

CONSERVATION THROUGH RECONCILIATION PARTNERSHIP



Birthing our Partnership


Year one of our seven-year journey

June 2020



WELCOME!

A Message from the Hosts of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership



Departing from typical university-based research projects, which are often only hosted by an academic institution, the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership is an Indigenous-led initiative and a partnership collaboratively hosted by three organizations: the IISAAK OLAM Foundation, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative and the University of Guelph. Each organization shares responsibilities for project implementation and oversight. Together, we are not only helping to lay the groundwork for transforming conservation in Canada but also developing models of decolonial University-Indigenous partnerships.

Visit our [YouTube channel](#) to see a welcome video from our hosts.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Sharing Knowledge and Visioning the Future

This report provides an overview of the first year of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) including our collective goals, the ways we work together, highlights from the last year, and a vision for the future. In an attempt to practice **Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing**, two of the guiding principles of the CRP, this report contains both written and oral knowledge sharing via embedded audio and video.

The CRP has also adopted the Seven Grandfather/Grandmother Teachings as a guiding framework for our partnership. While we acknowledge that the seven sacred teachings are not universal across Turtle Island, many of the principles resonate in a wide range of diverse cultures. For the CRP, the principles of love, truth, bravery, courage, honesty, humility and wisdom help guide the ways we engage with our work and with one another. Each year we focus on a particular teaching, with **love** being the central teaching of our first year. The CRP has been birthed out of love for all of creation and hope for a better future. Love cannot stand alone - it must be accompanied by action. By engaging with this report, we hope our partners will feel encouraged to continue their work catalyzing Indigenous-led conservation. If you are learning about us for the first time, we hope you will be inspired join our movement.

Visit our [YouTube channel](#) to hear the Elder's teachings on the sacred gift of love.



OUR MESSAGE

The Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership is an Indigenous-led seven-year initiative. We bring together a wide range of partners with the shared goal of catalyzing the Indigenous-led conservation movement in Canada. We do this by supporting the implementation of recommendations from *We Rise Together*, the report from the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE).

Our main message is one of hope. By supporting the Indigenous-led conservation movement, we aim to help bring about the bold, transformative change to heal the relationships between humans and our planet, including relationships amongst human and non-human beings. We strive to model this change by centering Indigenous leadership, mutual respect, reciprocity, shared relationships, and a deep concern for our current condition. We hold a deep conviction that bringing about reconciliation in the conservation world will result in the transformation necessary to heal the planet. Visit our [YouTube channel](#) to hear CRP Leadership Circle and Elder's Lodge members share our message.



OUR FIRST YEAR

Reflections from the Leadership Circle and Elder's Lodge

In the first year of our partnership we focused on building a strong foundation for our shared journey. Visit our [YouTube channel](#) to hear reflections from the CRP Leadership Circle and Elder's Lodge on the importance of relationship building, and birthing a governance structure in Ethical Space.

The Leadership Circle members have also shared reflections on the current state of Indigenous-led conservation in Canada and beyond, including enabling factors, challenges and opportunities. Watch our video "[Indigenous-led Conservation Today](#)" to learn more.



BIRTHING OUR PARTNERSHIP

The ceremonial birthing of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership took place on May 8, 2019 on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka at McGill University, a longstanding meeting place for many Nations. Led by Algonquin Elder Larry McDermott, together with many of our partners, we were reminded of the sacredness of our relationships: to the earth, all of our relations, and to one another. Through this ceremony, we strengthened our commitment to move forward in a way that centers balance, respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility, so that all life can thrive.

