



## BurlingtonGreen Indigenous Relations Policy

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on September 13, 2007 (United Nations, 2007). Article 3 of the Declaration states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programs affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programs through their own institutions" (UNDRIP, 2007). Article 29 states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programs for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination" (UNDRIP, 2007). In 2016, the Government of Canada "endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) without qualification and committed to its full and effective implementation" (The Government of Canada, 2016).

BurlingtonGreen recognizes the UNDRIP and is committed to upholding Indigenous rights and supporting Indigenous-led conservation efforts. Our policy is guided by the principles of respect, reciprocity, and partnership with Indigenous communities. Working in partnership, collaboration and following Indigenous-led conservation and regeneration is grounded in BurlingtonGreen's values for positive community-based environmental action, inclusion and connectedness, and gratitude and integrity.

Indigenous-led conservation is defined and led by Indigenous communities (Nature United, 2020) and is based on Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Kimmerer, 2013). One example for describing what this perspective means are the principles SandTalk Indigenous author Tyson Yunkaporta refers to from Elder Mumma Doris Shillingsworth as "**Respect, Connect, Reflect and Direct**" (Yunkaporta, 2019). Tyson offers Mumma Doris Shillingsworth's Indigenous wisdom and ways of valuing, being, knowing and doing (Yunkaporta, 2019) as a lens to inform our interactions and practice. "Respect, Connect, Reflect and Direct" are what Tyson also calls spirit energy, heart, head and hands and are key to carrying out *in this order* for all interactions with Indigenous communities and nature, as this order guides an organization's capabilities towards regenerative solutions and reaching environmental goals (Tyson, 2019). When organizations reverse this order, Tyson (2019) noted that they have failed in environmental intentions and goals.

With this perspective in mind, the objectives of BurlingtonGreen's Indigenous Relations Policy are:

### Objectives

1. To support and uphold Indigenous leadership in governance and stewardship of lands and waters;
2. To establish respectful and ethical communication and interactions with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and communities through transparent communications including “Data Sovereignty [as] the right of Indigenous peoples to determine” (Kukutai & Taylor, 2020);
3. To collaborate with Indigenous communities in a way that promotes reciprocity and long-term benefits for all parties;
4. To establish BurlingtonGreen’s roles and responsibilities with respect to meaningful embedded Reconciliation actions and advocate as an ally for the 94 Calls to Action from The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) reports (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015) in all of our work.

### **Our Approach**

Objibwe journalist and Canada Council for the Arts Chair, Jesse Wente (2022) said “Allies of Indigenous Peoples should educate themselves and each other, to understand the colonial systems of governance that are root causes for social injustice and environmental crises.” BurlingtonGreen is committed to finding a deeper understanding of the role that conservation organizations can play in continuing to uphold colonial systems (Nature United, 2020) and to holding ourselves accountable to change for the better when errors are made during practice as we discover insights and learn together.

Our policy is a living and growing document rooted in our commitment to ongoing respectful partnership with Indigenous communities. How we communicate, collaborate, develop materials and assets, and discuss shared work are the basis for building trusted partnerships. We follow the belief that “if we fail at communicating respectfully, we [also] fail these important relationships” (Nature United, 2020). An important aspect of respectful communication is recognizing the cultural diversity of Indigenous Peoples.

“Anishinaabe, Métis, Coastal Salish, Cree, Cherokee. We have nothing much in common. We’re all aboriginal and we have the drum. That’s about it” (King, 2012). BurlingtonGreen recognizes and respects the cultural diversity of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the First Nations, Métis and Inuit unique histories, distinct cultures, traditions, worldviews, languages, desires and needs (Joseph, 2019), and commits to interacting with deep respect accordingly. Based on this understanding, BurlingtonGreen will interact with the following guiding principles.

### **Our Guiding Principles**

1. **Consent:** BurlingtonGreen will obtain consent from Indigenous individuals represented in our communications; when quoted, referenced, or visually represented, and prior to publication (Nature United, 2020) on any media platform(s). We will adhere to a clear and transparent process for seeking permission, understanding, sharing, obtaining and implementing terms of consent (Nature United, 2020).
2. **Respect:** BurlingtonGreen will always begin with and prioritize respect for Indigenous partners in all communication objectives (Nature United, 2020) and interactions. We will always strive to create safe spaces and open lines of communication, applying the language of listening (Kimmerer, 2022)

first to our Indigenous partners' perspectives and needs, and seeking clarity to honour boundaries or conditions (Nature United, 2020) requested and mutually agreed upon.

3. **Listening:** BurlingtonGreen will seek to enable safe spaces for Indigenous partners to share their own stories, in their voice first and foremost (Nature United, 2020). As we will always acknowledge the leadership role of Indigenous partners in environmental work, we will seek to follow their guidance and recommendations in our shared work together.
4. **Reciprocity:** BurlingtonGreen recognizes the significant value of energy, time and resources often needed (Nature United, 2020) and requests from our Indigenous partners to execute project work together; such as creating communication materials, participation in research, or the creation of community-based programs. BurlingtonGreen is dedicated to contributing to capacity building for collaboration and always ethically prioritizing our partners' needs, requests, interests, and potential constraints and refusals or declines first.

