

SELF-REFLECTION AND ASSESSMENT TOOL

Reflective questions to better align ENGO financial practices with commitments to Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship

INTRO AND BACKGROUND

On behalf of RAD Network and EcoAnalytics and Environics, we invite you to participate and utilize this tool which was created from a collaborative research project exploring how ENGOs are working to align their financial practices with their commitments to reconciliation and undoing colonial barriers.

This project builds on previous work on decolonizing environmental practices and philanthropy (eg., Upwelling + Truth Telling events, dialogue and reports from Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership) and is intended as a way for organizations to continue learning and strengthening partnerships between settler-led ENGOs and Indigenous Peoples. The intention of this project was to help organizations learn from each other's challenges and best practices. We hope the findings from this report quicken the pace of innovation in financial practices, leading to more resources under Indigenous direction in the conservation field. For more information here is a link to our September 2025 [webinar video](#). We encourage you to review the findings and reflect where your policies, engagements and protocols align (or diverge) with emerging practices before diving into this reflective exercise.

Non-Indigenous Participants

Are you a non-Indigenous organization that aims to support Indigenous land stewardship initiatives? Do you have financial relationships tied to these commitments and goals? If yes, this tool could be for you!

This questionnaire is designed to be completed in collaborative organizational settings, with program and financial staff. It should be rooted in dialogue, contemplative thought processes, empathy and understanding.

The call to action is for users to bring these questions to their respective teams (i.e. operational teams, financial teams, leadership members, etc.) and host a thoughtful discussion of where their organization is at with their financial practices/priorities, and where they intend to go. The overarching goal is to engage the financial teams of non-Indigenous organizations—who may not necessarily be on the front lines of relationships with Indigenous Peoples—in a conversation that helps alleviate pressures on those who are on the front lines of those relationships. In the context of Indigenous-led stewardship, this tool serves as a developmental pathway to identify organizational practices, including learnings and areas for change, as well as potential barriers, in relation to working with Indigenous communities.



Once that progress is clearly identified and named, we encourage conversations that articulate an improved pathway forward that aligns with emerging practices and Indigenous worldviews. Ideally, tool users would reconnect with this questionnaire during key financial planning cycles to reflect upon the journey thus far and make policy and practice decisions aligned with organizational goals for reconciliation and right relations with Indigenous Peoples.

The ultimate goal of this questionnaire is to help organizations illuminate the intersection of their financial practices in relation to Indigenous-led conservation, to examine where systemic roots of inequity, bias, extraction of culture and lands still persists within the hidden confines of financial policies/practices.

We aim to mobilize the practical findings from this research into developmental conversations that lead to transformative financial changes within organizations and in wider funding and financial systems. We are calling for action and accountability with the hope that transformational financial practices and policies can be catalyzed in support of and alignment with Indigenous-led land relationships.

INTENT & HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Indigenous Participants

Are you an Indigenous government, organization, or community that is engaging with (or potentially engaging with) environmental organizations in support of Indigenous land stewardship? Do those established or emerging relationships include fiscal or financial responsibilities? If yes, then this tool could be for you!

This questionnaire was designed with ENGOs in mind and is to be completed in collaborative settings, rooted in dialogue, contemplative thought processes, empathy and understanding. The call to action is for ENGOs to bring these questions to their respective teams (i.e. operational teams, financial teams, leadership members etc) and host a thoughtful discussion of where ENGOs are at with their financial practices/priorities and where they intend to go. In the context of Indigenous-led stewardship, this tool serves as a developmental pathway to identify organizational practices, including learnings and areas for improvement when working with Indigenous communities.

Indigenous governments, organizations and communities can present this tool to their non-Indigenous partners as a way to host transparent, meaningful and proactive conversations around finances, fundraising practices, and funding Indigenous-led conservation. Through the use of this tool, one of the intended goals is to identify financial commonalities and 'sticking points' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners; where the hope is to have conversations to articulate an improved pathway forward that aligns with Indigenous worldviews and right relations.

HARNESSING THE ENERGY

We recognize that discussing financial practices and relationships can unwrap a variety of feelings and sentiments. If this happens during your dialogues, it is important to specifically name the emotions as they come forward; this is a critical step in your journey. To support this process, we encourage you to practice mindful observation (pausing to notice thoughts, feelings and physical body sensations such as tension or heartbeat) as it is connected to improved decision making, increased self-awareness and enhanced relationships.

Having these open and honest discussions is important, and as we continue to grow these conversations around these conversations, it's important to harness that spirit to move towards a transformed system that respects and uplifts Indigenous-led land stewardship.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF CURRENT FUNDING AND FINANCIAL PRACTICES

1. How do you think Indigenous Peoples perceive your organization, do you have mechanisms to get this feedback, what are the gaps you are working on? Factors to consider include:
 - a. How your organization was historically founded and funded, and how this influences your purpose, accountabilities and culture (e.g. membership-based, a few key donors, US-based, or global organization, etc.)
 - b. Current funding reliances and how this influences your purpose, accountabilities and culture (e.g. private donors, public funds, corporate donations, etc)
 - c. Evaluating ethical funding sources
 - d. Funding distribution (administrative costs, fundraising, grants, research, other, etc).

