PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS IN CANADA

LANDSCAPES, INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES AND PATHWAYS TO CHANGE

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Dedicated to our dear
friend and colleague
Jack Quarter

1942–2019

Table of Contents

Introduction 6

Peter R Elson, Sylvain A. Lefèvre and Jean-Marc Fontan

Historical and contemporary landscapes of foundations in Canada 11

→ A contextual history of foundations in Canada 13
Sylvain A. Lefèvre and Peter R Elson

→ Philanthropic Foundations Canada: Building a community and a voice for philanthropy 33
Hilary Pearson

→ Financial accountability and reporting of foundations in Canada 54
François Brouard and Marc Pilon

→ Donor-advised funds and charitable foundations in Canada 83
Carla Funk

→ Corporate foundations: Cases and causes 108
Cathy Glover and Kelli Stevens

Indigenous perspectives on philanthropy 128

→ All My Relations: A journey of reciprocity 130
Stephen Couchman, Marilyn Struthers and Justin Wiebe

→ Decolonizing philanthropy: Building new relations 157
Roberta Jamieson

→ Relationship, reciprocity and respect: Reflecting on our journey at The Winnipeg Boldness Project 173
Gladys Rowe and Diane Roussin

Pathways to change 189

→ The cost of social inequalities: Philanthropic field-building in Québec through the creation of the *Collectif des fondations* 191
Annabelle Berthiaume and Sylvain A. Lefèvre

→ Community foundations at work: Mobilizing and connecting place-based philanthropy 216
Laurel Carlton and Sara Lyons

→ Vancouver Foundation: Fostering meaningful engagement with youth 239
Natalie Ord

→ Centraide's Collective Impact Project: Poverty reduction in Montréal 262
Nancy Pole and Myriam Bérubé

→ Foundation House: More than just sharing space 287
Jehad Aliweiwi, Marcel Lauzière and Bruce Lawson

