

Dear Friend, and fellow supporter of the Canadian environment,

We recently commissioned a landscape report on philanthropic opportunities in Canada. The specific focus was on leadership development programs for cross-sectoral groups working on climate and biodiversity. The results were extensive. And so we created a brief excerpt, which is what we're sharing with you.

We hope that you or your team find a quick scan of the recommended organizations in this report to be useful, and complementary to your efforts

Warmly,

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*The following is an edited version of a study commissioned by Ground Effect to uncover funding opportunities for environmental leadership in Canada.*

# What is Ground Effect and why look at funding leadership?

[Ground Effect](#) is a Swiss-Canadian animist investment studio representing the interests of living systems and the conditions from which life emerges. It backs ventures that maximize planetary generativity, taking a variety of approaches that bring this worldview to life.

Ground Effect wants to help strengthen the interrelations between social and environmental movements. It believes that capacity building and leadership training are powerful tools to empower organizations who are already doing this critical work. It's with this intention that Ground Effect endeavors to help bring the many 'voices of nature' into human dialogues.

## Goals for this project

This project began with the assumption that there are great leadership programs in Canada that could benefit from further support. It started with the following inquiries:

- What does leadership mean in the Canadian context?
- Which programs and investments work well now, and why?
- Which existing initiatives need further backing? Are there gaps?
- What movements, trends, or practices could or should be accelerated?

# Landscape Analysis of Existing Programs in Canada

This paper describes representative programs that are 1) based in Canada; 2) not based in Canada but open to Canadians; and 3) relevant to Canada but not currently open to Canadians. It is a landscape scan of the kinds of programs that are available, who they serve, how they are designed, and the outcomes they seek.

Our findings can be initially grouped into the following general categories:

## 1. Programs that connect science and society

Three programs that stood out in the category linking science with society are:

### Liber Ero Fellowship Program

It is modeled on the David H. Smith Conservation Fellowship Program in the USA but is distinctly Canadian and highly effective. It works because it is tailored to the science-policy interface in Canada, including the Indigenization of science and conservation federally and provincially. It also has stable leadership in the form of dedicated funders and a humble leader, and it invests a lot in the durability and community of networks of new and past fellows.

### Global Young Academy

A global program for young scientists who are interested in the ways that science can build stronger societies, policies, and communities. Co-founded by Rees Kassan, a scientist at the University of Ottawa and former Aldo Leopold Fellow, it links the local to the global and research to its applications. Modeled on venerable academic societies, it deliberately serves younger scholars interested in systems change.

### Science for Policy Accelerator Program

Hosted by Evidence for Democracy. This stands out because it is rooted in an organization that was created in crisis during a government assault on a venerable Canadian environmental research facility. It is also unique in its inclusion of activists across the nation, across disciplines and issues, and across sectors.

## 2. Indigenous Leadership Programs

Three programs that stood out in the Indigenous leadership category are:

### The Indigenous Watersheds Champions

This has now been piloted in a handful of BC First Nations. It is unique because it was created in direct response to BC legislation that set up watershed governance pilot programs that demanded new forms of leadership. It is a solid partnership among First Nations, ENGOs, and a collaborative of water funders.

### Resilient Indigenous Leaders Network

Created as a result of an urgent need among mid-career First Nations leaders in BC. It recognizes the unique conditions under which leaders are working, often in isolation in their communities or territories, absent a local peer group to provide mutual support, advice, and community for resilience. “It is peer accountability, not a fancy cohort model. It is less like “here’s the fellowship and learning arc” and more like creating a faculty that can support leaders in the work that they are trying to do and connect them to other people who are doing work that is similar” --Kim Hardy

### Emerging leaders programs

In the 3 Northern Territories: includes Our Voices in Yukon, Dene Nahjo in the Northwest Territories, and Qanak in Nunavut. These stand out for the independent ways in which they arose to advance self-determination in their territories, the spectrum of sociocultural, environmental, and economic projects their participants spearhead, and the variety of communities they serve within these unique jurisdictions. These programs all chose to use the MakeWay Shared Platform to do their work nimbly, and this platform would be a way to support extension of the approach in other places.

Other than the regional initiatives mentioned above, quite a few interviewees singled out the quality and importance of the Partners in Reciprocity program of The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

### **3. For conventional environmentalists**

Three programs that stood out in the conventional environmentalism category are:

#### **Training Resources for the Environmental Community Program**

Open only to grantees of the Wilburforce Foundation, it has long offered emerging and senior leadership programs to certain organizations in BC, Alberta, Yukon, and NWT. These have been transformative for some environmental leaders but tend to be less applicable to contemporary and ever-expanding Canadian conservation approaches centered on Indigenous partnerships.

#### **Programs offered by the Sustainable Capacity Foundation and its affiliates**

Limited to smaller ENGOs in parts of Ontario, but with aspirations to go nationwide. Uniquely these efforts focus on underserved “small shop” ENGOs that are numerous and tend to have access to fewer resources than large national ENGOs. There is potential here to fill gaps flagged by some interviewees, such as a growing need for rural non-Indigenous Canadians to be more engaged in environmental leadership.

