

RIGHT RELATIONS COLLABORATIVE

20 | **RECIPROCITY**
23 | **REPORT**

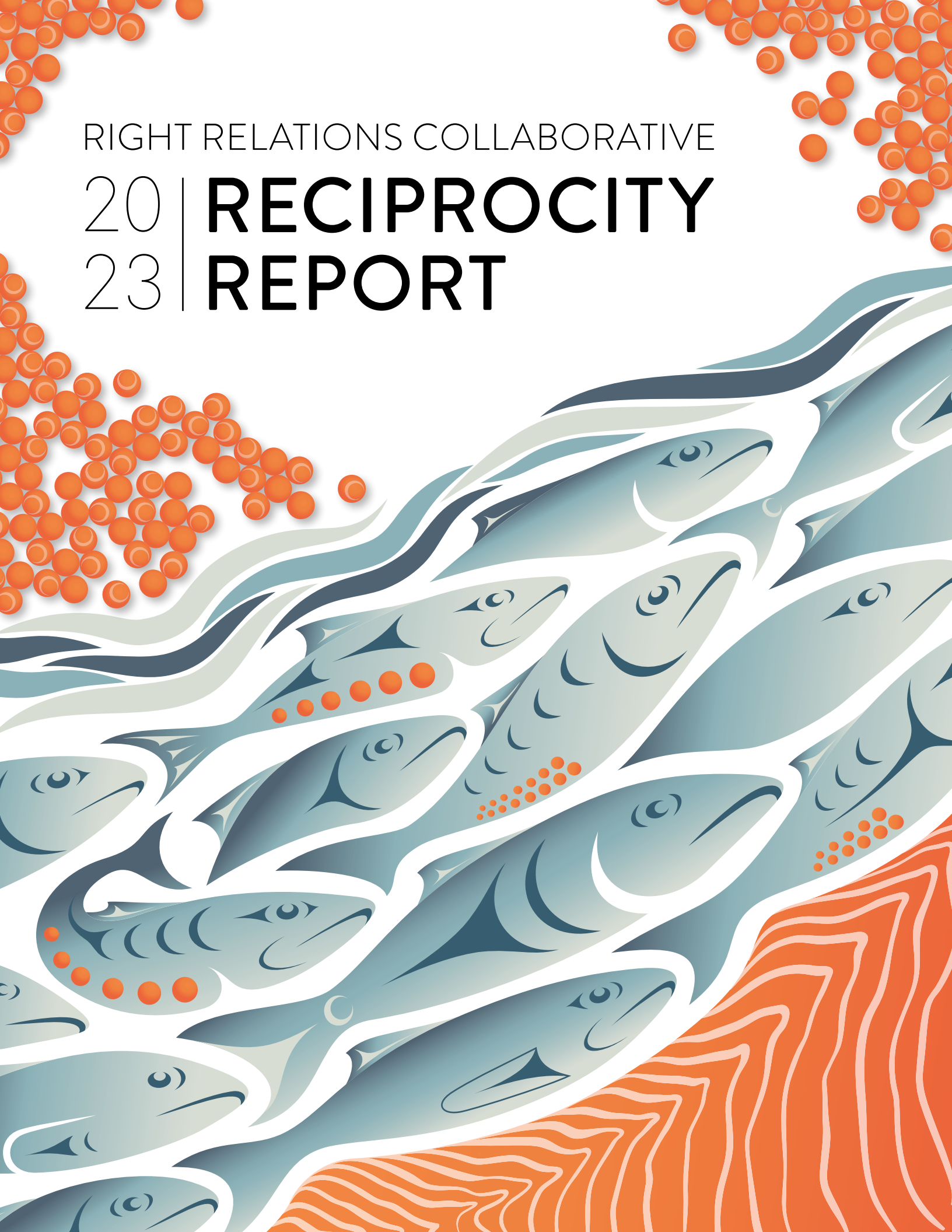


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WELCOME FROM The Aunties Council

Welcome to the inaugural Reciprocity Report for the Right Relations Collaborative. We're grateful you've found your way here to bear witness to the work we're doing together.

