

ENVISIONING AND CATALYZING THE INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION ECONOMY

A Publication of the RAD (Restore, Assert and Defend) Network.



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WE DEDICATE THE WORK WE ARE DOING TO
THE SEVEN GENERATIONS YET TO BE BORN.



A Publication of the RAD (Restore, Assert and Defend) Network.
This initiative is a project of the Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership.

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INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



future^{earth}



ANWAATIN

“ In the Ojibwe culture we have our seven grand father teachings: bravery, honesty, respect wisdom and one of the words that is love. I think this is where corporate boardrooms and governments have a hard time with is the word love. Yet love is one of the teachings. So how do you write that in the confederacy, how do you how do you write that into contemporary thinking? You know walking in the room with the provincial government we need to love each other better. We need love means you’re not gonna let me fail or fall right? I think there was a kinship at one time when these early agreements were made. They understood the sincerity of the Indigenous peoples governance systems - these covenants were truly spiritual and they weren’t meant to be broken the way they have been. That is really the breakdown of what capitalism did - it tore out the heart of relationships and made everything numbers and widgets and wonkets. Then after that it dehumanized everything including the Indigenous people. ”

- David Flood, In the RAD Moccasin Telegram Podcast

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A WELCOMING LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

"We are the ones we have been waiting for. This is Brave work. It is not easy but it is simple. This transformation will happen from our hearts, not our heads." – Patricia Saulis

This Visioning Gathering is about land and our relationship to the land and water. While our gathering will be guided by the protocols and ceremony of the Wolastoqiyik People, we will braid many cultures and teachings together to create a safe, welcoming, and Spirit-led ethical space where a new shared vision will emerge concerning Indigenous-led nature-based climate solutions.

The Wolastoqiyik have always had so many ways and practices for caring for the land. To us, the term "Indigenous Protected" is a way of life defined by what our communities say it is. More than just caring for a physical space, it is also about the equal importance of cultural, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual conservation and responsibility. Our Nations have, and continue to be, responsible for the spiritual and cultural wellness of our land.

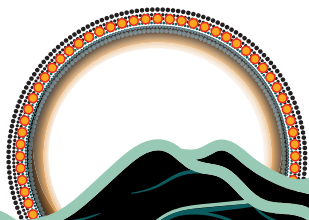
We do not, however, hold the belief that any one form of nature-based climate solutions is the right path forward, nor do we advocate that Nations should walk this path. Rather, we hold that each individual Nation should have the right to manage their territory according to their own aspirations, practices, values and beliefs.

As we prepare to come together, we ask that you do what is needed to clear the space for visioning in a way that makes sense according to your teachings. Take time to reflect on what you can contribute and what you hope to learn. Walk the land and listen to it. Unlike a traditional conference or workshop, we are coming together in the context of ceremony and shared vision. We encourage you to bring openness, willingness and trust, knowing that Spirit is around us all the time. We welcome your input and look forward to the sharing of stories and hearing from a diversity of voices.

Shortly after our visioning, we will come together once again for the virtual full moon gathering in May. In the Anishinaabe tradition, this next full moon is the flowering moon — a time of healing and cleansing; which will inspire the next question that we will hold together: How can Indigenous-led conservation financing contribute to regeneration and healing for all people?

The sun rises in the East. As we gather, this first light will emerge and new beginnings shall arise.

*We look forward to
welcoming you.*



INTRODUCTION

Emerging from the streams of work of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP), the Restore, Assert and Defend (RAD) Network is focused on enabling conservation finance pathways rooted in Indigenous rights, responsibilities, and knowledge systems.

In April 2023, the RAD Network will host a visioning gathering entitled *Restore, Assert and Defend (RAD) Network: Envisioning the Indigenous-led Conservation Economy*. This gathering will be held on the unceded and unsundered Territory of the Wolastoqwiik at Sitansisk (also known as Fredericton, New Brunswick). Here we will convene with Indigenous leaders, Nations and partners to co-create a shared vision for our emergent network and determine how to move forward together to advance Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship, rooted in abundance and supported in part by new and emerging financial pathways.

The purpose of this document is to share the context from which we are approaching the visioning gathering, and to present a high level overview of the work that has happened to date. This document is constructed in six parts: First, we provide general context regarding the purpose of the visioning gathering and the understanding and teachings that will guide us when we come together, followed by our current goals, values and priorities. Next, we share specific background as to where the RAD Network emerged from, and the prior work that seeded it.

We then introduce emerging financial pathways and tools for Indigenous-led conservation, followed by a deeper dive into the topic of carbon rights and jurisdiction. Finally, we share an overview of the current activities of the RAD Network and close with some thoughts on where we're headed.

Throughout this document, we have provided numerous links to relevant websites, reports and resources. We have also provided links to RAD Network draft documents, legal reviews and templates that have been developed over the past year. Our intent is to share with you the work that has occurred so far, so that you can be fully informed, invested and involved in determining how best to use this initiative to support any regional efforts that you are involved with.

The purpose of the visioning gathering will be to share what we have been learning so far, to lean in and listen to each other, and to clear the space for a new vision to present itself. We envision a path rooted in generosity, collaboration, reciprocity and possibility where a decolonized, systems-based approach to nature financing can emerge; embedded in an inclusive Indigenous-led conservation economy. We see this happening inside of an ethical space that is informed by the [Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings of Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility and Wisdom](#).

In response to the joint global crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, many solutions have been proposed. So far, however, the policies and practices set at local, provincial, national and international levels have failed to adequately address the challenges we're faced with. It is here that we see tremendous opportunities for Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation, for at the intersection of environmental action and Indigenous resurgence, pathways are emerging that lead to a better future. To truly address these joint crises, systemic transformation is called for at all levels, and in this new reality, all people must reconsider their relationship with Mother Earth on not just a physical level, but a spiritual one. This is why the work that we do as the RAD Network leads with Spirit, and every one of us must reawaken to what this means to each of us in order to clear the way for a different future to emerge. We must work together to create Economies of Abundance — protecting and utilizing resources in such a way that all people and an abundance of other species on this planet are able to thrive, now and in the future, in the spirit of cooperation, mutual aid and the common good.

