

**IKHANA FUND FIRST PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE COLLABORATION  
BETWEEN OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY AND WESTERN PHILANTHROPY**

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A General Statement About IKhana Fund in the Context of Collaboration with Western Philanthropy. The IKhana fund brings a (k)new pathway to philanthropic funding into Indigenous communities' traditional ways of supporting the land, to facilitate healing and strengthening environmental resilience in the places of which Indigenous people are the traditional caretakers. The 'k' in (k)new signals that this way of working may be new to funders but is knew or well-known to Indigenous communities.

Following is a list of First Principles for Indigenous Philanthropy that we drew up for consideration and discussion in our first IKhana Fund meeting. We share it in the hope it may be of use to other Indigenous communities trying to improve collaborative experience with funders operating out of Western worldview. This list is not intended to serve as a final document, but as a collection of ideas that can be discussed, thought about, and tested in a process of exploring new possible avenues and means by which Indigenous peoples and communities can collaborate in productive ways with Western philanthropy. We respectfully ask those who use or try to use all or part of this list to give us feedback ([dawn@tapestryinstitute.org](mailto:dawn@tapestryinstitute.org)) on what worked and what didn't, so we can learn from your experience. We will be happy to share from our own experience with you as well. We expect the document will have to be applied in a variety of practical ways, in a range of situations, for it to begin to shape itself into something/s that is/are genuinely useful to the communities it can serve.



Preamble: Stepping into the unknown involves trust and letting go of control. However, doing this is part of reciprocal process. Before we work together or collaborate with a Western ally, we need to concretely outline our First Principles, using this list as a starting point, and identifying and adding any items that may pertain to a specific situation. The funder will eventually learn and gain knowledge from engaging in these actions. Western allies do not need complete understanding of Indigenous ways to proceed in collaborative relationship with us, and it is impossible for us to provide such understanding. Instead, we invite you to join us on a pathway of hope. We anticipate a resistance to change as part of normal human process, but we ask you to enter into this relationship with us in good faith, and to participate actively with us in making every effort to communicate with one another, asking questions whenever necessary, and gently but firmly holding each other accountable to the larger goal we serve in our work together.

The First Principles listed here are of three basic types: (1) those that are universal and apply to the ways we collaborate with both Indigenous people and people of Western culture; (2) those for Indigenous People, that apply to the ways we collaborate with people of Western culture; and (3) those for people of Western culture that apply to the ways they should behave in collaborative relationships with Indigenous people.

**The following First Principles are universal and apply to the ways we collaborate with both Indigenous people and people of Western culture.**

### Our Core Principles

- We are standing our ground for the Land.
- The Land is at the center of everything.
- The Land is alive and has agency.

### Additional Basic Principles:

#### *About the Land*

- By "Land" we refer to all that exists, seen and unseen, on earth and across the entire cosmos, including humans and All Our Relations.
- The Land is living and living things can heal.
- If the Land dies then everyone dies.

#### *About Land-Based Environmental Work*

- The Land is leading. The Land knows how to heal itself and is telling Indigenous people how to do that. The work we do is not an expression of human ideas.
- We are doing the things we are doing in our environmental work because we can hear the Land. This is not a mystical or religious statement, but one of sensed reality.
- We are working to effect non-human solutions to things, in comparison to the system of Western control that effects human solutions.
- The Land takes priority over human stakeholders, because we Indigenous recipients are Standing Our Ground for the Land.

#### *About Relationship*

- Relationality is of essential importance, epistemically and also ethically.
- We issue a call to relationship. We offer our allies an *opportunity* to be in relationship and to learn, not a *demand*.
- We acknowledge that our allies are standing on Indigenous Land and that they themselves have very old and deep Indigenous roots. This will help us establish meaningful relationships of healing.
- Relationships between funders and recipients should be mutual and two-way, reciprocal. Funders must realize they will receive something out of relationship with the people they fund, so they need to participate and engage with us. Being in relationship is not about money, whether donor or recipient.
- We should treat people the same regardless of how much funding they contribute or receive. The relationship formed is more important than money. We should engage in relationship with one another even if no grant money moves. Relationship is not transactional.
- IKhana fund offers different levels of relationship to philanthropists, depending on where they are willing to meet.

- Funders have problems that Indigenous partners can help solve. Support is not a one-way street that follows only the flow of financial resources.
- We realize there are aspects of being in relationship that funders may not be used to. We must learn what these are so we can communicate them.
- We should be a good host when we invite someone into our Place

*About the Work We Do*

- There must be flexibility of time in the work we do.
- The processes of what we do are more important than outcome.
- We will try to articulate what success looks like, but it may not be possible to satisfy a Western funder's expectations of success metrics.
- Indigenous groups must lead collaborative endeavors, within our Land-based, relational ethical systems.
- Indigenous Process is essential. It is not enough for Indigenous people to simply be involved in a project for it to be truly "Indigenous" in its values, methods, and principles.

**The following First Principles are for Indigenous People, and apply to the ways we collaborate with people of Western culture.**

- We should talk to you as if you already know the things we are talking about, remembering that we just need to help you reveal Knowledge from within yourselves.
- We Indigenous recipients pledge to tell you what you need to know in order to enter this space with us.
- We Indigenous recipients will ask your motivation for entering this space with us.
- We Indigenous recipients will do our best to keep things simple and straightforward, as much as we can.

**The following First Principles are for people of Western culture and apply to the ways they should behave in collaborative relationships with Indigenous people.**

- Western collaborators must recognize the sovereignty of Indigenous people/s.
- Funders must relinquish control over our collaborative work together.
- Everyone is welcome on the Land and to Country, but the traditional owners/custodians of Land should be acknowledged.
- Because there must be flexibility of time in the work that is done, the donor cannot set those limits.
- Because the processes of what are done are more important than outcome, the donor cannot set demands for specific expectations of outcome. However, assumptions or hopes about outcome possibilities should be communicated for the purposes of fostering understanding as we learn to work together.

- Because it may be difficult or impossible to articulate what success looks like, the donor may not stipulate expected metrics of success. Again, assumptions or hopes about what success would look like should be communicated for the purposes of fostering understanding as we learn to work together.
- Western collaborators must be transparent about the source of the resources they intend to contribute to the work we do together. Since all things are connected, certain kinds of resources from specific sources may be inimical to the work to which they would be applied. It is essential to make sure that resources do not carry lethal toxins into environments that will be harmed, rather than benefitted, by what these resources bring. We will ask you about the sources of funds you offer us, and you should let us know if you're aware of a potential problem we do not see.

### **To Think About Going Forward:**

How will we repair breaches in our agreement once we formulate our principles as a working document? It will be impossible to prevent all problems, but we should have processes for restorative justice or some other means of repairing relationships harmed by miscommunication, misunderstanding, or the challenges of cross-cultural collaboration. As we proceed into collaborative relationships that apply these First Principles in a working way, we need to keep detailed records of the process and also of the ways these Principles help the group members better understand situations in which assumptions and methods have come into conflict. It is especially important that we record the means we try to use to resolve problems if the agreement we've drafted seems to have been violated by one or more of the parties involved in the collaborative project. The purpose of such records is solely to assist all the participants, Indigenous and Western, in better understanding how we can make our collaborations more powerful, more effective, and more synergistic.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

The 2022 report **STANDING OUR GROUND FOR THE LAND: AN INDIGENOUS PHILANTHROPY**, available at <https://tapestryinstitute.org/standing-our-ground-for-the-land>, may be useful to philanthropists seeking additional information about the ideas and values expressed in these First Principles.

Questions, Comments, and Feedback:  
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