The Right Relations Collaborative is a shared space for Indigenous leaders and funder partners who recognize the inequities, harms, and volatile future that is manifesting from our current disconnected and extractive financial system.

More than that, it's a pathway into the nurturing regenerative work being led by Indigenous changemakers across communities and territories in what is colonially known as British Columbia – and it's a learning ground for the Settler-created philanthropic sector to joyfully dismantle the harms and inequities of the extractive financial system from which philanthropy was formed.

The Collaborative began to manifest in 2020 and has evolved rapidly in this moment and with this gathering of people who are committed to rebalancing power and building right relations. As we continue to shape this important work, we are excited to pause and reflect on some of our early milestones, learning moments, and emerging aspirations.

Witnessing is an important and affirming role in our respective cultures, and we are grateful for your eyes on the work we're doing. If you see potential for yourself in this work, we hope you feel inspired to [connect with our co-leads](#).

Respectfully,

Marilyn Baptiste, Xení Gwet'in

Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack), Secwepemc and Nuxalk

K'aayhlt'aa Haanas (Valine Brown), Haida

Right Relations Collaborative Aunties Council

THE PEOPLE WHO UPHOLD

The Right Relations Collaborative

We have worked hard to create an open and abundant space for collaboration that dissolves the colonial power dynamics of conventional philanthropy and moves beyond barriers, competition, and scarcity.

Soapberry

Council of Aunties

The governance backbone of the Collaborative is the Council of Aunties. Their transformational work both sets the table and invites community organizations and funder partners to take a seat at that table together. Their wisdom leads foundational work at RRC such as our engagement framework, emerging mentorship and support work, and funder connection calls.



Marilyn Baptiste

Marilyn is former chief of the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, where she led her community in defeating one of the largest proposed copper and gold mines in BC. She spent her childhood in Xeni Gwet'in Caretaker Territory where she grew up with her parents and sisters. She often joined her father, then chief of the Nemiah Valley Indian Band (XGFNG), on his trips to survey the territory.



Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack)

Nuskmata is a Secwepemc and Nuxalk community organizer and researcher dedicated to supporting Indigenous lifeways, governance, and sovereignty. She plays a role at First Nations Women Advocating Responsible Mining (FNWARM) and serves as Executive Director of the Moccasin Footprint Society, an Indigenous charity that supports Indigenous Knowledge, Rights and Way of Life.



K'aayhlt'aa Haanas (Valine Brown)

K'aayhlt'aa Haanas is an organizer, communications professional, and devoted Haida citizen belonging to the K'aawas Eagle Clan. She believes in the power of people and connection to place and she is fiercely committed to building community resilience amid the climate crisis. Valine is the Manager of Member Engagement & Accountability at The Circle on Philanthropy.

Co-Leads

The Right Relations Collaborative adopts a co-lead model that pairs experience with Settler philanthropy and grassroots Indigenous heartwork in a combined approach. Co-leads Jess and Kim work to actualize the Aunties Council's vision and create the administrative and relational frameworks that support RRC to thrive.



Cúagilákv (Jess Housty)

Cúagilákv is a parent, writer, and community organizer from Bella Bella. They bring their life experience and mixed settler/Heiltsuk ancestry to bear on work related to food security, land-based healing and education, and community-led social change. Jess is the parent of two Heiltsuk children and is privileged to raise them on the land and in their culture surrounded by their extended Heiltsuk family and non-human kin.



Kim Hardy

is a settler of Scottish and Northumberland ancestry, mother, wife, auntie and community economic development and co-op practitioner based in the homelands of the ləkʷəŋən speaking people (Victoria, BC). Having worked boldly at the intersection of philanthropy and Indigenous communities to shift power and nurture relationships over the last decade, Kim seeks to cultivate collective power towards equity and ecological resilience.