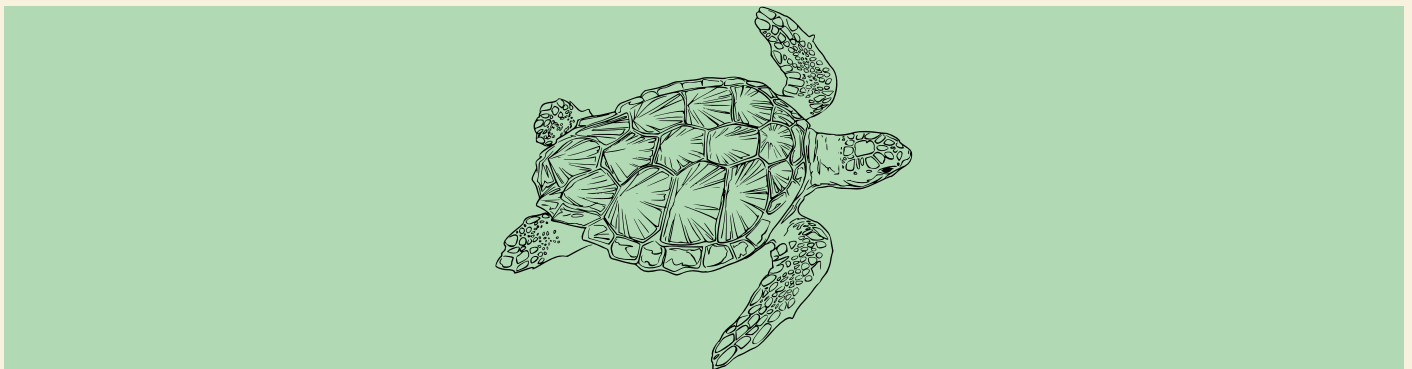


Photo credit: River Voices Productions

Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing are the two core guiding principles of the CRP, therefore, ceremony plays a critically important role in the partnership. As a central part of Indigenous knowledge systems and governance, ceremony helps us connect our mind, body, emotion, and spirit. Through ceremony, we can come to understand and accept our mutual responsibilities. Ceremony also lifts up the spirit to our connection with the land, water, sky-world, and to one another.

BUILDING OUR CIRCLE

We have spent the first year of our partnership establishing a **resilient governance structure**. The CRP Leadership Circle, which is comprised of four Indigenous thought-leaders and two non-Indigenous university-based academics, provides the intellectual and strategic direction for the CRP. The Elder's Lodge, comprised of four founding members representing several diverse nations across Canada, helps ensure our work is ethical, authentic, equitable and sacred. The Elder's Lodge also helps support decision-making and dispute resolution, as requested. This governance structure helps ensure the partnership is led by Indigenous experts while practicing reconciliation through the inclusion of non-Indigenous voices in decision-making processes. This structure also enables the partnership to embody the principles of Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems are braided, with the guidance of gifts from the Elders. Our governance system is grounded in the cycle of the 13 moons, and our relative, the turtle, has the responsibility for reminding us of this system. Our work is guided by seasonal changes in the natural world, recognizing the inter-connectivity of all creation.



We have also focused on building **reciprocal relationships** with our partners. When collaborating with the CRP, all partners are asked to identify resources that may be shared with the CRP family for the benefit of the Indigenous-led conservation movement in Canada and beyond. Similarly, our partners are asked to consider how the CRP can help address their specific goals, research and/or learning needs. This creates a mutually beneficial and balanced relationship built on respect and shared responsibility.

OUR RESEARCH

Research activity in the partnership is grounded in the highest standards of ethical practice designed to elevate research that starts from Indigenous knowledge systems, laws, worldview and theory. As such we expect both the practice and outcomes of our research to be truly transformative as we support implementation of the ICE recommendations and Indigenous-led conservation more broadly. The following six research streams are not mutually exclusive with many research projects weaving together aspects of several streams.

In response to calls by ICE to move the practice of ethical space forward through relationship building in the pursuit of IPCAs, the CRP has established an **Ethical Space** research stream, led by Danika Littlechild of Carleton University. As the first research stream of its kind, it will help contribute foundational research and analysis of ethical space in the context of conservation as well as a deeper understanding of the methodologies and wise practices in the establishment of IPCAs, transformation of existing protected areas, and the maintenance of decolonial research partnerships.

The **Knowledge Systems** research stream, led by Dr. Deborah McGregor of York University, seeks to develop ways of weaving together diverse knowledge systems in the service of Indigenous-led conservation and advance reconciliatory methods that elevate Indigenous protocols for conservation governance.

The **Indigenous Conservation Governance** research stream, led by Dr. Monica Mulrennan of Concordia University, is investigating how governance of existing protected areas can be revisited and revised for much greater consideration of Indigenous laws, leadership and knowledge, thereby supporting and enhancing institutions of Indigenous conservation governance, strengthening the ability of communities to fulfill their responsibilities while also achieving benefits in terms of sustainable livelihoods.