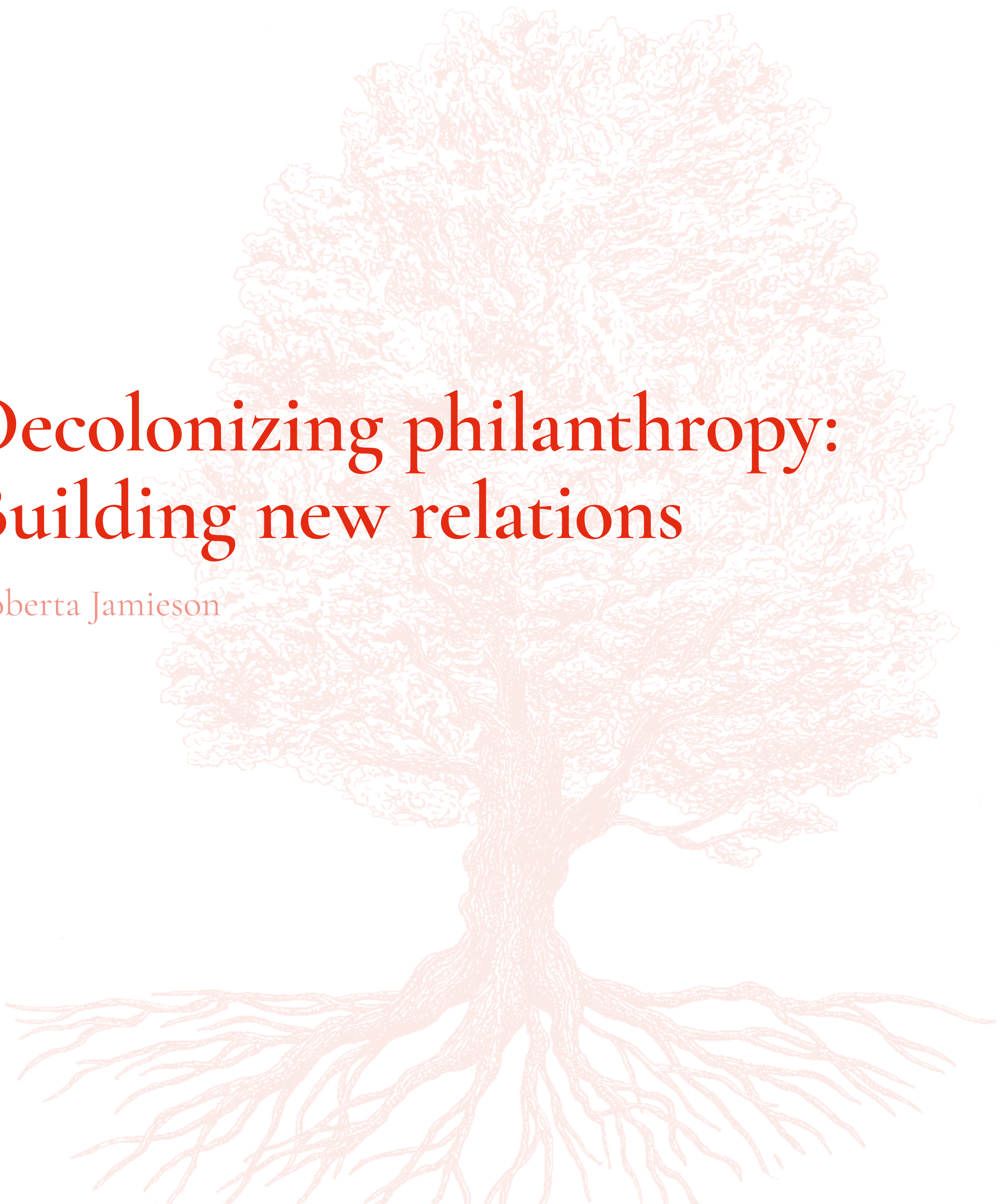
Reflections and conclusions 314

Tim Brodhead

→ Contributors 324

Part two

Chapter seven



Decolonizing philanthropy: Building new relations

Roberta Jamieson

→ “All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.”

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015

Dozens of Canada’s philanthropic organizations have embraced the call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that starts this chapter. A number of them presented a Declaration of Action to the closing session of the Commission on June 1, 2015, promising to engage in the dialogue necessary to ensure the philanthropic community understands the cumulative impact of the unresolved trauma caused by the Residential School System. They also pledged to do this with, and not for, Indigenous communities, in all their diversity (Pearson *et al.*, 2015). Since then, a total of 80 philanthropic organizations have signed on and promised to support the specific elements of the Declaration of Action (Archie, personal communication, June 27, 2018).

As a result, many philanthropic organizations have been working hard to decolonize their attitudes and programs. This is not an easy process. We are not always aware of how our own beliefs and attitudes have been colonized. Organizations such as the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (the Circle) are helping charities and philanthropists understand the cultural differences that could cause well-intended approaches to be misinterpreted as signs of disrespect (the story of the Circle’s origins is discussed in Chapter 6). As one of the Circle’s recent publications pointed out, the philanthropic sector, like most other parts of Canadian society, has not had a lot of experience engaging with Indigenous communities, and vice versa: “All sectors of Canadian society – government, corporate and philanthropic – have a stake in, and share responsibility for, the wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples and communities. To date, the dominant role played by government has overshadowed and perhaps even excused the comparatively small role of philanthropy” (The Circle, 2012, p. 16).

This paper springs from my life as a Mohawk woman living on the reserved lands of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario, my ten years of work as Ontario’s Ombudsman and my work as president and CEO of Indspire. Indspire is a national Indigenous-led charity that provides bursaries to assist First Nation,

Métis and Inuit persons in obtaining post-secondary education or trades, so they can contribute their full potential to their families, communities and Canada. I offer my experience to help philanthropic organizations to contribute better to an historic transformation, a future that includes sustainable Indigenous communities.

Past cannot be prologue

Despite some good intentions, history shows that the efforts of the philanthropic sector have often not been that philanthropic – they have often advanced colonial enterprise at the expense of Indigenous peoples. There was, for example, the Residential School System, the appropriation of cultural artifacts for museums, and the "Sixties Scoop" that saw thousands of Indigenous children torn from their families and communities for adoption elsewhere. This did not happen "historically" but in our own lifetimes (Brascoupé Peters *et al.*, 2016). At the root of this dark and cruel history was a desire to eliminate our Peoples.

I have heard many senior officials in both the public and private sectors ask, "Why don't we just get rid of these reserves? They're wastelands." To which I replied, "Excuse me, you want to blame the victims, the people in communities who you have displaced and disempowered? You want to blame them for being hopeless and helpless? You believe the way to fix them is to have them come into cities and mainstream communities?"