Funders

Through the engagement framework and initial relationship building, Right Relations Collaborative invites values-aligned funders to dig deep into their philanthropic practices and "money story" as a first step toward transforming how they work. We acknowledge and uplift the following funders who are walking this pathway with us.



Supported Organizations

The pooled fund at Right Relations Collaborative, through the collective wisdom of the Council of Aunties, supports a cohort of incredible Indigenous community organizations. We encourage you to explore their work and uplift their ongoing projects and programs!

- **Moccasin Footprint Society**, Nuxalk and Secwepemc homelands
- **Qqs (Eyes) Projects Society**, Heiltsuk homelands
- **ŚW, ÇENENITEL, WŚÁNEĆ** homelands
- **Swiilawiid**, Haida homelands
- **Ts'msyen Cultural Society**, Ts'msyen homelands
- **Standing Together** (emerging work of Marilyn Baptiste), Tšilhqot'in homelands

Together we are building a sense of kinship, collective responsibility, and shared power.

Shared Reflections

CÚAGILÁKV
JESS HOUSTY

I'm of Heiltsuk and mixed Settler ancestry and was blessed to grow up in my unceded motherlands on the outer central coast of what's colonially known as BC. I grew up in my culture, on the land, and part of grassroots programming and advocacy that defined my values and illuminated pathways to leadership and community-building that remain central to my life. As I've struggled over two decades to navigate the barriers, complexities, and power dynamics of fundraising for community work, I've always daydreamed – sometimes in frustration, sometimes with hope – of a better way. I arrived at this work on the verge of burnout, not just ready for change but needing it. When my co-lead and dear friend Kim asked the question out loud, "Is it time?" there was only one possible answer. Through the restorative and reparative power of relationships – with Kim, with the brilliant Aunties, and with our initial group of funder partners – we're making the most of this moment. And I'm so excited to share our early reflections with you through the content in this inaugural Reciprocity Report.

"I arrived at this work on the verge of burnout, not just ready for change but needing it."

KIM HARDY

I am a Settler of Scottish and Northumberland ancestry based in the homelands of the Ləkʷəŋən speaking peoples. The generosity of Indigenous communities and people I have come to know growing up in the beautiful lands and waters of what's colonially known as Vancouver Island, has afforded me understanding of my class privilege, how I have benefited from colonization and clarity of my responsibility and accountability in this big work. After a decade working in conservation philanthropy I have come into relationship with Aunties fulfilling their ancestral duty to defend their homelands from extractive development. I have also been privileged to witness the beauty and generosity of their nurturing work of reconnection, wellness and realizing their values through food, lands, language and community building. I have also witnessed the disconnect of philanthropy from investments that perpetuate inequities and harms. Frustrated with the separation of philanthropy from the threats to lands and the barriers Indigenous communities face accessing philanthropy on their terms, I hooked up with my co-conspirator, Cúagilákv (Jess Housty) to try something different. The big work of this bold experiment has brought so much joy and relief – a welcome

"The big work of this bold experiment has brought so much joy and relief – a welcome power correction that allows us all to take healthy and supported risks towards changing our hearts, our minds and clarifying power for right collective action."

power correction that allows us all to take healthy and supported risks towards changing our hearts, our minds and clarifying power for right collective action. Thanks to the generosity and guidance of the Council of Aunties we are getting clear on the power each of us holds to shift a system that continues to harm with investments and growth.

Key Milestones

The Right Relations Collaborative emerged conceptually in 2020 and practically in 2021. Once we pulled together the collective wisdom required to do this work well, it has evolved quickly and organically. We continue to work through the barriers inherent to capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy and emerge on the other side in a shared space that centers collaboration, support, and abundance.