OUR RESEARCH

By investigating ways to use the tools under Canadian law and other constructed arrangements between Indigenous governments and the Crown, the **Domestic Law and Policy** research stream, led by Mr. Larry Innes of ILI, responds to ICE calls to support Indigenous governments working to make IPCAs a reality. We are assessing the particular regulatory challenges and policy opportunities for Indigenous conservation governance in different political jurisdictions in Canada.

In its efforts to advance ICE goals around the identification and protection of sacred or culturally important areas/species and promotion of collaborative land use planning, the **Biocultural** research stream, led by Dr. Faisal Moola at the University of Guelph, is focused on three key areas: 1) exploring and supporting biocultural approaches to conservation 2) exploring the extent to which biocultural approaches have informed domestic and international policy and 3) assess potential threats to a suite of cultural keystone species.

By investigating the role Canada's government is playing in international negotiations on biodiversity targets, the **International Policy** research stream, led by Dr. Noella Gray of the University of Guelph, advances ICE calls for better understanding the development of IPCAs beyond Pathway to Target 1 and the ways the Government of Canada supports/promotes IPCAs internationally.

While many individual research projects may consist of case studies, our collaboration will ensure that we can collectively answer several overarching research questions including:

1. What are the enabling and constraining factors for IPCA establishment in different jurisdictions across Canada?
2. How can Two-Eyed Seeing, Ethical Space, and other models inform the management and governance of IPCAs?
3. What are the best practices for transforming existing protected areas to be better aligned with Indigenous rights and responsibilities?
4. In what ways are Canada's actions in regards to meeting CBD Aichi Targets and post 2020 agreements, contributing towards reconciliation and decolonization? Where do we see risk of replicating colonial norms?
5. How can conservation partnerships cultivate and maintain Ethical Space?

GATHERINGS AND DIALOGUES

During the first year of the partnership, the CRP supported several regional gatherings and dialogues organized by our partners. These **capacity building opportunities** provided a forum to learn, share knowledge, ask critical questions, and increase awareness of the cultural, environmental, economic, social, legal, financial and geopolitical realities that can either uplift or hinder Indigenous Nations' abilities to express their sovereignty through land protection and watershed management.



Protected Areas and Climate Action in Ontario

October 16-18, 2019 | Territory of the Algonquin, Huron-Wendat and Mohawk Nations
(Kingston, ON)

Trent University's Indigenous Environmental Studies and Science Program, Plenty Canada, Walpole Island Land Trust, Frontenac Arch Biosphere and Ontario Nature hosted a three-day gathering in Kingston, Ontario in October on the critical role protected areas play in conserving biodiversity and enhancing community ecosystem resilience in an era of climate change. The gathering brought together over 100 interested members of Indigenous communities across Ontario and a targeted audience of government staff, conservation groups, industry leaders, academics and other interested parties to participate in the cross-cultural dialogue. In addition to panel and keynote presentations, the gathering included a water walk and ceremony, led by Elders Marilyn Capreol and Larry McDermott. Visit Ontario Nature's website for the **full report and video**.



GATHERINGS AND DIALOGUES

IPCA Establishment Productive Retreat

November 19-21, 2019 | Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (Tofino, BC)

The IPCA Establishment Productive Retreat hosted by the IISAAK OLAM Foundation was designed to support Indigenous Nations that are in the early phase of IPCA establishment, including but not limited to recent recipients of Canada Nature Legacy Challenge Component funding. Sponsored in-part by the CRP, the gathering provided an introduction to IPCAs and was an opportunity to meet the people and experience the places that made Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks possible. The retreat also fostered space for sharing knowledge and learning from other Nations on similar paths. Read the **full report.**



Photo credit: IISAAK OLAM Foundation



2020 Northwest Territories Conservation Network Gathering

February 26-27, 2020 | Denendeh (Yellowknife, NWT)

The CRP sponsored in the first annual Northwest Territories Conservation Network Gathering, hosted by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The gathering brought together a wide array of partners including Indigenous governments, GNWT and Government of Canada departments, funders, academia, and conservation leaders from other jurisdictions to exchange knowledge, build partnerships and nurture collaboration. Topics of discussion included innovation in conservation and research, collaborative governance, management, monitoring, financing, and mechanisms to sustain Indigenous stewardship.



