Renew our communication strategy to,

- Provide clarity on how we address issues of Reconciliation, self-determination, and decolonization through our external communications by end of June 2023.
- Build a collection of living resources for staff to use and ensure we are consistent in our communications approach to Reconciliation by end of June 2023.

#### 6.2.2 Fundraising

Create Fundraising Guidelines that clarify our obligations to,

- Be fully transparent with Indigenous communities and Nations and obtain consent when they are referenced in our fundraising materials.
- Enter fundraising partnerships, whenever a proposal is developed that is specific to an Indigenous community or Nation, through which Indigenous partners are clearly represented in the development of proposals, and in the execution of projects.
- Ensure that funding generated through fundraising partnerships is shared transparently and equitably with partner communities and Nations.

### 6.2.3 Partnerships

Renew partnerships by,

- Updated policy on how we work with Indigenous Communities and how we navigate distinctions in authority and representation e.g., elected and hereditary systems etc.
- Where appropriate, draft **Letters of Accountability** to partner Indigenous communities.
- Where appropriate, update Memorandum of Understandings with Indigenous partners.
- Share and adopt where appropriate Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks that facilitate the Indigenization of our work.

### 6.2.4 Governance

Renew Governance through the 2022 – 2027 Strategic Planning process,

- The board enacts a Board Development process to address decolonization and Indigenization by March 2023.
- EC produces and enacts this Reconciliation framework upon which to guide our planning and practices by November 2023.

### 6.2.5 Mission and Strategy

Through the 2022 – 2027 Strategic Planning process,

- EC clarifies how Indigenous Reconciliation and self-determination are integrated within our mission and strategy.

### 6.2.6 Staff & Internal

Renew staff cultural policies and procedures by,

- Including initial training on Reconciliation in Employee onboarding materials by August 2023.
- Staff and the Organization create (and continually improve) cultural safety plan annually in November, including ongoing support and resources to maintain a dialogue and process of decolonization.
- Policy on increasing Indigenous representation on staff in place by March 2023.
- Policy on supporting and promoting Indigenous staff in place by March 2023.
- Updated hiring practices and create standardized hiring process and policies that are equitable and in line with our vision, mission, and strategy in place by February 2023.







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Ecotrust Canada respectfully acknowledges the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), and Coast Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) peoples on whose traditional territories our two offices are located.