We are incredibly proud of these milestones that mark our growth as we come into our strength:

- The Council of Aunties established a **shared giftmaking practice** rooted in abundance and collective care instead of competition and scarcity.
- The Collaborative launched our **Engagement Framework**, the first step for funders who wish to join our space, which invites reflection on their philanthropic practices and "money story" as part of the journey to explore values alignment.
- **8 Funder Partners committed** to the good big work of being in right relationship with support from the Collaborative and the Council of Aunties.
- These funders supported a pooled fund that, so far, holds **\$1.2M/year for at least 3 years** to support community-based and Indigenous-led organizations in Haida, Ha̱zaqv, Nuxalk, Ṯšilhqot'in, Ts'msyen, Secwepemc and W̱SÁNEĆ homelands.
- Together, we've nurtured kinship and relationship through **monthly "connection points"** for Aunties and Funder Partners to co-create dialogue about philanthropy and the community work it supports – conversations rooted in curiosity, vulnerability and understanding.

Who Is Our Community?

We recognize that Right Relations Collaborative is an initiative within an abundant ecosystem of others in this good work on which we depend.

We are grateful to The Circle on Philanthropy for illuminating the pathway for much of this work and for supporting our efforts to put their values and philosophies into practice. We urge anyone working in the philanthropic sector to familiarize themselves with the incredible resource of their [I4DM \(Definitional Matrix\)](#) and its [Guidelines for Use](#) and to explore the stories and organizations profiled at [The Feast House](#).

We are also grateful to our friends at [Gaagige Zaagibigaa](#); the [Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative](#); and the [Indigenous Women's Flow Fund](#) for sharing their generosity and kinship as we develop our own Collaborative model and shared giftmaking practice.

We would also like to acknowledge the ancestors, non-human relations, and land love that empower each of us in our work.

What Is Transformative About The Work?

"This is a really powerful space – it feels so good to be part of something where there is clear power and sovereignty to follow. It is invaluable and calming to have a space where we can follow Indigenous leadership in a reciprocal and right way."

- Lauri Thompson,
All One Fund

"RRC is a rare space for vulnerability in philanthropy and has allowed me to make eye contact with my own barriers/behaviors. It has affirmed things I know in my gut and have for years. To have conversations with the RRC about how we can and should show up is humbling and also empowering."

- Carolynn Beaty, Sitka Foundation

"Being part of RRC has allowed me to connect, reflect, and recharge. Transformation takes space, and energy which are all part of what this group cultivates with such clarity and ease."

- Adrian Schurr, Google.org

"The certainty of the Right Relations Collaborative funding has made it possible to do what needs to be done - hiring to respond to the work our community needs. Decolonizing the funding process has resulted in decolonizing our work in our community. It's created the space to open up my mind for what is possible."

- Nuskmata, Moccasin Footprint Society

Ts'eman - Xeni Gwet'in

miá - Haitzaqv

Salmon - English

amlh - Nuxalkmc

"The Right Relations Collaborative clarifies the power that each of us holds and when we are afforded the clarity of "what is ours to do" we can work easily with abundance together."

- Kim Hardy, Co-Lead

"It's been transformative for me personally to be doing this – I'm so emboldened by the authenticity of it. I would have been terrified to be in a conversation with our funders! But this feels so good - to know we have a place in these conversations. Conventional funder/grantee conversations are oppressive, disingenuous and messy. This feels real and honest and lovely."

- Cúagilákv (Jess Housty), Co-lead Right Relations Collaborative

"Toyaxsutnuusm to your support for our food sovereignty work in Ts'msyen territory. This work is healing and vital and we are so grateful and honored to be working in this good way with RRC."

- Braden Etzerza,
Ts'msyen Culture Society

"Being a part of RRC has been the biggest honour in my life. It's been long overdue. Building these relationships are apart of true reconciliation working with communities from their perspectives, in their house, rather than in an imposed belief system"

- Marilyn Baptiste, Council of Aunties

"RRC has set a mold of how philanthropy should be done where decision making is held in community and power and white dominance culture is given a real loving but vigorous shake. Being gifted the time, words, heart, and minds of the aunties and members over each of the connections has been invaluable for me."

