



Healing

Through

The Land

Transforming Power
and Redefining
Relationships

“Healing Through The Land” Initiative:

Transforming Power and Redefining Relationships

In the spring of 2016, the Catherine Donnelly Foundation rolled out an environment funding strategy aimed at promoting climate justice and supporting initiatives that accelerate the transition to a post-carbon world. Our approach recognizes an inseparable bond between nature, justice for the marginalized, a commitment to society and reconciliation with Inuit, First Nations and Métis People.



Dene Nahjo urban hide tanning camp in Somba K'e Park (Yellowknife, NWT), September 2018.

In the fall of 2016, the Foundation also advanced a new housing strategy which prioritized learning from, building relationships with and ultimately providing support to Indigenous Housing organizations and/or Indigenous-led initiatives. This preoccupation responded to a noticeable gap in the Foundation's funding history and intersected with the Catherine Donnelly Foundation's Adult Education and Environment mandate funding priorities.

Over the past couple of years, the Foundation has been actively seeking out partnerships with actors/allies/funders currently engaged with/within Indigenous communities. To date we have hosted three gatherings (November 2017, April 2018, September 2018).

The CDF's principal objective in convening Indigenous leaders and allies was to learn from and engage with Indigenous communities to explore how the Foundation (and other funders) could address holistic community capacity needs faced by Indigenous

communities/people that fit within a climate change/climate justice framework.

Guided by the wisdom of participants in our gatherings, we came to the shared understanding that addressing capacity needed to be rooted in healing. We also came to understand that this initiative could not just be rooted in environmental concerns, but would need to be flexible and appreciate Indigenous worldviews of interconnectedness. This led to the emergence and naming of the “Healing Through the Land” initiative. However, we did not define exactly what that meant but rather had a broad understanding of what it might encompass in a holistic and innovative way:

- Integrating and enhancing elements of community leadership
- Cultural revitalization
- Increasing energy efficiency (culturally appropriate, safe housing)
- Addressing issues of Indigenous homelessness¹

¹ “Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities.” Jesse Thistle <https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness>



Statue and carvings in the rock in Yellowknife representing the Cultural crossroads (including spirit animals of the Métis, the Inuvialuit and the Dene. All connected by the universal language of music).

- Localizing food (sovereignty)
- Supporting economic development/sustainability
- Protecting water across Indigenous communities

In January 2019, a smaller follow-up meeting took place in Montreal. The intention was to further unpack the discussion that emerged in Yellowknife (Sept. 2018) and flesh out how we might better address the questions that surfaced around structure, intent and partnerships.

After a fulsome discussion, we built on the learning that had previously emerged and crafted some recommendations as tangible next steps for continuing to develop the Healing through the Land Initiative, while at the same time “testing” some of our assumptions. Following this meeting, the CDF had an internal discussion that took into consideration the recommendations and the learning that had emerged throughout the process.



Context

The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have created an historic opportunity for a growing movement of people of faith and civil society to work toward reconciliation.



This initiative is an opportunity to right relations by actively seeking to build mutually respectful relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and recognizes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation in Canada.

We need to build deep and trusting relationships with Indigenous-led organizations if we truly wish to begin the process of decolonizing our funding approaches.

First gathering of Healing Through the Land participants, Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Toronto, ON, November 2017.

Key Elements

Through the wisdom and guidance of Healing Through the Land participants, the following elements have emerged as priorities for the first year:

LONGER TERM FUNDING

Shift from conceiving of this as a “pilot” and catalyze funders to make multi-year commitments.

CDF has committed \$1 million to support the development and creation of a pooled fund over a five-year timeframe aimed at addressing community capacity needs faced by Indigenous communities/people across Canada. We recognize that the first year of this 5-year program would be a critical development phase.

Rationale: Originally, this was framed as a one-year pilot project, but we recognize that in order to

honour our commitment to reconciliation and reciprocity we need to think longer term. It is our hope that other funders would match the CDF's commitment and grow the pooled fund over the five-year period.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

Create a Steering Committee or Governance

Rationale: The Steering Committee must be Indigenous-led and Indigenous-centred. Founding members include Siila Watt-Cloutier and Miigam'agan who will ensure a grandmother/mother centred approach permeates the work. Darcy Riddell will also be on the committee, representing CDF. There are a number of decisions to be made, including:

- Identifying the right fiscal arrangement/financial vehicle for the fund
- Defining what is meant by healing through the land
- Crafting the granting criteria that can be shared

This new Committee will be tasked with managing and developing the work moving forward by recruiting members through a call out that is disseminated through *Indigenous and non-Indigenous* networks across Canada.