Photo credit: Allison Bishop

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Nature-based solutions are actions that restore, protect, or sustainably manage ecosystems while contributing to the well-being of societies and biodiversity. When led by Indigenous Peoples, nature-based solutions can contribute to economic development while supporting Indigenous governance and cultures. Despite being interconnected, innovations in climate action and conservation are often isolated from one another. Funded by the Metcalf Foundation, the CRP led a project in collaboration with Anwaatin and Shared Value Solutions .



Through this project we hosted a dialogue in May 2019 at the University of Guelph in the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. The dialogue explored how Indigenous-led conservation and carbon storage efforts might align with more universal conservation and climate objectives, while creating Indigenous community benefits and advancing Indigenous rights. The project culminated in the creation of **resources**, including:

- A series of eight videos;
- A written report; and
- An info-graphic

IPCAS, COVID-19 AND RESILIENCE

We are living in extraordinary times as the global community works together to slow the spread of the novel corona virus, Covid-19. We are experiencing profound loss of life coupled with extreme social and economic disruption. Physical distancing is being practiced at unprecedented levels in an effort to protect those who are most vulnerable in our communities, including our beloved Elders. First Nations and remote Indigenous communities without access to medical supplies and/or clean water are especially vulnerable.

On April 3rd, 2020, the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) in Canada held a virtual dialogue with its partners on the importance of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hosted by members of the CRP Leadership Circle and Elders Lodge, the purpose of the dialogue was to create a space to reflect on the renewed importance of Indigenous-led conservation during these challenging and uncertain times. Read a full reflection from the dialogue on the [**CRP Blog: Together We Rise.**](#)



"Until there is a concerted effort made for the earth to be healthy, we will not be healthy."

--Elder Albert Marshall

As an initiative with a strong community-based research component, the pandemic also has implications for our work. To ensure the safety of Indigenous communities and our Elders, the CRP has suspended all fieldwork and community research visits until our community partners determine it is safe to resume. As of March, 2020, we have cancelled or postponed all in-person meetings. On June 8, 2020, we launched our [**Virtual Campfire Series**](#), which features webinars and online dialogues on a range of topics and is meant to foster discussion and support mutual learning. The Virtual Campfire Series, which also features regular "fireside chats" with the Elder's Lodge, will be hosted throughout 2020-2021.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Our Vision for Year Two of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership

The second year of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership will focus on the sacred gift of truth. Visit our [YouTube Channel](#) to hear members of the CRP Leadership Circle and Elder's Lodge provide insight into where they hope we are headed in the second year of our walk together.



OUR FAMILY

The CRP is a large and growing family of Indigenous thought-leaders, Nations and organizations; Elders and youth; over 30 researchers; and 30 partner organizations (environmental not-for-profits and universities). We are united in the goal of helping catalyze the Indigenous-led conservation movement in Canada and beyond.



We are located in communities across what is now known as Canada, with our leaders residing in the "IPCA innovation hubs" of Eastern Canada (Cape Breton, Nova Scotia), Southern Ontario (Guelph, Ontario), Western Canada (Victoria, British Columbia), and Northern Canada (Yellowknife, Northwest Territories). Explore the map above to learn more about our family.

CLOSING WORDS

Visit our [YouTube Channel](#) to hear members of the Leadership Circle and Elder's Lodge offer closing reflections, including a teaching about *iisaak*, which can help us navigate mistakes and make repairs in our relationships.



THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who helped make this report possible. We are grateful to the CRP Leadership Circle and Elder's Lodge for generously sharing their knowledge and gifts.

A special thanks to Monica Shore and Noémie Foley with the IISAAK OLAM Foundation, and to Jeremy Williams with River Voices Productions for their video editing efforts. We would also like to thank River Voices Productions for sharing footage from past gatherings for the videos.

We appreciate our many partners and collaborators for their significant contributions to this project. We look forward to continuing our walk with you.

Together We Rise!



**conservation
through
reconciliation
partnership**



IMPROVE LIFE.

IISAAK



OLAM

**INDIGENOUS
LEADERSHIP
INITIATIVE**



Social Sciences and Humanities
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