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. Does your organizations' mission relate to Indigenous values of stewardship for the land and formally acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty/self determination? How is your mission and other public commitments informed by UNDRIP, TRC Calls to Action and Principles of OCAP?
2. What role do Indigenous advisors or communities uphold and how do you ensure their perspectives are equitably braided into decisions that affect them?

SECTION 3: FUNDING AGREEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS NATIONS

1. Consider the types of financial partnerships your organization hosts or are considering with Indigenous Peoples. Are you:
 - a. Making efforts to ensure funding is more predictable/sustainable and transparent?
 - b. Supporting Nations in non-financial ways?
 - c. If offering in-kind supports, does this include training, youth engagement or long-term consideration of how this capacity might be shifted into the Nation?
 - d. Considering how decisions are made when funding is allocated to Indigenous projects?
 - e. Re-evaluating financial policies to ensure processes are supporting Indigenous worldviews?
 - f. Transparently sharing the total amount of funding that you receive and how this relates to Indigenous-focused funds raised and distributed?
 - g. Actively pursuing pathways to land back and upholding Indigenous governance?
 - h. Advancing solutions that uphold Indigenous economic sovereignty and increase access to own-source revenue?

SECTION 4: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

1. Do you have formal or informal mutual learning opportunities or evaluations built into your organizational practices to uncover pathways to decolonize and advance reconciliation?

Considerations include:

- a. What barriers or difficulties have you faced when upholding your organization's Indigenous commitments?
- b. Were you able to work with the Nations to better understand their experiences and inform paths forward or practice changes?
- c. Do you have mechanisms in your organization to share learning across program areas and that impact financial practices and broader organizational policies?

SECTION 5: INCREASING SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION AND SUPPORTING REFLECTIVE POLICIES

1. Are there designated staff responsible for ensuring alignment between organizational practices and Indigenous commitments?
2. How do you plan to increase financial support and capacity for Indigenous-led conservation?
3. Does your organization maintain commitments to participating in Indigenous-focused learning networks? Have any financial staff participated in Indigenous-focused learning? Financial staff may include Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), finance leads, administrative staff, fundraising support staff, grant writing teams, etc.
4. How has participation in Indigenous-focused training impacted your financial practices?

SECTION 6: FINANCIAL TRANSFORMATION EVALUATION CHART

Inspired by Justice Funders Resonance Framework, this chart aims to help ENGOs self-assess how their financial practices align with Indigenous-led conservation practices and values. This chart is an incomplete list of the many transformative financial practice possibilities, and is meant to guide reflection and calls to action—not to rank or score organizations numerically or competitively. We intend to build on this resource as more wise practices emerge. The starting point may not be the same for all those who participate, but the goal is to highlight what could be possible on our paths toward reconciliation. While going through this chart, please keep the following in mind: where do you fall on the spectrum of transactional to transformative and what does it take to move towards transformation?

Practice	Paths of Practice	
	Transactional	Transformative
Decision-making power	Budget decisions are made internally by the organization.	<u>Indigenous partners</u> lead decisions affecting them.
Financial policies	Policies are rigid and heavily enforced (receipts, per diems, legalese in financial contracts and agreements, defaults to intellectual property for work undertaken).	Policies reflect Indigenous definitions of time, include reciprocity/trust-based approaches and maintain a flexible approach to allow for cultural contexts (e-transfer, elders paid in cash, etc).
Reporting	Reporting mechanisms are strictly determined by organization/funder.	Indigenous methodologies and chosen platforms of storytelling/ceremony are the main method of reporting.
Accepting funding	ENGOS accept money without aligning with Indigenous worldviews or funding ethics.	Indigenous partners co-lead funding acceptance strategies.
Annual funding distribution	Minimal funds are distributed to Indigenous-led initiatives/projects and majority stays within ENGO.	Significant and intentional allocations are made to Indigenous-led initiatives.
Commitments to Indigenous-led conservation	ENGO has no internal or external commitments to Indigenous-led conservation.	ENGO has public facing commitments (with progress reports) that align with Treaty Rights, UNDRIP, TRC, OCAP and community partner protocols.
Land Back action	Minimal to no efforts are being made to ensure land is returned to Indigenous partners.	Actively supporting return or transfer of land back to Indigenous partners.
Increasing capacity in communities	Supporting communities is short term and project-based, effectively maintaining reliance on external funding, tools or “expertise”.	Organizations are removing themselves from the capacity-builder role and thinking about building capacity well in advance in self-determined ways (ie. in 5 years, capacity will be BUILT and organization is no longer needed).
Indigenous representation	Indigenous participation is tokenistic or symbolic.	Indigenous leadership is embedded throughout all levels of financial decision making—from strategy to implementation.
Overcoming financial allocation challenges and barriers	No feedback loops or mechanisms for overcoming barriers.	Proactive steps are being taken to work with Indigenous partners to identify challenges and co-create culturally inclusive solutions.
Funding agreements and contracts	ENGO imposes funding cycles with fixed-term end dates.	Trust-based funding agreement models are designed in collaboration with Indigenous partners, with predictable and sustainable funding.