#### **Sustainability Network**

It has existed for 25 years and offers a wide variety of programs to ENGO staff on important skills like engagement organizing. It has developed an excellent reputation as a capacity builder serving organizations that TREC does not serve with its range of shorter-term workshops and trainings. It is not a leadership training per se, but it is a valued resource whose reputation and constituency overlaps with this category.

## 4. Programs engaging youth

Three programs that stood out in the youth engagement category are:

### Reel Youth

A program that uses film as a medium to engage youth in issues and give them leadership skills. It stands out for its durability, its urban at-risk clientele, and the ways in which it combines seemingly narrow technical training into transformative change for individuals and communities.

### Students on Ice

A nationally known program that teaches leadership in the rigours of the polar context. It engages Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth with one another and with leadership, policy, climate change, and social change in transformative ways. It has a solid base of funding, a strong brand, and steady leadership for many years. It also has a large alumni network of former participants leading in sustainability careers.

### Nunavut Sivuniksavut

A venerable program that gives Inuit students from Nunavut a deep educational experience in Ottawa. Often, it is their first trip south, so the educational components are embedded in cross-cultural personal transformation. Students are empowered to participate in Inuit self-determination by learning about their unique land claims, relationships with the Crown, and roles in Canadian society.

Interestingly, Indigenous youth are the youngest and fastest growing demographic in Canada. This is true in jurisdictions from coast to coast to coast, but especially in the Prairie provinces and nowhere more than in Nunavut and other parts of Inuit Nunangat -- which makes up about a third of Canada's land and ocean and is facing the most rapid climate and social change.

## 5. Programs involving funders

Three programs that stood out in the funder category are:

### Play Big

Designed for high-net-worth individuals to explore their wealth journey with peers at various stages of their philanthropic and investment lives. It emphasizes the integration of those domains of wealth with each other, and with progressive values and the ways those can be manifested in the world. It has been transformative for some of its Canadian participants who are now thriving in an integrated capital paradigm.

### The Right Relations Collaborative

Equally designed for all kinds of funders and donors, on the one hand, and Indigenous leaders on the other. It is not a traditional leadership “training” program but rather a practical, hands-on, shared values journey of learning by doing philanthropy in ways that recognize history and power. It is rooted in an up-front agreement and follows up with tools to change relationships. Now it is limited to certain territories in BC but has potential for cautious expansion. It was the creation of a council of Indigenous “aunties” seeing a need to change philanthropy.

### The Art of Reciprocity

More focused on transforming individual funders and their foundations but is less explicitly designed around power sharing than the Right Relations Collaborative. It is hosted by the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, and thus can be more focused on historical, constitutional, ecological, and cultural contexts of how Indigenous-led change can best be supported in Canada.

## 6. Programs that link progressive movements

Three programs that stood out in the general progressive movements category are:

### Action Canada Fellowships

Creates opportunities for Canadians to understand the policy development environment across geographies, sectors, issues, and cultures. Strengths include fellows interacting with real-world policy makers and practitioners across the country on tailored study tours that vary from year to year in their emphasis.

### Inner Activist programs

Distinctly Canadian and emphasize “inner” matters of power, positioning, and personal inward journeys alongside politics and policy. This program is open to individuals working in multiple sectors, issues, and geographies across Canada.

### The Integrated Capital Institute hosted by RSF Social Finance

Combines sectors and approaches deemed to be especially leveraged to produce social change. Specifically, it merges the power of philanthropy with the power of investing and aims that combination at enduring transformation of systems of money and power. This is an example of a program that has had only a handful of Canadian participants to date, but they have stayed in touch as a tiny network of peers with shared experience.

Diverse parties are increasingly understanding that working together across sectors and backgrounds is the main way that durable change happens. To support leaders grappling with such messy realities, paradigms and networks such as collective impact and The Partnering Initiative have arisen. It is worth exploring their utility with the foundations and others who have invested heavily in learning from these models.



## 7. Other approaches to consider

### Third Act

From the progressive social and environmental arena emerges a particularly relevant effort led by two well-known 60-somethings, Akaya Windwood, the long-time CEO and master leadership trainer with Rockwood Leadership Institute, and Bill McKibben, the journalist and climate activist. Windwood and McKibben are collaborating on Third Act, a novel effort to harness the skills and passions of tens of millions of older – but by no means moribund – people who care about the world’s future for the sake of their grandchildren and intergenerational legacy.

### Vision 2030

It is worth special mention of an initiative for environmentalists now underway called Vision 2030, spearheaded by the Sustainability Network, a well-known capacity provider to Canadian ENGOs for 25 years that also provides short-term movement-building trainings. With the support and participation of several leading environmental groups and funders, Vision 2030 has potential to yield insights on leadership training needs and gaps for the future. Its findings, events, and publications are worth following and are likely to provide insights relevant to the questions asked in this paper.

## 8. Provocations

### What if we.... Designed programs for unlikely stakeholders?

“One funder interested in green water infrastructure projects got some partners together and created a totally new leadership program targeting municipal facilities people. How do young people and mid-level managers transform urban systems from within, have the voice and the capacity to do pretty tough work? You would not have thought of this audience. But a funder really targeted a group you would not consider “leaders of tomorrow” and thought it through and had an “aha moment” and created a focused but diverse, cross-departmental target group.”