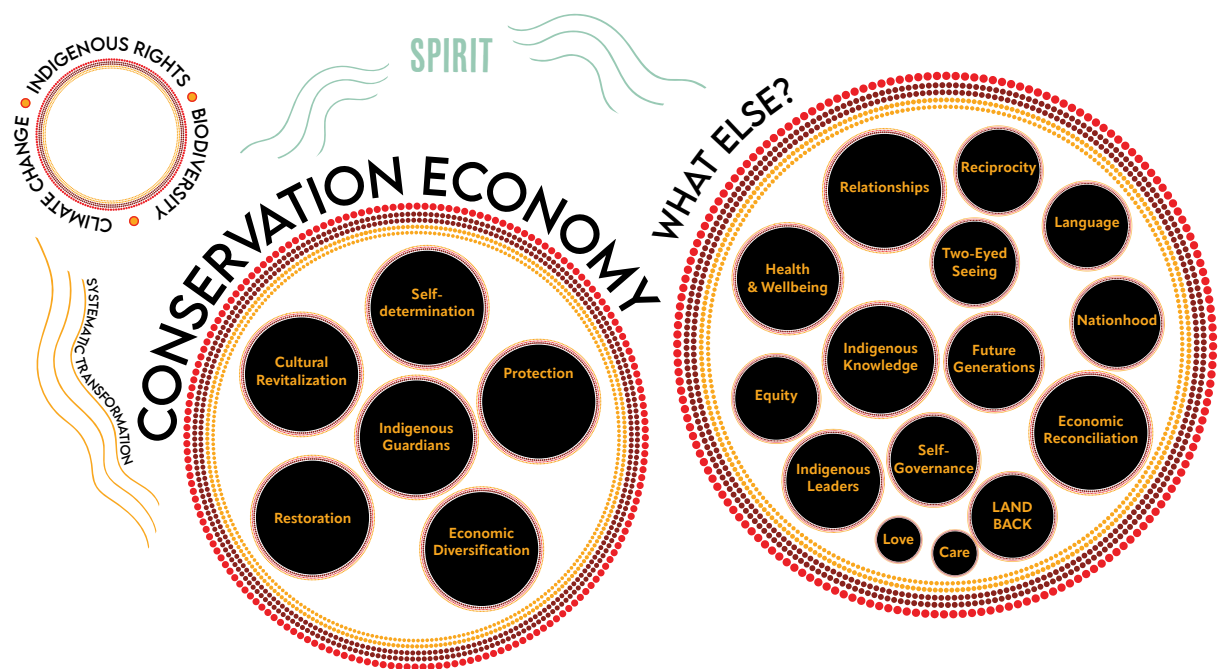


Figure 1. Context of the work

We aspire to uncover how we might all walk this new path forward in a way that addresses the threat of ecological devastation and activates a powerfully connected future of living well together. We believe that conservation and the resurgence of Indigenous self-determination go hand-in-hand. Yet for Indigenous-led conservation to be successful, it requires an economic core that can sustain it, in the form of a conservation economy which will bring an abundance of aligned benefits such as cultural resurgence, self determination, Indigenous Guardians, Indigenous-led land protection, and economic prosperity among many other possibilities.



WHY WE ARE GATHERING

Simply put, we are coming together to address complex problems and think about how to make conservation work better in Indigenous territories - led by Indigenous Nations. We want to find ways to use new financial tools and models to help restore relationships, assert rights, and defend the land and water. Our goal is to make sure that Indigenous rights, culture, knowledge and health are at the centre of nature-based solutions, carbon projects, and other conservation finance approaches. Our aim is to help advance Indigenous rights, knowledge, and conservation initiatives while growing Indigenous-led conservation economies and supporting community well-being in the long-term.

“Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been diligent and ingenious cultivators of biological diversity through advanced economic practices that were founded on natural law. Indigenous economies followed Indigenous worldviews, which understand that human systems are a part of, and must remain in balance with, ecosystems. The outcome and effect of these worldviews and economic practices was abundant, thriving biological diversity.”

*Eli Enns and Dannika Littlechild, Foreword,
We Rise Together, 2018*

INDIGENOUS-LED IS SPIRIT-LED

We understand that the root of climate change and biodiversity loss is a spiritual crisis. Many of us are spiritually weak because we have been taught to believe that the world is scarce, that we must compete to survive, and that material wealth (over meaningful connection to nature, to each other, and to Spirit) equates to happiness. This way of thinking has been caused by colonialism and capitalism; working to sever us from the spiritual realm. To transform our way of thinking, we need start with Spirit and ceremony to move towards a new vision full of abundance, where we can work together instead of competing. A space where we are connected to each other as well as to the natural world in order to help take care of the land.

Each of us is important in this transformation. We need to work together to imagine what the future can be like. To do this, we need to clear our minds and be open to new ideas. When we are clear, the next steps to creating that future will become clear too.

ETHICAL SPACE

We seek to create an ethical space as we come together. In their 2018 report, *We Rise Together*, the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE), describes ethical space as “a venue for collaboration and advice, sharing and cross-validation (where one side validates the other’s decisions)”. Ethical space respects Indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems, inherent rights and legal traditions. The principles for understanding ethical space are as follows:

1. The focus of ethical space is on creating a place for knowledge systems to interact with mutual respect, kindness, generosity and other basic values and principles. All knowledge systems are equal; no single system has more weight or legitimacy than another.
2. One system does not need the other to “corroborate” it to achieve internal validity.
3. While agreeing to formally enter ethical space may be straightforward for most parties, actually being within that space together requires flexibility. Parties may frequently need to adjust to change, surprise, and to other factors that cannot be envisioned at the initial stage.

GUIDING TEACHINGS

We will gather in the unceded and unsurrendered Territory of the Wolastoqwiik at Sitansisk and our visioning will be guided by traditional protocol and ceremony of the local Wolastoqey Nation. Gathering here is important because of the belief that the healing that is needed starts in the East.

We will also be guided by teachings from other Indigenous cultures brought forward by Elders and leadership to help determine how we will all be together. The RAD Leadership Group has identified the Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings as especially relevant to creating these guidelines.

In the Anishinaabe tradition, the Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings include the principles of love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility and wisdom. These principles guide us in living a good life and existing in harmony with all of creation. The teachings are relatable and encompass the kind of morals that humanity can aspire to live by. They offer ways to enrich one’s life while existing in peace and harmony with all of creation.

Many Indigenous organizations and communities have adopted the Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings as a moral stepping stone and cultural foundation. And, where others have adapted these teachings to better suit their community values, they still share the same concepts of abiding by moral respect for all living things.

These ancestral teachings were brought to us by David Flood a member of the RAD leadership group as a starting point to guide our time together. We know that there is a spectrum of teachings and understandings across all of Turtle Island. We are offering these here as a starting point and when we gather we will be asking all of you to bring other teachings so that we can collaboratively determine what is important in how we will work together.

The Seven Generations Education Institute provides a helpful overview of the Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings recreated [here](#).

RAD NETWORK PURPOSE

To date, the purpose of the RAD Network has been communicated in terms of an overarching aim to “advance solutions that will restore relationships and Indigenous knowledge systems, assert rights, and defend lands and waters”. The Leadership Group has been guiding the clarification of our network’s purpose, and understand it to be not to lead, but to uplift and support the leadership that exists in Indigenous communities and Nations leading to the establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and other land stewardship initiatives.

We are not the leaders; we are the spark that lights the fire or feeds the flames.

Important goals we are working toward include:

- To advance Indigenous leadership in conservation through IPCAs, Indigenous-led nature-based solutions, land back and self-determination;
- To connect Indigenous Peoples to financial resources and expertise to exercise their responsibilities to care for lands and waters;
- To create practical and scalable tools, resources, templates and examples of conservation finance options;
- To grow capacity of communities and make the space of conservation financing less intimidating and more accessible; and
- To influence emerging financial markets and nature-based economies (carbon offset, biodiversity credit, green bonds etc.) in Canada and globally to benefit Indigenous Peoples

The RAD Network will pursue these goals by building relationships and connections, by developing practical tools and resources, and by sharing knowledge. This approach is firmly grounded in Spirit, ceremony, and ethical space, and pursued in alignment with the path that has been walked by the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) and the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership. We will conduct our work in a way that engages youth, Elders, communities and Indigenous researchers.

These goals will be further refined through our visioning gathering.

DRAFT VALUES & PRINCIPLES

- To uphold the knowledge of Elders
- To ground our work in Spirit and ceremony
- To apply the Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings of Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility and Wisdom
- To prioritize integrity
- To use Indigenous languages, worldviews and teachings
- To honour cultural and kinship ties, and past and present trade networks
- To develop relationships rooted in reciprocity
- To work in ethical space

We are working to develop a reciprocity agreement, including a behaviour/relationship protocol and set of principles that could ground all parties in agreed upon values such as the Seven Ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother teachings.