I ask again the key question all Canadians have to answer: "Do we or do we not want sustainable Indigenous communities in Canada?" Some of those who see the problem make great commitments, but by and large they do not see sustainability as the outcome. What these officials want is the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the broader society. That's not about sustainable Indigenous communities – it's about assimilation and our eventual disappearance. *We* have other plans.

There are three major fault lines running through the history of philanthropic engagement with Indigenous communities: invisibility, benevolence and self-awareness. As the Circle notes, the problems of the country's Indigenous people were long thought to be the responsibility of the federal government. Philanthropic organizations felt there were more worthy efforts for them to undertake. Indigenous peoples wanted, and still want, what is ours, based on our inherent rights, rather than to be objects of charity.

The pressing problems of Indigenous communities are very complex and require long-term solutions. The inflicted trauma of residential schools, addictions and unacceptable living conditions are long-term problems with deep, complex roots, not as easily solved as providing school supplies or a better diet to children or looking for a cure to a disease.

The Circle has pointed out the results of this stark and profound indifference and neglect. Its latest figures show that, in 2013, Indigenous-focused "charities" made up approximately 1% of total "charities" in Canada, and their revenues were 1.6% of the core charities identified in the report (The Circle, 2014, p. 5). While there have been some recent increases, they have not negated the Circle's 2012 conclusion that "there is little doubt that foundations are either not known or poorly understood among Aboriginal communities and organizations, and philanthropy has not, overall, played a significant role in Indigenous development in Canada" (The Circle, 2012, p. 16).

When Philanthropic organizations did get involved in Indigenous communities, they often came as providers of benevolence rather than as people willing to engage with people to resolve problems. They came with a "do to" attitude, as opposed to a "working with" commitment. Rebecca Adamson, the founder of the First Nations Development Institute, maintains, "The traditional philanthropic paradigm is a transaction: one gives, the other receives. This is alien to most Indigenous communities whose giving instead stresses reciprocity … If we want to change outcomes in Indigenous communities, the first step for donors is self-reflection … Philanthropic organizations need to understand that cash cannot buy relationships – nor can it be a substitute for human involvement – and they need to see that transparency, trust, and compliance are natural components of good relationships" (Adamson, 2011, para. 1).

Rebecca Adamson is right. We can't just use the same old methods and routines. They won't work: the Indigenous history of Canada is proof of that. Indigenous communities have a lot of what is needed to make ourselves much healthier, but we have become so damaged by colonialism that this task is challenging. The wounds and scars and debris of over a century of legalized racism, exclusion, exploitation, domination that came out of the thinking of past generations of Canadians must not be perpetuated by this generation of Canadians.

The answer is simple – the same Canadian values and expectations that settlers have for themselves and their families must also be available to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who have such deep roots in this place called Great Turtle Island. The TRC noted that, when Indigenous communities entered into treaty relationships with the Crown, they entered into them as equals, not as inferiors.

Indigenous reciprocity

The second essential change that is required if philanthropic organizations want a constructive relationship with Indigenous communities is a recognition and embrace of reciprocity. Reciprocity is the foundation that underpins all our relationships; it is the lens through which we look at all relationships, both human and non-human. Reciprocity is the essence of how we give and receive. It maintains the cycle of life and the sustainability of our people. Rebecca Adamson describes the core principles of reciprocity this way: "I have the honour of giving, the honour of receiving … I honour you by giving. You honour me by receiving" (Adamson, as cited in Steinem, 1997).

While the word "reciprocity" is not always used in our daily lives, the concept is still deeply embedded in many aspects of most Indigenous cultures. And while colonialism has seriously eroded our systems of reciprocity, we have a strong philosophical connection to the concept that continues to this day. Indigenous reciprocity is an integral part of a nearly universal Indigenous worldview. The specific protocols and ceremonies that give voice to the concept, though, vary from nation to nation, highlighting the need to enter into any long-term relationships with humility and cultural awareness.

Long before the Spanish came in the 15th century, *compadrazgo* was a belief and cultural cornerstone throughout the Americas. It was made manifest in reciprocity, ritual kinship, and the elaborate festivals and practices of gift-giving and communal work.

- The Zapotecas in Mexico assume reciprocal responsibilities through *guendaliza*, which means "We all are relatives." They say *chux quixely* when they say thank you. The phrase means "I will reciprocate."
- Article 2 of the Bolivian Constitution says, "Bolivia is founded on the principles of unity, solidarity, and reciprocity." Evo Morales, the first Indigenous president of that fundamentally Indigenous country, used reciprocity, solidarity and community as the basis for a new economic system intended to provide a better future for the Bolivian people.
- The potlach provided benefits on the Pacific coast of North America that are essential to sustainable communities, including the redistribution of wealth, the claiming of status, and rights to hunting and fishing territory.