--*Diane Ives*

“How to reach young leaders in their 30s still developing their values? Who are the messengers on issues like not using lead bullets or having empathy/connection to nature? Those are the boots-on-the-ground people who should be in leadership programs across Canada. I see a glaring need.”

--*Nancy Baron*

### Added training lines to budgets?

“The biggest impact I had as a funder of the tar sands network was resourcing NGOs to add a training line item in their budgets annually, so the NGOs could plan to resource what their staff needed and send staff to trainings at Hollyhock or elsewhere. Often people want to create big new programs, but the greater problem in my opinion is just resourcing the NGO’s with enough capacity over time, so they have staff stability and capacity and can train and keep their staff.”

--*Tzeporah Berman*

### Created more awareness and communication of leadership programs?

Programs may not be taken by the people who most need them. Some attract “leadership junkies” who have been through several, leaving slots unavailable for people who might be slightly less ambitious or self-promoting. Other programs may develop a reputation that excludes people who could not only benefit but create a more diverse cohort. Marketing and additional research into who is, and is not, applying for and getting into programs would be useful.

# Table of Recommendations and Considerations

We understand that we shared a lot of material above. So as to structure it with more actionability, here's a simple way to think about the landscape given your interests.

**IF you are interested in... You might consider... and THEN this could result**

First Nations or Inuit conservation, climate, or Indigenous rights leadership	Fund Indigenous-led efforts such as RILN, RRC, and AoR	Better shared strategy & values alignment among Indigenous organizations and ENGOS/funders, and thus stronger Indigenous environmental protections
Youth-led climate change movement building	Fund Preparing Our Home, Youth Climate Lab, Climate Justice Organizing Hub, or Indigenous Climate Action	More capacity of next generation climate activists to be policy savvy and “get” how climate action fits with social justice outcomes
Biodiversity and habitat conservation action led by environmental activists across Canada	Strengthening small ENGOS via SCI and large ENGOS via Vision 2030 & Sustainability Network. Extension of TREC offerings widely in Canada.	ENGOS with more policy efficacy, partnership skills especially with rural and Indigenous Canada, and better cross-movement alignment, staff retention, and organizational stability
Greater impact for science and researchers in driving evidence-based decision-making in public policy	Consult with Liber Ero, ELP, COMPASS, Switzer, & their funders about expanding access to such programs in Canada	More potent Western science and Indigenous knowledge applied to climate and biodiversity policy and community socioeconomics
Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship programs consistent with reconciliation and rural economic shifts	Funding local, regional, or national programs for First Nations or Inuit stewards across life/career stages	Capacity on the ground in every corner of Canada to take care of lands and waters differently and advocate for their protection
General improvements in the progressive environmental and social sector in Canada	Improving access to Canada based versions of programs Rockwood or the Hollyhock Leadership Institute	More cross-issue alignment that can inform policy discussions, along with greater personal resilience for sector leaders
Leadership regardless of issue area, but in specific regions of Canada	Invest in place-based efforts such as those in the North, or in other philanthropically neglected parts of Canada	More balanced leadership skills and advocacy voices from all parts of Canada are brought to bear on issues of national or global importance

# A note on evaluation

While some funding activities are easily measurable in their outcomes, we fundamentally believe that leadership and capacity building programs have results that are not immediately detectable, and that may be non-linear and emergent over time. The reason is that the newly strengthened leaders and organizations are yet to set out with the skills and networks that have recently enriched them.

Just because these programs are hard to measure is not a valid reason to withhold support.

At Ground Effect, we believe in applying unique measures of evaluation for each and every grantee. We are ultimately comfortable with assessments of project performance that are more narrative than quantitative. There do exist tools for getting into this part of the evaluation – Indigenous evaluation, developmental evaluation or utilization-focused evaluation – but few programs have invested heavily in them.

The Consultant. Dave Secord is Principal of Barnacle Strategies, a BC-based consultancy that works with foundations as well as environmental NGOs, Indigenous people's organizations, and universities. His career has focused on academic leadership and transdisciplinary environmental science, and on grantmaking in fields ranging from land and sea conservation and climate justice to Indigenous rights. He serves on several non-profit boards and loves place-based philanthropy in western and northern North America.

The Interviews. Insights and perspectives for this project centred on interviews with 21 experienced leaders who have seen practices, evolution, and gaps in programs in Canada and beyond. Collectively, interviewees included:

- Executives, board members, participants, and/or funders of diverse leadership programs
- Philanthropic donors or funders of climate, conservation, sustainability, and social issues
- Environmental, social justice, and Indigenous non-profit executives and board members
- Indigenous leaders with governance, community, philanthropy or non-profit experience
- People with government positions including running land or natural resource agencies
- Scientific or other researchers whose work informs evidence-based decision-making
- Grassroots community activism experience across diverse Canadian landscapes
- Various ages or career stages including youth, early-to-mid-career, and elders

The Audience. This work was developed with a primary audience of funders, especially Ground Effect and its potential collaborators in a community of philanthropic practice.