EMERGENT PRIORITIES

The RAD Network Leadership Group has identified some emergent priorities, which we summarize below. These priorities will be further refined through our visioning gathering.

- **Ground this work in Spirit and ceremony**, with respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
- **Create and share useful tools and information** for communities to advance conservation finance solutions in their territories (e.g. template language, case studies, stories). Tools are spiritual, cultural, economic and educational.
- **Create and share existing policy resources** for Nations looking to create and finance IPCAs that are policy and markets relevant (e.g. beyond the technical tools of how to do a carbon project or assess ecosystem services).
- **Grow relationships and connect people** to create a network for access to learning, tools, technical support, and policy advice. This could include a brokering space to connect interested nations to “good market actors”.
- **Share and communicate existing models and showcase leadership** by:
 - centering Indigenous rights and responsibilities;
 - building markets that benefit Indigenous communities and Nations; and by
 - increasing capacity on the ground and through sharing stories and knowledge.
- **Grow the Network** by:
 - identifying the people and organizations interested or involved in conservation financing and build a marketplace for nature-based solutions and Indigenous-led carbon management, conservation bonds, and what has not yet emerged;
 - connecting and catalyzing more projects; and by
 - sharing elements of what “good” looks like to market actors — communicating Indigenous-led approaches and highlighting the barriers so that market actors can be aligned in clearing the path.
- **Identify sources of funds to support the work of the Network** to start up and continue.
- **Talk about language(s)** and create a directory of terms that are consistent with Indigenous worldviews.

BACKGROUND

WHY “RESTORE, ASSERT, AND DEFEND”?

The RAD Network seeks to advance collaborative solutions that will:

- restore relationships and Indigenous knowledge systems;
- assert Indigenous rights; and
- defend lands and waters.

The Earth is in peril due to climate change and loss of biodiversity.

80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is on land managed by Indigenous Peoples, who make up only 5% of the world's population.

Canada has committed to protecting 30% of its land and oceans by 2030, and Indigenous Peoples are critical to making this happen.

Indigenous rights, climate action and biodiversity protection are deeply intertwined. Canada has adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050, but there are risks that Indigenous communities will be harmed by efforts to solve climate change and biodiversity loss, such as rights abuses and disenfranchisement when their land is taken for carbon storage or nature-based solutions without their consent or involvement. Indigenous leadership in conservation is critical from a rights perspective and is the best way for Canada to reach its 30x30 goal and to stop and even reverse biodiversity loss.

To achieve these goals, Canada needs to invest much more money in conservation. Although conservation financing opportunities are growing in the public, private and philanthropic sectors, not enough attention has been given to how this money can be made available to the Indigenous Peoples who have always taken care of the land.



“There is a clear unwillingness to recognize Indigenous jurisdiction and Indigenous understandings of land as systems of reciprocal relations. Reframing nature-based solutions in the context of Canadian and international climate policy is essential not only to advance the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, but also to create the ceremonial ground for Indigenous visions of nature-based solutions in order to address these joint crises.”

Reed et al., 2022

WHERE DID RAD EMERGE FROM?

The [RAD Network](#) was incubated out of the streams of work of the Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) to advance conservation finance pathways rooted in Indigenous People’s rights, responsibilities and knowledge systems. The CRP launched in May 2019 to accelerate action on the recommendations of the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) to support Indigenous-led conservation across Canada. The RAD Network focuses on creating opportunities for First Nations and Indigenous communities to finance protection of biodiversity and 30x30 targets while advancing Indigenous governance and authority through conservation finance, including impact bonds, blended finance vehicles, carbon offsets, and more. We are researching and sharing emerging models and advancing policy solutions that centre Indigenous rights and responsibilities in emerging conservation finance markets. We also seek to connect Nations to a broad network of support so they don’t have to tackle these complex issues alone.

The Network is Indigenous-led, with a large and growing list of partners and collaborators. The field of conservation finance has exploded globally as a way to address the joint crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Indigenous lands and rights must be at the centre of these solutions, for while Indigenous Peoples and local communities are the traditional stewards of most of the world’s remaining biodiversity, Indigenous worldviews and rights continue to be seen as marginal. We are exploring questions around how to situate our work, what partnerships we might pursue, and what lessons may be learned from social finance and other fields.

Since its inception, the RAD Network has grown and continues to evolve as the Leadership Group collaboratively refines the direction, purpose and scope of the Network.

Reed, G., Brunet, N. D., McGregor, D., Scurr, C., Sadik, T., Lavigne, J., & Longboat, S. (2022). Toward Indigenous visions of nature-based solutions: an exploration into Canadian federal climate policy. Climate Policy, 22(4), 514-533.

CRP BEGINS



conservation
through
reconciliation
partnership



2019

ALIGNMENT

Gathering to explore alignment between Indigenous-led conservation and Indigenous-led carbon storage

2020
-2021

RESEARCH & WRITING

- Relationships
- Background Documents
- Working Groups
- Early focus on Carbon Rights and Responsibilities

2022

ENVISIONING AND ACTION

- The RAD Network forms
- January 2023: monthly Full Moon network meetings start
- April 2023: host a live gathering to vision Indigenous leadership, and support community implementation of IPCAs, nature-based solutions and the conservation economy