- Ross Jameson, Sitka Foundation

"As a funder, I have never wanted as much power as we have. It feels unbalanced. It has felt so relaxing, a relief, to come into a space where we are getting clear on the work we should be doing to reduce harm, competition and scarcity in philanthropy."

- Sherry Yano, Real Estate Foundation of BC

"RRC has driven home for me that building diverse power in partnership takes time and we can move quickly and clearly when we have the right structures to allow for right relationship."

- Wendy Vanasselt, Wilburforce Foundation

tsiín - Xaad Kil

STORY SHARED BY JESS:

Shared Giftmaking Practice

When we began the work of giving the Collaborative shape and power, we were adamant that it needed to come with appropriate resourcing delivered without the typical barriers: we wanted to ensure that the Aunties Council was compensated with appropriate generosity and that they had a pooled fund – generated by multiyear, unrestricted contributions from our funder partners – to distribute to the organizations doing good work in our communities.

The pooled fund proved to be relatively simple to daydream into existence, but when the time came for our first call about distributing funds, I felt deep apprehension. We'd built a space together rooted in an abundance mentality. But I'd spent nearly two decades thinking in terms of scarcity; I was afraid that the joy and trust we'd built along with the structural work of the Collaborative would be harmed by the necessity of making decisions about allocations.

We went into that first disbursement call without a process mapped out. We'd asked the initial group of organizations ready for support to bring forward honest asks that reflected their real needs, especially those needs that are hard to meet when faced with the silos and barriers of conventional philanthropy. Beyond that, we hoped for organic dialogue and consensus-based decision making.

Looking back, I see how years of scrabbling for funds coded fear into my thinking about what funding practices could look like. And I feel deep gratitude for the humility and shared joy that marked our conversation. As each organization spoke to their dreams and their needs, no one was thinking about competition: each person was cheering the other dreamers and leaders on, prepared to celebrate and advocate for one another as we all fumbled through that first attempt to get the funds connected with worthy work.

We don't talk about "fund disbursement" anymore. Instead, we refer to our shared giftmaking practice. And with each infusion of funding going into communities, we prove that the scarcity mentality doesn't come from within – it's imposed on us, and it's an oppressive tactic that diminishes our power. When invited to think abundantly, our practice is rooted in collective care and joy, where shared wisdom guides us to connect the power of money with the power of community.

As we begin to articulate our shared giftmaking practice with more intention, we look forward to learning from others who are innovating in this space – and to guidance from the cultural practices and Indigenous brilliance brought into the Collaborative through the Aunties Council and Indigenous organizations we support.

Fireweed

STORY SHARED BY KIM:

Engagement Framework

As we embarked on our journey to co-create a path for philanthropy re-rooted in right relationship and reciprocity, we were filled with a sense of hope and enthusiasm. We recognized that in order to address the power imbalance of conventional philanthropy, we needed to invite questions that would result in a different conversation. We knew that only through a deeper understanding of who funder partners are and transparency around their "money story" would a new conversation be possible.

We created the [Engagement Framework](#) as a tool to transform the power imbalance between funders and Aunties by inviting honesty and reciprocity. Funders are invited to "apply" to join the Collaborative by sharing their reflections on a set of questions curated by the Council of Aunties. These questions ask funders to reflect on their existing tools, practices, and success metrics for working differently. This process also allows funders to reflect on the origins of the money they steward – and the harms caused in the accumulation of that wealth – as an honest foundation for building new relationships.

Funder's completed engagement frameworks are met with joy, generosity, curiosity and gratitude from the Council of Aunties. The act of completing the engagement framework is an opportunity for healing and growth as it allows for open conversations about how the controlled flow of money has affected indigenous communities. It is a joyful and empowering process that illuminates barriers perpetuated by the conventional financial service sector and clarifies the good, big work of creating more flow for funding to connect with Indigenous community organizations as well as align investments with being in right relationship.