Healing Through the Land Gathering,
Tree of Peace Friendship Centre,
Yellowknife, NWT, September 2018.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Support the mapping of a set of principles guiding this work, grounded in a grandmother/mother-based; heart-centred; inter-generational framework.

Rationale: There was a strong desire expressed to maintain the principles that have guided the work thus far in all that we do. To respect the process and be comfortable taking the time needed to arrive at the right decisions and not rush the work. A recognition that if we infuse these principles in our deliberations, in the relationships we seek to build, and in the philosophy behind the projects we seek to foster and support, then we are on the right track.

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

Support the convening of land-based practitioners.

Rationale: The need for this type of convening arose from the meeting in Yellowknife where the group identified a gap around mapping land-based projects in Canada and the work that is currently going on in this space.

Opportunity for on-the-land practitioners: To map existing land-based projects and communities, to come together and learn, network, share best practices, pathways, impediments, and any funding received. Create a toolkit to support similar grassroots initiatives to develop.

Opportunity for philanthropy: Inform the philanthropic space, raise the awareness of on the land work by raising the body of evidence, mapping, revealing what's happen-

ing and making it more legitimate and visible helps all the existing programs get more funding and it inspires communities to start up. Create a toolkit for funders wanting to build relationships with communities around supporting land-based projects.

Opportunity for the sector: There's a need for leadership to identify what is "authentic", Indigenous-led, land-based learning. What does it look like? Who are the leaders? What are the best practices? What are those disruptive relationships and partnerships that are needed to drive this forward? Synthesis and pedagogical approach that can be shared.

CASE STUDIES

Test the model by funding a few land-based healing initiatives in the first year.

Rationale: We discussed exploring a way to pilot or support the development of programs in 3 communities in different regions to develop case studies that support our theory of change.

HEALING THROUGH THE LAND

FUNDERS TABLE

Create and convene a separate Funders Table to support the work.

Rationale: The Funders Table would be an informal structure that supports Healing Through the Land by: a) actively collaborating in the work, b) coordinating financial commitments, and to the degree possible, c) tailoring reporting and administrative demands on the Healing Through the Land Steering Committee.



Healing Through the Land Gathering, Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Toronto, ON, April 2018.