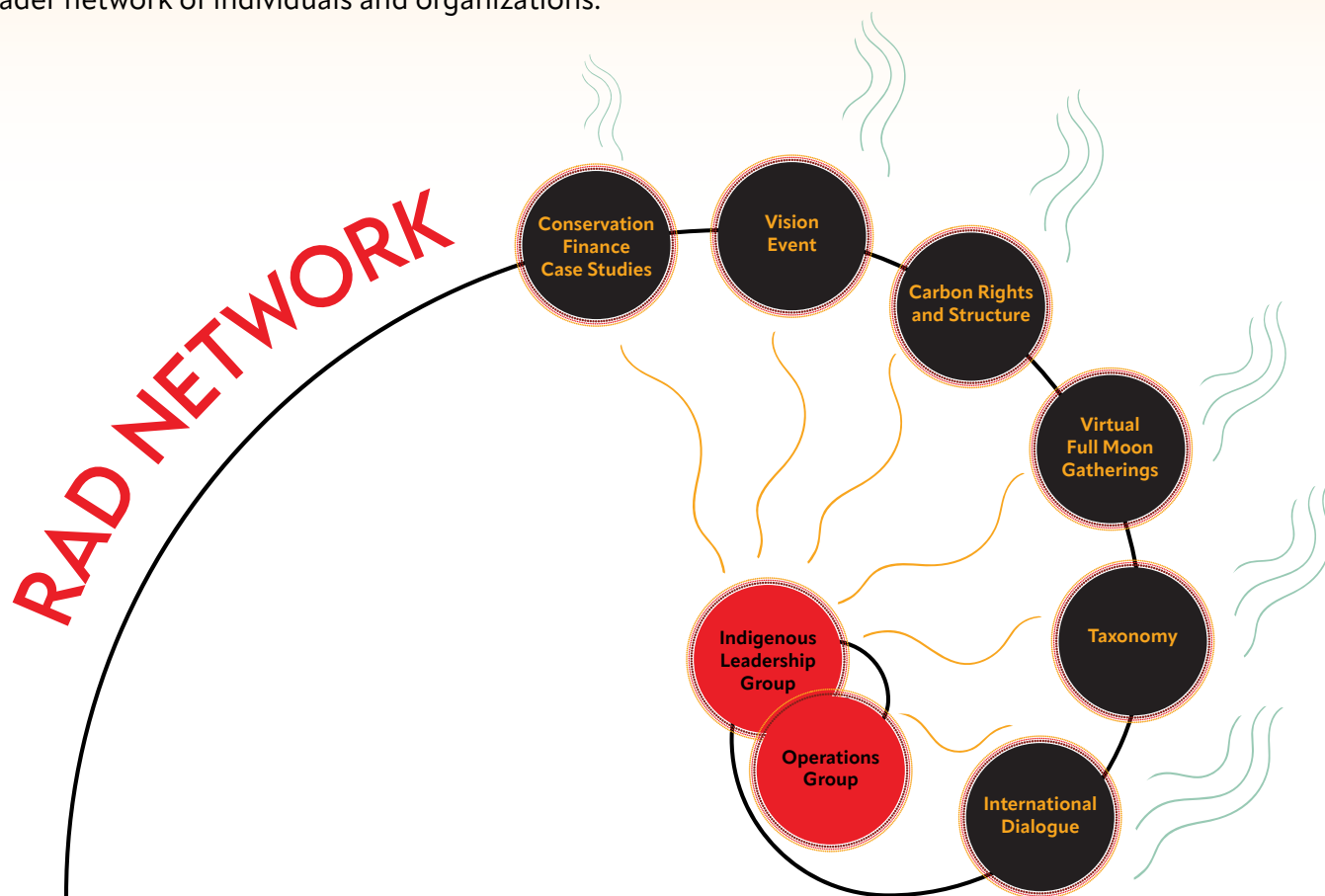
2023

Figure 2. RAD Network Timeline - 2019-2023.



OUR CURRENT STRUCTURE

The RAD Network currently consists of a Leadership Group, Operations Group, Working Groups and a broader network of individuals and organizations.



The Network consists of lands managers, Indigenous community members and leadership, Indigenous government representatives, Elders, youth, allies, colonial governments, academics, ENGOs, and aligned industry. The Network meets once a month for Full Moon Network Gatherings, which facilitate opportunities to connect, learn, and exchange ideas.

The Leadership Group guides the strategic direction, goals and approach of the Network. The current Leadership Group members are: David Flood, Eli Enns, Kim Neale, Patricia Saulis, Steven Nitah, and Trish Nash. Some of these members may continue to lead, and some may step away after the Visioning Gathering. The vision created will guide the group that will lead the next steps.

The Operations Group is a small group that operationalizes the vision of the Leadership Group and supports the overall work plan of the Network.

The Working Groups advance the overall goals to establish priorities through dialogue, research and shared action. Thus far, Working Groups have been working on carbon rights and responsibility, conservation finance case studies, Full Moon Gatherings, international dialogues, and taxonomy/the language we use. The Working Groups continue to evolve in focus, membership and scope. We anticipate that after the Visioning Gathering it will be clear what working groups are needed to achieve the agreed vision.

CONSERVATION THROUGH RECONCILIATION PARTNERSHIP



The Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) is a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organizations who want to change the way we think about conservation and our relationship with the land. They want to move away from colonialism-based ways of conservation toward ways of doing things that respect Indigenous knowledge, laws and governance, and they aim to support the creation of new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in all forms that better reflect Indigenous People's relationship with their land.

The CRP is a seven-year program hosted by the IISAAK OLAM Foundation, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, and the University of Guelph that brings together many partners to support Indigenous-led conservation in Canada. The CRP's main goal is to help heal the relationships between humans and the planet by supporting the Indigenous-led conservation movement.

In 2018, a group of leaders called the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) came together in a number of gatherings to co-create a report called [We Rise Together](#). ICE recommended creating and expanding IPCAs in the spirit of reconciliation, as well as revitalizing relationships between the Crown and Indigenous governments in existing protected areas. These efforts require a shift away from colonial conservation strategies towards conservation models and practices rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems and designed in accordance with Indigenous law.

The CRP also conducts research to help understand how to practice conservation in a way that is respectful and collaborative. They make sure that their research follows guidelines that respect Indigenous control over Indigenous owned data. They also work to help increase knowledge and understanding of these issues amongst Indigenous People, conservation professionals, and the public.

The CRP is now in its final years, and is working to establish and contribute to three legacy projects: The [IPCA Knowledge Basket](#), the IPCA Alliance/Network, and Regional IPCA Centres of Innovation. These projects will support Indigenous Nations and governments with the development and implementation of Indigenous Protected and Conserve Areas (IPCAs).

The legacy projects are interconnected, feeding life into one another and nourishing the broader Indigenous conservation leadership movement. It is the intent of the RAD Network to help support abundance in these legacy projects and in regional Indigenous-led efforts across Turtle Island that require conservation finance solutions.



IPCA ALLIANCE



IPCA CENTRES OF INNOVATION

Figure 4. An image of a campfire, with the wood representing the Centres of Innovation, the fire representing the IPCA Knowledge Basket, and an arch representing the IPCA Alliance. Arrows point from one legacy project to the other to represent how they connect or feed into each other.

PRIOR WORK: INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION AND CARBON STORAGE

Prior to the emergence of the RAD Network, from 2018-2021, the CRP co-facilitated a related research and engagement project, led by researchers at the University of Guelph in collaboration with Anwaatin Inc. and Shared Value Solutions, with support from the Metcalf Foundation. The project was called *"Nature-Based Solutions: Indigenous-led Conservation and Carbon Storage in Canada"*.

Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore forests and other ecosystems to fight climate change and biodiversity loss. The term "natural climate solutions" is relatively new, but in practice, Indigenous Peoples have been implementing such solutions since time immemorial. When led by Indigenous Peoples, nature-based solutions can contribute to economic development while supporting Indigenous governance and cultural revitalization.

As part of this project, a gathering was held in 2019 to explore the alignment of Indigenous-led conservation and carbon storage in Canada. In the following, we summarize the 2019 gathering and share links to key outputs, including a report and short films, as well as to a related webinar series.

2019 GATHERING: EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

In May 2019, various RAD Network members participated in a gathering called *"Exploring the Possibilities: Indigenous-led Conservation and Carbon Storage in Canada"*. The gathering was part of a research and engagement project created with support from the Metcalf Foundation.

Representatives from Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations convened with ENGOs, practitioners, legal experts and researchers to build connections and explore if and how carbon storage initiatives could be woven into existing and emerging Indigenous-led conservation efforts. Words of wisdom were shared by Indigenous Nations who have leveraged funding for carbon storage to finance IPCAs and other stewardship initiatives, while others voiced their interest in opportunities pertaining to carbon and other funding options for their stewardship initiatives. This gathering shed light on aspirations, opportunities and barriers, and served as a springboard for further exploration and collaboration. A [report](#) was created from the gathering and the broader research project, as well as a summary [infographic](#) and a [series of short films](#) featuring insights from a range of Indigenous leaders, Elders, researchers and practitioners.



WEBINAR SERIES: NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

1. Nature and Carbon: Opportunities and Challenges for Indigenous Leadership

The first webinar in the series brought together speakers from Indigenous organizations, the businesses community, and environmental organizations to showcase Indigenous-led natural climate solutions in Canada.

2. Natural Climate Solutions Series: Celebrating 20 Years of Coastal First Nations

The second webinar in the series celebrated the work of the Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative.

3. Indigenous-led Natural Climate Solutions in Action: Confederated Tribes of Colville

The third webinar in the series focused on the resource management approach of the Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation in the United States. Cody Desautel (Natural Resources Director) shared experiences from Indigenous-led natural climate solutions within the Confederated Tribes of Colville and how their collective efforts contribute to creating healthy and resilient forests and local economic development.