We recognize that not everyone is ready to take on this work. Early on in establishing the Collaborative we were faced with a difficult decision – a Funder offered to contribute to the pooled fund without completing the Engagement framework. As difficult as it was to turn away a significant gift – enough to support a new organization – the Council of Auntie's felt strongly that the integrity of the Collaborative would be compromised if they accepted.

As we continue to work towards a more just, equitable and livable world, we are reminded of the power of connection and relationship. One of our collaborators said, "It felt like such a relief to be asked these important questions, reflect on where the funding I steward came from, and share this. It was a beautiful process of dismantling the power imbalance in philanthropy and arriving at a deeper understanding of our shared humanity."



Accountability

Part of this is about wellbeing: How can we give Aunties and Indigenous community partners the space and resources to focus on their work without the unequal burden of fundraising for that work? And how can we help Funder Partners to step into the vulnerability of exploring the tension of being a leader in changing systems and challenging norms?

Part of this is also about recognizing and shifting locations of power: How can Funder Partners be more intentional about aligning their investments with their values? And how can we authentically and safely shift power to communities within funding relationships?

A commitment to accountability asks a lot of each participant in the Right Relations Collaborative. Here are some of the methods and mechanisms emerging for us:

For funders:

- A minimum 2 year unrestricted funding commitment (ideally, a 5 year commitment)
- Independently becoming a member of The Circle on Philanthropy
- Recommendation to participate in the Partners in Reciprocity program
- Annual report back on institutional progress toward being in right relationship with Indigenous communities and organizations

For aunties:

- A commitment to meet everyone in this space where they're at
- Facilitating knowledge exchange and the sharing of joys and challenges in this work
- Holding a set of values that set the table for just and equitable relationships

“We ground our work in the belief that we share responsibility for everyone’s work and each of our respective livelihoods.”

- Carolynn Beaty

We acknowledge that accountability is an evolving practice that asks honesty, vulnerability, and courage of us and that this practice is only functional in the context of a trust-based relationship. We are grateful for the way that the respective cultural practices shape our practice.

We also acknowledge the collective wisdom of the Aunties Council in holding these accountability practices with the tough love and high expectations that only an Auntie can wield. In particular, we share the following questions from Aunties Council member Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack) to those in positions of power and influence in the financial service sector:

- What percentage of your funding currently goes to Indigenous-led organizations?
- What concrete number can you commit to shifting toward in the coming years?
- Are you making connections and introductions to your colleagues in the philanthropic community to increase access for Indigenous leaders?
- How are you shifting your investments away from extraction and exploitation and toward sustainable and regenerative enterprise?



Good Funder Work

With support from the Aunties Council, our Right Relations Collaborative Funder Partners are doing the big work of learning how to be better helpers and asking:

“What is good funder work to do?”

Philanthropy exists when there is a surplus of wealth. Indigenous communities have systems for managing and disbursing resources to ensure everyone is looked after. Funder energy is better spent ensuring pathways for funding are right, ensuring their current investments are not creating more harm and clearing pathways for increased access to funds. By recognizing the characteristics of white supremacy and how they are perpetuated in philanthropy, funders can begin to make important power shifts to align with Indigenous leadership and practices around abundance.

Transforming power requires transforming practices – both as individuals and within institutions – and this is good, big work. Here are some of the ways it shows up:

- *Proactively identifying barriers*, or hearing feedback about barriers with an open mind, then removing them to increase the flow of funding to communities and organizations that would not otherwise have access.
- *Extending support beyond the network of organizations in your circle* and putting energy into supporting the organizations that should exist – and that your Indigenous partners are dreaming into being. Funders can help to activate this work by resourcing the early stages, bridging relationships, clearing pathways, and removing barriers.
- *Understanding where the money you steward originated* and owning the narrative! What harm was enacted and is it ongoing? On whose back or from whose homelands was the wealth extracted? Lean into aligning your investments with your values across your whole portfolio and the messy, reparative work of undoing harm.

