

GUIDANCE FOR BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

BACKGROUND

Nature United is a Canadian conservation organization that creates solutions for people and nature by building diverse partnerships to protect lands and waters and ensure nature is the foundation of healthy communities, economies and future opportunities. We are the Canadian affiliate of the world's largest conservation organization, The Nature Conservancy (nature.org).

Nature United believes the increased authority of Indigenous peoples to steward their lands and waters results in durable and lasting solutions for people and nature over time. As such, Nature United works in partnership to support Indigenous-led conservation, which is defined and implemented by Indigenous communities, grounded in Indigenous values and perspectives, and often focuses on the interconnected issues of supporting vibrant communities, strong cultures, viable economies, and healthy ecosystems.

OUR APPROACH

Our organization recognizes and respects the Indigenous peoples of Canada—First Nations, Inuit and Metis Nations—as the original rights-holders of the lands and waters of what is now known as Canada. We also recognize the integral role of Indigenous peoples in the governance, management and conservation of lands and waters. Nature United adheres to a human rights-based approach to conservation, which means that we seek to respect and integrate Indigenous rights into our programs and activities (*please refer our resource “Indigenous Rights and Nature United’s Approach to Conservation”*). As such, Nature United seeks to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples, communities and/or organizations where shared interests exist to manage and protect functioning ecosystems; increase the authority of Indigenous peoples to manage and steward lands and waters; build sustainable local economies; and to achieve other tangible benefits developed in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

From Nature United’s perspective, enduring and effective partnerships are based on shared interests, mutual respect and open dialogue. Nature United may contribute to partnerships with Indigenous peoples in many ways, including but not limited to: private and public fundraising; science and research in conservation, mapping and other tools; marketing and awareness campaigns; corporate engagement; domestic and international policy; and global strategies. As the Canadian affiliate of the world’s largest conservation organization, Nature United can access and draw on the resources, experience and expertise of this larger organization.

New partnerships with Indigenous peoples, communities and/or organizations, or maintaining and strengthening existing partnerships, ideally involves building shared understandings and agreements, including but not limited to:

1. **Shared Vision:** Nature United believes in establishing long-term, effective and productive relationships with Indigenous partners. This means we seek agreement on short-, medium- and long-term goals and outcomes, approaches, roles and overall scope of work.
2. **Funding:** Nature United is not a traditional funder, i.e. we do not generally receive funding applications, and we have limited unallocated funds. However, we do have the ability to work in collaboration with Indigenous partners to seek and identify the resources required for specific projects and to assist in securing funding.
3. **Communications:** Nature United’s *Guidelines for Communicating with/about Indigenous Partners* informs and directs the development of all communication materials led by our

communications, marketing and philanthropy staff about the work that our organization is directly involved in or indirectly supporting. All of our communications processes and materials adhere to the principles of Consent, Respect, Authenticity and Reciprocity.

4. **Community Engagement:** Nature United believes that durable conservation solutions are best identified and implemented by people on the ground. We also believe that for projects to be successful there must be broad community buy-in and support. We consider community engagement an integral component of the work that our organization both directly participates in and supports. In particular, we apply a human-rights based approach to our work that addresses the inclusion of women, young people and other groups within communities. As we develop plans with partners about priority projects, Nature United is interested in understanding how the broader community will be engaged in the project.
5. **Decision-making Authority:** Nature United recognizes that there may be multiple systems of governance within Indigenous communities we partner with. We respect both hereditary and elected forms of government. When working in partnership, we need to understand the reporting structures and decision-making authority as it relates to the project and scope of work. Our organization strives to engage in partnerships that have the support of both elected and hereditary systems. We also provide partners with clear and accessible information about the decision-making authorities and reporting structures within our own organization.
6. **Other:** There may be other components or qualities of a partnership that either Nature United or Indigenous partners would like to develop into a shared understanding and/or agreement. Each partnership is unique and may include additional agreements or clarifications about relevant topics or issues.

Nature United seeks to develop meaningful partnerships where shared priorities and interests exist. We see partnership-building as an ongoing and iterative process, and we look forward to what we will learn from and contribute to partnerships as we move forward together.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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