EMERGING FINANCIAL PATHWAYS

The full mission and vision of the RAD Network is still emerging, but so far, our central aim has been to explore financial pathways to restore landscapes, to assert Indigenous rights, and to help defend lands, waters and other natural resources through advocacy and support of Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship.

While our work is grounded in Spirit and ceremony, we have been exploring concrete answers to such socioeconomic ramifying questions as: What financial and legal tools can support Indigenous-led conservation economies? What tensions, barriers and opportunities exist for different financial pathways? And, how can the RAD Network support Indigenous Nations and communities to access financial and legal tools?

A working group was formed over the past six months to look at examples of financial pathways that have been used to fund existing conservation initiatives. Their draft work exploring financial pathways to restore, assert and defend lands, waters and other natural resources can be found [here](#), presented with case studies [here](#).

BUILDING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF “CONSERVATION” AND “ECONOMY”

“We have the power to change...
to develop the local, reciprocal
economies that serve community
rather than undermine it.”

- The serviceberry,
Robin Wall Kimmerer

Each month, the RAD Network hosts Full Moon Network Gatherings to build connections, exchange ideas and stories, and envision new pathways forward.

Through conversations and specific dialogue taken from the Full Moon Gathering on the topic of Pathways, the working group explored the language used (within the context of financial pathways) by public, private and philanthropic sources. Particular interest was given to the words “conservation” and “economy”, and we are confident that in a space of abundance, a new vision of our relationship with conservation and economy will emerge.

OTHER LINKS AND RESOURCES

The following are additional resources that have been created by partners who form the RAD Network and might support your enquiry coming into the Visioning Gathering:

- David Suzuki Foundation Report: [Shared Governance](#)
- WWF-Canada Summary: [Restoring Lost Habitats in Canada](#)
- Smart Prosperity: [Investing in the Future of Ontario's Greenbelt: A Conservation Finance Blueprint for Southern Ontario](#)
- Ducks Unlimited Report: [A Business Case for Wetland Conservation: The Black River Subwatershed](#)
- IISD Report: [Leveraging Payments for Ecosystem Services: Poplar River First Nation leads the way with innovative conservation](#)
- Coast Funds Report: [Sustaining People & Place](#)
- Municipal Natural Assets Initiative Case Study: [Journey so Far](#)
- Secwepemcúl'ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society: [Elephant Hill Fire Natural Capital Valuation Project](#)

"Conservation" and "economy" can mean different things to different people, depending on their worldview. Carol Anne Hilton has applied a Two-Eyed Seeing framework in her book *Indigenomics*. It shows where there may be divergent meanings. The following is built upon Hilton's work. For example, the word "economy" means:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW	WESTERN/CAPITALIST WORLDVIEW
Economy Means	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spirituality based • Relationship focused • Seven generations, long-term thinking • Abundance stems from nature and connectivity • Prosperity is demonstrated in distribution • Economy is ceremonially based • Is circular in nature and regenerative • "Resources" and responsibility are intertwined • Economy is a way to express the spiritual truths of reality • Cooperation is essential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraction-based mentality - get "resources" out of the earth as fast as possible • Short-term thinking • Wealth is collected by a small few • Mechanized • Performance based • Comparative in nature • Competition is a necessity
Paraphrased from <i>Indigenomics</i> , by Carol Anne Hilton - page 19	

This Western/Capitalist worldview currently predominates the economies of North America and has resulted in significant inequality between people. Some non-Indigenous groups are likewise calling for more cooperative and socially responsible economic models, and exploring these alternative models is an opportunity to expand the dialogue on how Indigenous worldviews on economies could help address inequality and waste across society.

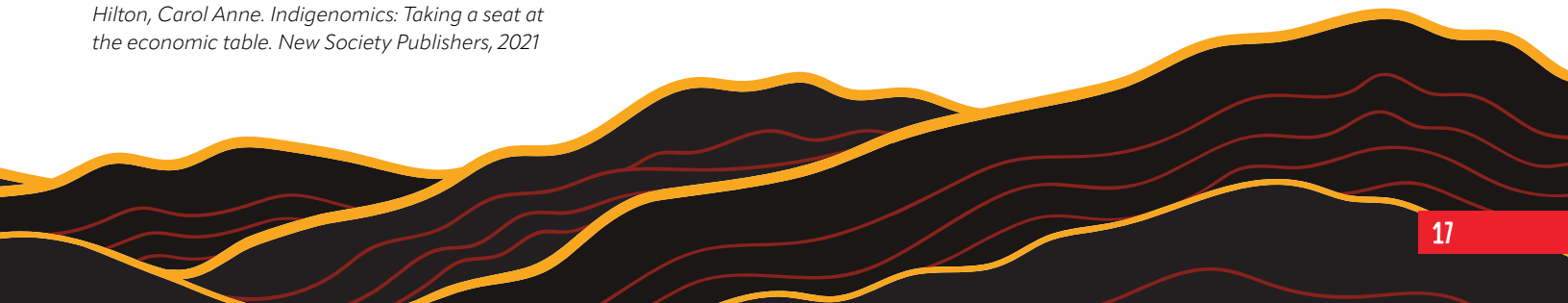
Hilton, Carol Anne. *Indigenomics: Taking a seat at the economic table*. New Society Publishers, 2021

Similarly, in building our shared understanding of the different meanings of “conservation” we can consider the following, also built on Hilton’s work:

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW	WESTERN/CAPITALIST WORLDVIEW
Conservation Means	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spirituality, culture and identity thrives in relation with the lands, waters and other natural resources• Indigenous rights, responsibilities and traditional land and water management practices are restored to protect species, their habitats and ecosystems• Aim is for a relationship between people and species, habitat and ecosystems resulting in greater well-being derived from protection of lands, waters and other natural resources within ecosystems• Ecological monitoring is prioritized based on spiritual, cultural and human well-being in relation with a species or ecosystem• Regenerative community-based practices in agriculture, hunting, trapping, foraging, burning and forestry are restored• Not constrained by colonial paradigms of land or water ownership since all is connected and there is a responsibility by all to be in relationship for protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aim is to protect species, their habitats and ecosystems• May have rules, policy and land-use limitations for regenerative agriculture, burning, forestry and wildlife harvesting• Long-term ownership agreements stewarded by primarily non-Indigenous government, not-profit, charitable organizations• Systematic and mechanized truth based on science of empirical evidence - conservation physiology• Ecological monitoring is prioritized based on time, money, and extraction interests and impact on economic outcomes• However, a significant paradigm shift is underway, and there is increasing recognition amongst conservationists (who were taught primarily through Western Science) that it is not just about what is achieved but how it is done
Paraphrased from Indigenomics, by Carol Anne Hilton - page 19	

The RAD Network is an opportunity to build a new and shared understanding of “economy” and “conservation” that is mindful of the fact that one dimension of the meaning of a word does not override another, that values and meaning exist simultaneously and we must understand both points of view to understand each other, and that it is advantageous to find spaces where these points of view intersect with one another. While the differences in worldview are useful to better understand what we mean and how we think, there is much to be learned through seeking similarities.