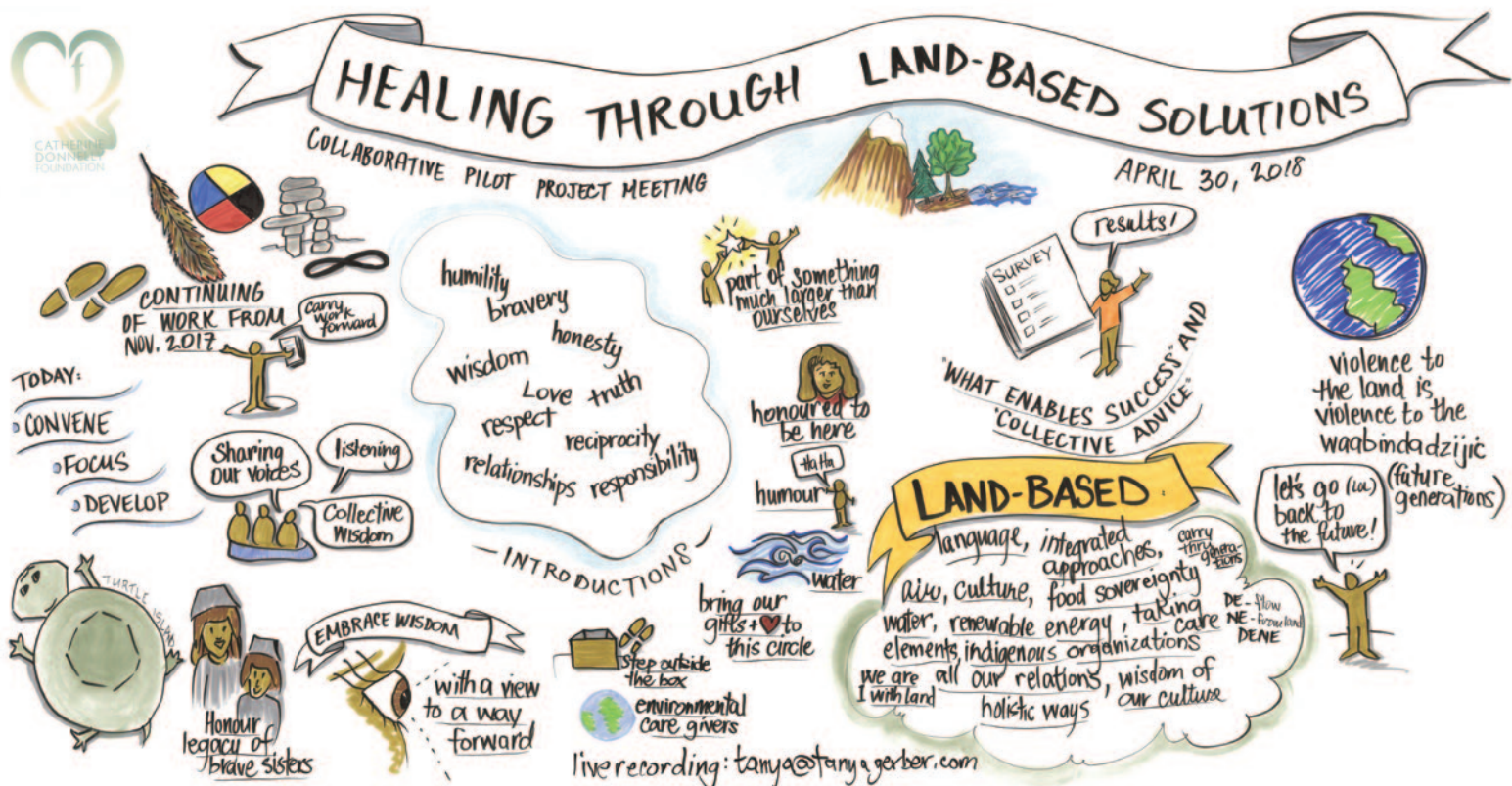
Potential Outcomes

The Healing Through the Land Initiative is an emergent program, one that we are committed to supporting, but are not leading.

The following outcomes would be further developed by the Steering/ Governance Committee who would provide guidance and leadership on all aspects of program development and management.

- Pooled fund grows to \$5 million over five years.
- More Indigenous-led initiatives addressing community capacity needs have emerged.
- Charitable foundations have a better understanding of the capacity needs of Indigenous communities/people and incorporate this knowledge into their grantmaking.
- Participating funders have been enriched by new learnings from the program which can influence our philanthropic practice.

Graphic recording (harvest) by Tanya Gerber of Healing Through the Land Gathering, Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Toronto, ON, April 2018.



PARTICIPANTS

Kris Archie	The Circle on Philanthropy
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Sherry Campbell	Gordon Foundation
Vivien Carli	Gordon Foundation
Mary Corkery	Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Board Chair
Eriel Tchekwie Deranger	Indigenous Climate Action Network
Pegi Dover	Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network
Stephen Ellis	Tides Canada
Ellen Gabriel	Activist, rights of Indigenous people
Chris Googoo	Ulnooweg Indigenous Communities Foundation
Chris Henderson	Indigenous Clean Energy, Lumos Energy
Margaret Herriman	Max Bell Foundation
Dani LaGiglia	PetSmart Charities of Canada
Melina Laboucan-Massimo	David Suzuki Foundation's Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Change Fellowship
Chris Lee	Inspirit Foundation
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Pam Ouart-McNabb	McConnell Foundation
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Darcy Riddell	Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Environment Committee
Paul Rowe	Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Environment Committee
Frances Sanderson	Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Housing Committee
Itoah Scott-Enns	Arctic Funders Collaborative
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Susan Smitten	The Circle on Philanthropy and RAVEN
Ron Tremblay	Traditional Wolastoq Grand Chief
Siila Watt-Cloutier	Author and activist



**Miigwetch, to all who
have been on this
learning journey with
the Catherine Donnelly
Foundation.**