### **Protocols**

To ensure respectful communication for traditional ways of being and ethical practice, there are Indigenous Protocols to observe when contacting and interacting with Indigenous communities (University of Alberta, 2024). Learning to understand and practice protocols appropriately is a lifelong learning process, an indicator of respect and awareness, and demonstrating that we each are taking the time to learn about Indigenous cultures while challenging unconscious bias that can place preference on settler culture social constructs (Antoine et al., 2018).

There are two generally common Indigenous Protocols: Land Acknowledgements; and always introducing yourself with who you are and where you come from (including where your family is Indigenous to prior to settling in Canada and potentially where your parents and grandparents are from?) (Antoine et al., 2018). Introducing your family history helps to situate you in relation to those you are interacting with (Antoine et al., 2018).

Beyond these two common practices, protocols will vary widely from Indigenous cultures and it will be a lifelong learning process through building trustful relationships together with Indigenous communities. BurlingtonGreen staff, Board members and all those interacting with Indigenous groups representing BurlingtonGreen "will need to ask questions and be prepared to make mistakes and apologize if needed. It may not always be smooth, but with practice your knowledge will grow" (Antoine et al., 2018).

In our work with Indigenous communities, BurlingtonGreen will seek to establish protocols for consultation and decision-making processes with Indigenous partners.

### **Communications Guidelines: Roles & Responsibilities and Process**

BurlingtonGreen will establish a clear and transparent process for obtaining consent and approval from Indigenous individuals and communities for co-created communications or projects. This process will include:

1. Identifying main contacts from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities involved.

2. Developing and seeking approval of a Partnership Agreement prior to collaboration, with meeting minutes documenting decisions and agreements.
3. Agreeing in writing on communication materials and project assets, including their purpose, description, media formats, and approvals required.
4. Clarifying roles and responsibilities for developing, approving, and distributing communications and assets.
5. Ensuring Indigenous partners retain ownership and access to all materials developed in perpetuity, in alignment with Data Sovereignty principles.
6. Requiring external parties to comply with the same policy and guidelines.

This approach will ensure respectful and collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities, guided by transparency and mutual respect.

### **Reconciliation Plan**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) stated that “Without truth, justice, and healing, there can be no genuine reconciliation. Reconciliation is not about ‘closing a sad chapter of Canada’s past,’ but about opening new healing pathways of reconciliation that are forged in truth and justice” (TRC, 2015). BurlingtonGreen recognizes the interconnectedness of nature and our work in communities, and “the need to heal humanity’s relationship with the environment” (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018) must be “include[d] within the language of Reconciliation” (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018).

BurlingtonGreen will build relationships “with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples based on the recognition of Rights, Respect and Partnership” (Government of Canada, 2024). Where there is opportunity, BurlingtonGreen will work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples “to address past harms, support strong and healthy communities, and advance self-determination and prosperity” (Government of Canada, 2024).

To support Indigenous-led conservation means to also champion Indigenous-led restoration and species-recovery work, which in turn means learning about Indigenous land governance that “reaches beyond the boundaries of...Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas” to Crown lands (David Suzuki Foundation, 2021). When BurlingtonGreen engages with Indigenous communities for environmental work, we will always advocate for advancing Indigenous self-determination and building connective long-term relationships based on respect and recognition of Indigenous Peoples as Land Rights holders who have the critical leadership voice for land governance decisions (David Suzuki Foundation, 2021).

Jesse Wenthe said of the Land Back movement “Land Back is really about the decision-making power. It’s about self-determination for our Peoples here that should include some access to the territories and resources in a more equitable fashion, and for us to have control over how that actually looks” (David Suzuki Foundation, 2021).

To support Reconciliation and Indigenous-led conservation, representatives of BurlingtonGreen will (David Suzuki Foundation, 2021):

1. Develop specific initiatives and projects that support Indigenous-led conservation efforts.
2. Provide and seek ongoing education and training for staff, Board members, and volunteers on Indigenous history, culture, and protocols.

3. Work to provide a seat and securing a leadership voice for Indigenous groups at governance decision-making tables involving environmental work (Monkman, 2021).

### **Policy Evaluation and Review**

BurlingtonGreen will conduct regular evaluations of this policy's effectiveness; review the policy annually to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of Indigenous communities.

In all our interactions, BurlingtonGreen will uphold the principles of respect, reciprocity, and partnership with Indigenous communities. We recognize the importance of ongoing learning and growth in our journey towards Reconciliation and commit to continuous improvement in our Indigenous relations practices.

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## Revision History

- Draft 1 by Cynthia Chau Thursday, March 14, 2024