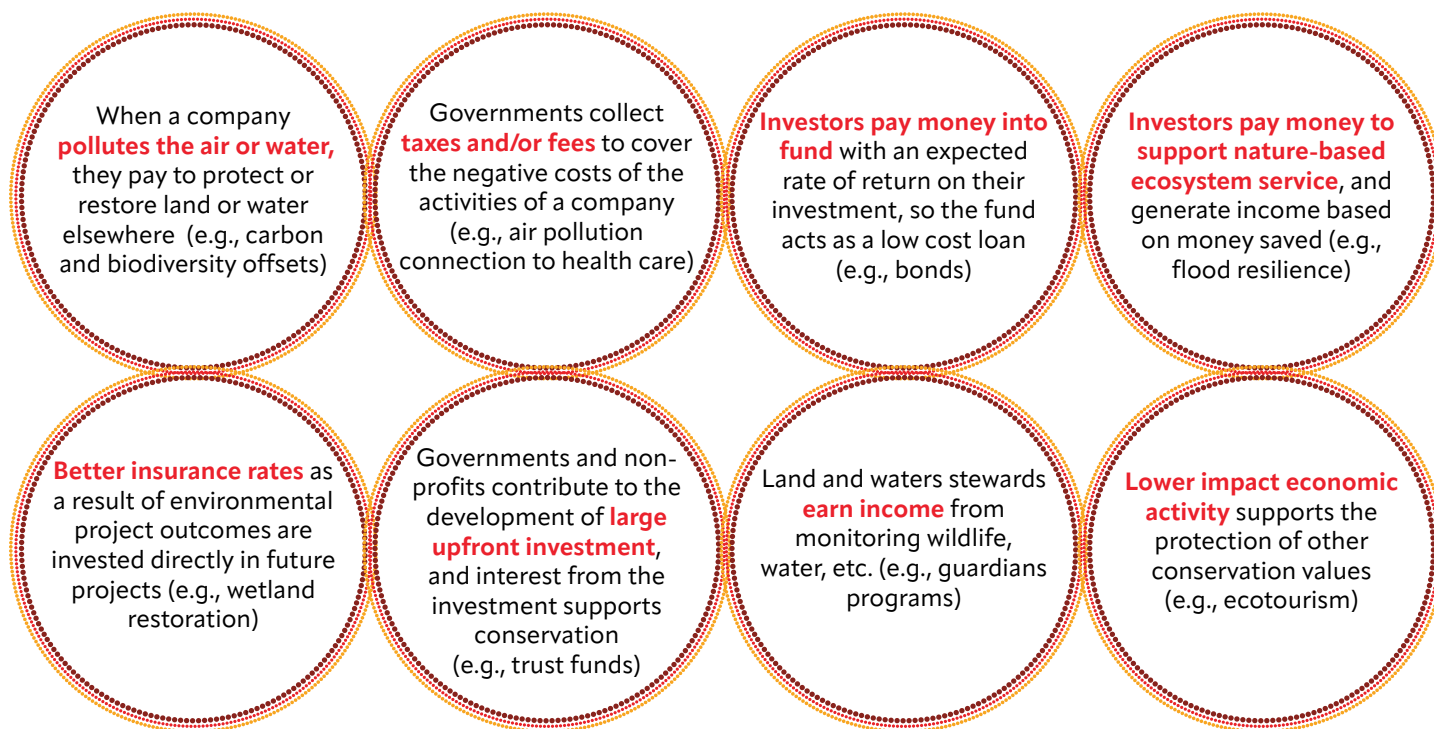
Hilton, Carol Anne. *Indigenomics: Taking a seat at the economic table*. New Society Publishers, 2021



FINANCIAL TOOLS FOR INDIGENOUS LED CONSERVATION

The RAD Network's Case Studies Working Group has drafted a [table](#) of financial and legal pathways based on research and case studies created with Indigenous Nations (summarized here).

IN A BROAD SENSE, FINANCIAL TOOLS FOR INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FALL INTO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:



These tools are often combined with multiple sources of financing supporting a given initiative. Ultimately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Different pathways and tools will be better suited to different contexts, and different Nations and regions face different challenges and opportunities.

The draft will continue to be refined and updated, particularly as we engage in visioning and learn from each other at the upcoming gathering. We plan to create and share a more exhaustive list as a toolbox of options to demystify the practical financial and legal pathways for Indigenous-led conservation in Canada.

DEEP DIVE: NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS, CARBON, RIGHTS & JURISDICTION

When this network first began to take shape in 2021 and 2022, our primary focus was given to Indigenous rights and responsibilities, and to nature-based carbon management as a vitally important, active, and fast-moving avenue for conservation financing. A major barrier was quickly identified and captured in the question, *Who has the right to manage the carbon in traditional territory?*

A team of writers and researchers prepared background documents drawing from literature and key informant interviews to guide our critical thinking concerning the legal and policy implications of carbon rights and responsibilities, and our vision as we look at different jurisdictions in Canada and internationally where Indigenous Nations have been working to shape, implement and realize the reality of nature-based and Indigenous-led carbon management.

We have created short summaries of the work that we have been doing and offer them to inform our visioning process together. We do not hold the belief that any one form of nature-based climate solution is the path forward, nor advocate that Nations should walk this path. Rather, we hold steadfast that each individual Nation should have the right to manage their territory according to their own aspirations and vision.

As a group we are advocating that delineating the rights and responsibilities over carbon is a necessary precursor to achieving Indigenous-led nature-based climate solutions, should that be what an individual Nation wishes to pursue.

Over the past year, the focus of the RAD Network has expanded to include all pathways for financing IPCAs. Although this focus will be refined further at our visioning gathering, our initial work pertaining to carbon rights remains an important thread in the basket of possibilities that we offer up and continue to investigate. It's important to note that many members of the RAD Network and its Leadership Team are actively involved with "on the ground" projects that can't move forward as a result of this one issue of carbon rights. We thereby offer this work here in its incomplete and draft form to inform our visioning process together; sharing the seeds so that we may all develop together.

WHY IS CARBON RIGHTS A CENTRAL ISSUE RIGHT NOW?

"I think that capital is probably going to be the smaller barrier in the scheme of things because there's a growing volume of hungry capital that wants to cause nature based solutions... I think the major barrier is going to be navigating the policy landscape and defining those carbon rights."

- Sean Weaver: CEO of Ekos in New Zealand in an interview in 2022

The Canadian land base is overlaid with a complex patchwork of provincial and territorial lands managed by Crown governments, treaty areas, co-managed lands, title areas, private lands, and contested lands. And because of this, each region of Canada is unique. These same lands form the traditional territory of the Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island. Even though courts have recognized Indigenous People's rights to their land, progress has been slow due to legal battles and disagreements.

Landscapes across Canada have vast reserves of carbon in the form of peatlands, permafrost, wetlands, and forests. In fact, Canada stores 327 billion tonnes of carbon in its terrestrial ecosystems — some of which is irrecoverable or vulnerable to release from human activity and, if lost, could not be restored by 2050 — when the world must reach net-zero emissions to avoid catastrophic climate impacts.

Globally, 34% of the remaining intact lands are Indigenous lands, while in Canada, a significant proportion of carbon stored in natural systems is located within the traditional territories of over 630 distinct First Nations communities, as well as Métis and Inuit communities. It is estimated that 80% of Canada's carbon-rich peatlands (including the world's second-largest carbon pool) occur on land under Indigenous treaties, storing approximately 4.8 billion tonnes of irrecoverable carbon — a thousand times more than Canada's annual carbon emissions.

Carbon management and questions about who has the right to manage the carbon in traditional territories is closely linked to Indigenous rights and self-determination.

Indigenous Nations rely on their lands and waters for sustenance, livelihoods, and cultural practices, and these ecosystems are often threatened by extractive industries and unsustainable resource use. By taking control of carbon management, Indigenous Peoples can assert their sovereignty over their lands and resources, and ensure that these lands are managed in a manner in line with the aspirations of specific Nations and their cultural values while also providing a pathway to economic self-sufficiency.