- *Shaking up systems.* How are you challenging your colleagues in your institution to deepen their learning and transform their practices? How are you challenging your peers in the philanthropic sector to do the same? Are you being open and transparent about your capacity, resources, and constraints? Are you undoing competition and paralysis in the system that houses your work?
- *Focusing your energy on collaborating and orienting around the communities and organizations you support* instead of building a constellation around yourself or your institution. Think about your networks as another powerful resource you can leverage in support of the leaders you support with grants.

A good practice is asking yourself what kinds of barriers or supports your Indigenous partners are signalling to be important. What work is called for in this moment? And what, of that work, is something you can step up to do?

Continued on the next page →

The Aunties Council has shared some intentional 'asks' with Funder Partners in the Collaborative. We believe they are valuable insight for the philanthropic sector at large:

Listen and deepen your understanding of the diversity of cultures, languages, laws, ceremonies, practices, and connections to the land across your Indigenous partners. Learn about the history of colonization and how it continues to manifest. Do not expect your Indigenous partners to educate you about colonial histories and traumas or defend their humanity or do extra emotional labour that is complicated by the power dynamics inherent to the transfer of money.

Be ready to collaborate in authentic ways, including sharing your connections, aligning your funding to match the needs emerging in communities, and amplify good community work. Conventional philanthropic practices result in scarcity and competition across community relationships and you have work to do to support authentic thriving.

Be transparent about your limits, your assumptions, and your conditions. We know that funders are at different stages in their learning and unlearning journeys, and it creates a foundation of honesty and accountability when we understand the hard limits and challenges your staff and board are working through that impact how you can support us.

Understand and share your "money story." Philanthropy exists when there is a surplus of wealth. Monetary wealth accumulates through extraction – literally or figuratively. We care deeply about what harms arose through the accumulation of the wealth you're responsible for distributing, and we want you to care as well and be ready to have a conversation about the values your "money story" reflects.

We can do restorative, reparative, regenerative things together when we are partnered in a values-aligned way and doing our respective work with good intentions. These are big, complicated, ongoing conversations that require us to have open hearts – and we believe this is foundational to the goal of being in right relationship.

Salmonberry

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the exciting work we've explored so far, we know there is much more good work ahead of us. Please follow our journey as we look toward:

- Hosting our first COVID-safe, in-person retreat for Aunties and Funder Partners to connect on the land in Summer 2023
- Digging into topics like spend-down models and values aligned investing models with our Funder Partners
- Developing the idea of "Auntieships," specialized fellowships to support Indigenous leaders who need the love, support, and mentorship of an Auntie along with a stipend to support them in developing their leadership capacity
- Extending our monthly "connection point" calls for Aunties and Funder Partners beyond the pilot phase and into a regular offering
- Continuing to tell the story of the Right Relations Collaborative and build our circles of kinship and reciprocity
- Expanding our network of Funder Partners and the Indigenous community organizations who are supported through the Collaborative's pooled fund

We honour that this work evolves organically in response to community-identified needs raised up through the Aunties Council and the Indigenous leaders and organizations in our circles. Our commitment is to be receptive and responsive to what each moment asks of us in this work.

Closing

We express our gratitude to you for your generosity and enthusiasm in witnessing our work and our inaugural Reciprocity Report.

If you're an Indigenous community leader or organization seeking support, we ask for your patience as we develop a responsible and relational onboarding practice to bring new people into our circle.

If you're a potential Funder Partner interested in joining the Collaborative, we invite you to [reach out to 'Cúagilákv or Kim](#) for an initial conversation or to explore our [Engagement Framework](#).

We appreciate the community and momentum building around this work, and welcome folks to join our email list if they'd like to be part of our ongoing sharing circle.

With gratitude,

Cúagilákv and Kim
(on behalf of everyone at Right Relations Collaborative)