The Federal Government's 2021 budget included funding for Indigenous-led climate action, including support for Indigenous-led carbon offset projects and the establishment of a new Indigenous Guardians program to support Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship. The growing demand for carbon offsets from the private sector in that many companies are looking to reduce their carbon footprint by investing in carbon offset projects, and there is a growing interest in supporting projects that are led by Indigenous communities and that promote community development and well-being.

THREATS AND ISSUES RELATED TO CARBON OFFSET PROJECTS

Within carbon management are opportunities that if not properly held could lead to further dispossession and exploitation. The term "Carbon Cowboys" is often used to describe a small portion of individuals and companies engaged in the emerging carbon market, specifically in the buying and selling of carbon credits driven by promoting market-based solutions that prioritize profit over community-led conservation and stewardship.

This is a threat to Indigenous Peoples if they are approached regarding carbon projects rather than if they were to lead these efforts through their own land relationship planning initiatives. A carbon credit-driven market can create incentives for private companies and investors to invest in carbon offset projects that are not aligned with Indigenous values, and/or do not prioritize Nation building, well-being, and social justice outcomes.

For the most part, the emerging carbon market is an unregulated and often unpredictable market seeking to profit from carbon offsets without fully understanding or respecting the rights and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples. This type of thinking can perpetuate the commodification of nature and Indigenous knowledge, reducing both the natural world and cultural practices to that of financial assets to be bought and sold. Subsequently, carbon has been associated with the possibility of undermining Indigenous rights and sovereignty, and the broader goals of conservation and sustainable development. For this reason, it is imperative that the management and decision making of carbon related projects on Indigenous lands be held by Indigenous Peoples; as evidenced in the [2021 Indigenous Climate Action Report](#).

LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

“*Indigenous Peoples must define self-determination and free, prior and informed consent. Pathways that seem liberating to Indigenous Peoples can be reinvented by the state to reproduce the very oppression they are designed to overthrow.*”

- Borrows, 2016

“*This [passing Bill C-15] was a massive step toward the recognition of Indigenous rights, but even more so the recognition of Indigenous law.*”

- André Bear

Indigenous Peoples in Canada retain, exercise, and defend their inherent, treaty, and constitutional rights to manage and protect their territories and homelands. Their right to do so is affirmed by section 35 of the Canadian constitution and a growing body of federal and regional jurisprudence.

The responsibilities carried by Indigenous Peoples—to ancestors, to territory, to specific species, and to the wellbeing and nurturance of future generations are the foundation of legal orders and systems which have sustained relationships of integrity, persistence, and ingenuity for centuries. Bill C-15 offers an unprecedented opportunity for First Nations and Indigenous communities in Canada as Indigenous Peoples can now define how they want to manage and make decisions within their territories. This vision must be defined and built by Indigenous Peoples exercising their inherent land-based responsibilities and legal traditions. There may be encouraging opportunities for Indigenous Nations and communities to form a conservation economy based on the application of their territorial knowledge and responsibilities. Long-term carbon management strategies support Indigenous Peoples to nurture, restore, and protect biodiversity while demonstrating leadership on a global scale. Indigenous Nations and communities have the potential to influence and direct emerging carbon markets.

In a background report titled [Carbon Rights: legal and Policy Pathways](#), Leora Gansworth looked at guiding questions and identified six distinctive pillars which would support territorial assertions of Indigenous People who exercise self-determination over carbon management in their territories. The six pillars are:

- Self determination
- Integrity
- Economic redress
- Indigenous responsibilities
- Healing and climate leadership
- Partnership and reconciliation

“The biggest threat to the current carbon market is the integrity of carbon credits themselves. Indigenous responsibilities are a foundation to building carbon credits with integrity.”

- Steven Nitah, Łutsël K'ë
Dene First Nation and Nature
for Justice

In addition to this background document, the RAD Network also retained Resilient LLP to create a short memo on the current status of Indigenous carbon rights in Canada with a focus on a Discussion Paper conducted by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) titled “[Carbon Pollution Pricing: Considerations for facilitating Indigenous participation in the Federal Greenhouse Gas Offset System](#)”

This [memo](#) states that the Discussion Paper fails to address sui generis (independent legal classification) Indigenous Carbon Rights, which do not fit within the mould of Canadian common law rights.



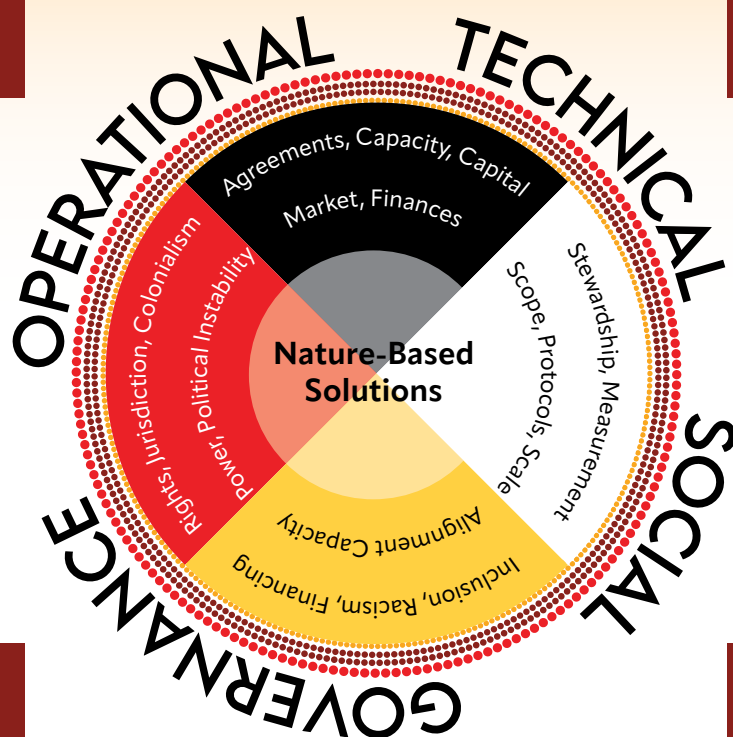
In June, 2022, the RAD Network hosted two virtual round table discussions focused on Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC's) Discussion Paper, and from the consolidated comments created a [template letter](#) that was shared widely to support Nations who wanted to create a response letter from their organization.

BARRIERS TO INDIGENOUS-LED NATURE BASED CARBON PROJECTS

Indigenous communities seeking to implement nature-based carbon projects currently face a complex and uncertain pathway that does not guarantee success. There are operational, technical, social, and governance challenges, many of which are connected to legal, policy, regulatory, and economic barriers. The following outlines some of the key questions that might need to be asked to determine whether nature-based carbon projects are desired or feasible.

Who has the power and authority over decisions?

Is there structure in place to achieve the aspirations?



Is there alignment and means to achieve the aspiration?

Are the technical aspects of the aspiration achievable?

Some of the challenges that face Nations related to nature-based carbon projects have been reviewed previously in [Townsend and Craig, 2020.](#), in a [CRP blog](#) by Steven Nitah and Mary-Kate Craig, and in a [blog created by Nature for Justice](#) and are summarized in the figure above and the text below.

Governance

Challenges associated with colonialism have led to eroded trust, entrenched industrial authority, and an underpinning of racism and oppression, which means that the existing system often excludes Indigenous Peoples while privileging federal, provincial and territorial governments. Additionally, political instability and overlapping claims shows evidence that there is often a lack of federal and provincial alignment, and sometimes neighbouring Nations (or even forces within a Nation) might all feel they have viable claims over territory.

Operational

Carbon projects can't proceed without a completed and signed agreement, otherwise there is high uncertainty, however this is often very difficult due to competing issues, a lack of leadership, a disjointed network, the realities of intensive labour vs capacity challenges (administrative burden), and a misunderstanding of the path forwards and the complexities related to carbon markets (carbon literacy). Further, projects of this nature require significant upfront capital to start, and it can often be difficult to know who to trust to collaborate with, or which markets to sell into.

Technical

Often there are no protocols in place for the activities or spaces that might align with a Nation's aspiration, such as the protection of peatland areas, or where existing bodies do not recognize existing and ongoing historic guardianship, such as with so called "Crown" lands, where the traditional territories of Nations are excluded.

Social

We are operating inside of a colonial legacy suffering from rampant intergenerational trauma, ongoing racism, and the legacy of residential schools. There can be competing social issues that are a higher priority (missing and murdered Indigenous woman, teen suicide, substance abuse, etc.) which could result in missing voices, gender imbalance, and a lack of community buy in for carbon project conversations and action.

There is little doubt that the challenges are numerous and that the heart of any nature-based carbon project discussion will be tensions around control of land. The RAD Network was formed in part to analyze these tensions in order to highlight and activate actionable items. It is unlikely that global climate and biodiversity targets will be met without natural climate solutions and nature-based carbon playing a role, and thus, Indigenous Peoples will be critical to their success. If the use of nature as a climate solution is going to live up to its promise we need to address these barriers in a timely and equitable manner. The path forward will, by necessity, be Indigenous-led and have rights and responsibilities at the centre of attention and discussion.

OTHER LINKS AND RESOURCES RELATED TO CARBON RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are additional resources that have been created by partners who form the RAD Network and might support your enquiry coming into the Visioning Gathering:

1. **Blog: Indigenous-led Natural Climate Solutions: A Promising Path Forward**

In June 2022, several members of the RAD Leadership and Operations Groups co-authored a blog post for the CRP, called *Indigenous-led Natural Climate Solutions: A Promising Path Forward*. The blog provides a high level snapshot of the topic as well as an extensive list of resources and further reading

2. **Case Studies [DRAFTS]**

With the help of many individuals, the RAD Network has been collaboratively developing case studies on jurisdiction and the right to manage carbon, with the purpose being to develop a snapshot of different approaches, key barriers, and opportunities, both locally and internationally.

- a. [International case studies](#)
- b. [Canadian case studies](#)
 - i. [Wahkohtowin Development GP Inc.](#)
 - ii. [Matawa First Nations Management](#)

3. **Template Letter: Federal Greenhouse Gas Offset System feedback**

In June 2022, the RAD Network developed a template letter for organizations to provide comments in response to the ECCC discussion paper, Carbon Pollution Pricing: Considerations for Facilitating Indigenous Participation in the Federal Greenhouse Gas Offset System.

4. **Policy Brief by Wahkohtowin Development GP Inc.** [Blog & Policy Brief: Indigenous-led Natural Climate Solutions](#)

5. **Ecotrust Canada's Climate Innovation team and BC AFN Discussion Paper**

This Discussion Paper provides information and promotes dialogue on carbon, First Nations rights with respect to carbon, how carbon offsets work, and how First Nations can benefit from them.

6. **Ecotrust Canada Blog:** [Forest Carbon Offsets, the benefits and misconceptions](#)

7. **Ecotrust Canada Report:** [Advancing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas through Carbon Financing \(2023\)](#)



CURRENT ACTIVITIES

FULL MOON GATHERINGS

In many Indigenous cultures and traditions across Turtle Island, full moon energy is thought to be transformational – meant to stir and bring forth emotions which connect the mind with the heart. The RAD Network hosts Full Moon Network Gatherings each month to build connections, to exchange ideas and stories, to reflect on a question or theme of importance to our work, and to envision new pathways forward.

Previous Full Moon Network Gatherings have addressed such questions as: “How do we advance ethical space in Indigenous-led conservation finance?”; “What conservation finance pathways can uphold Indigenous rights, safeguard Indigenous cultures and knowledge, and advance biodiversity conservation and climate action?”; “How might conservation financing be rooted in spirit and ceremony?”; and, most recently, “How do we ensure space to build a shared vision of an Indigenous-led conservation economy”?

After each gathering, we share recordings, reflections and key learnings in our newsletter, *Pathways*:

- [January 2023 newsletter](#)
- [February 2023 newsletter](#)
- [March 2023 newsletter](#)

INTERNATIONAL FULL MOON CONVERSATIONS

Members of the RAD Network have met incredible Indigenous stewards from around the globe who are working on restoring their territory, asserting their jurisdiction, and defending their homelands. We recently launched the International Full Moon Conversation with a purpose to build connections with our brothers and sisters in all parts of the world – to hear the stories of what their visions are, what their struggles are, and the actions they are taking as the stewards of their territories. So far, we have connected with Indigenous leaders in Panama and activists in Colombia, with plans to connect with others in Africa and the Asia Pacific in the coming months.

PODCAST

[Our Moccasin Telegraph Podcast](#) will be a platform to bring forward the stories of Indigenous-led conservation and emerging pathways through which to finance these efforts. We aim to uplift voices that are too often unheard, highlight important work, and create a safe, ethical space for all people to connect with each other, with Spirit, and with the stories from the land

This will be a kind, loving, and respectful way for people to speak the story that they want to tell. We envision that these stories will feature people bringing forward what is meaningful to them and sharing what they need to in their own way. Elders and youth will often be featured, as well as many other people who are connected to the land and who are doing the work right now to steward their territories and heal the planet.

LOOKING AHEAD

“This is a conversation about responsibility — responsibilities we share with each other, responsibilities to the animals that sustain and protect us, responsibilities to our lands and waters, and responsibilities to all of creation. We urge you to begin or continue with the hard work that requires an ongoing relationship-building process with Indigenous Peoples.”

- Indigenous Caucus Statement Nature-based Climate Solutions Summit

A bold movement is forming – one that could help to achieve Indigenous leadership and self-determination while supporting national climate and biodiversity targets as part of thriving conservation economies rooted in Indigenous knowledge, rights and responsibilities.

The purpose of our gathering is to call forward the spirit of a collective vision: A future where Indigenous-led conservation economies thrive across Turtle Island. We hope to bring people together to create tangible plans toward this shared future with actionable pathways to get there together. We intend to create an ethical space of trust and protection as we come together to plant the seeds of an emerging, collaborative effort where aligned partners are working in unison to empower the management and protection of the lands and waters under Indigenous laws and leadership.

The RAD Network will amplify existing efforts to establish a pathway where securing Indigenous rights and governance over lands will also advance the protection of biodiversity, safeguard Indigenous culture and knowledge, and create local climate solutions. Together we will envision new relationships with law and with territory to restore relationships, assert Indigenous rights, and defend our lands and waters for future generations. The conservation of biodiversity and the resurgence of Indigenous self-determination can go hand-in-hand. There is an opportunity for all people to reconsider their relationship with the living Earth and envision a powerfully connected future of living well together and with Spirit.

“ Everything that we have done is for the future. That’s what our elders used to say: yunedhé xa, which means for the future. All of this work is for future generations. We are leaving them a legacy. ”

- Darryl Marlowe Chief Łutsël K’ė Dene First Nation

RESTORE ASSERT DEFEND