Indigenous reciprocity is sometimes symbolic – a hunter asking permission from an animal before a kill or a healer placing tobacco on the earth before picking leaves from a plant. These are all simple yet profound expressions of reciprocity.

It is far more complex than a simple two-way exchange of favours. There are reciprocities of reciprocities, an involvement of intricate social systems, usually accompanied by protocols and etiquettes that trigger a series of events, which in turn trigger another series of events.

Reciprocity energizes the framework of how we see ourselves in the world. When we get up every morning, we recite a Thanksgiving address that centres ourselves in the world. It addresses and is focused on our relationship with the Creator. You begin with under the earth, then on the earth, then you talk about the plants, the animals, the birds, the clouds, the winds, the sun and the moon. The least we can do is say "Thank you." You identify everything by their relationship to you: my mother the earth, my cousins the animals, my eldest brother the sun.

So, you start every day by seeing yourself as part of a whole, part of a larger picture – I have responsibilities, and my responsibilities are to the whole, to the collective, to keep sustainable communities alive.

At its heart, reciprocity is not about the individual. It is not about "acting" upon the world, or "doing" things to it. It is about a relationship that has to be mutual, holistic and concerned about more than one thing.

Reciprocity rarely stands alone – usually it is one essential aspect of a constellation of positive attributes which are integral to Indigenous societies – and it is very badly needed right now by the rest of the world.

Here at Indspire, we have taken a modern registered national charity, and incorporated the Indigenous value of reciprocity by having student applications commit to giving back to their communities as one of the criteria for awarding bursaries.

Testimony from recent recipients show that Indspire is the spark that starts a transformation. When we survey our students, the vast majority say, "I am working for my people." Recipients like Natu Bearwold told us they have never felt so part of a community; they have never felt such an obligation to return. "I'd like to work in northern BC in Indigenous communities," said Bearwold, "because I know there is a great need for doctors in my home territory and I'd like to contribute to the healing of my people. This award has made all the difference in my life right now" (personal communication, May 2018).

Cheyenne Bisson echoed those feelings: "My future aspiration is to establish a Youth Healing Lodge for the seven First Nations along the North Shore, a place for our youth to come and learn about their culture and language, a place where they can see the possibilities that life has to offer themselves. This award is truly a blessing ... It is knowing that there are beautiful people out there that kept me going and encouraged me in fighting the good fight" (personal communication, May 2017).

By giving them support as Indigenous people and not as needy students, Indspire is validating the identity of Indigenous youth. "You valued me for who I am and supported me in strengthening that identity" is not the usual response you get from a recipient of philanthropy. Part of that identity is a responsibility to the whole and to giving back in a reciprocal way.

Decolonizing philanthropy

When our people talk about reconciliation, we are talking about structural and systemic change. We are not talking about wanting a seat at your table. We want to build an entirely new table.

The Circle highlighted this goal back in 2012: "We are not looking for a one-way relationship, from a wealthy benefactor to a deserving cause. We are looking for a collaborative, multilateral relationship where all parties are committed to learning and growing. In return, we offer a deep engagement in growing, thriving communities that goes far beyond a grant application or a project report" (The Circle, 2012, p. 4).

Indigenous communities are now asking charities and philanthropic organizations to deeply question their own intentions when they engage with them, and many find that difficult to do. We are asking them to acknowledge that simply having money does not mean they know best what is needed for Indigenous communities.

Kris Archie, executive director of the Circle, acknowledges that this is more difficult than it appears at first blush and that many organizations have found that good intentions are not enough when they go to sign the Declaration of Action. "Before anyone can sign it now," says Archie, "we have a form they have to fill out. It's intentionally created to provide them with an opportunity to reflect upon the questions we are asking. What we have noted is that it tends to be a very important exercise for people. Many come back to us and say, 'Wow, I saw this document and wanted to sign it, and I started to fill out your form and I realized there's much more we need to do before we can consider ourselves prepared to sign this'" (personal communication, 2018).

If people are asked to think about their own social position and privilege and the ways they are complicit in the ongoing destruction of Indigenous lands and communities, it can be very hard for them to know what to do next.

Archie says these initial difficulties and uncertainties, the fears and fragilities, are generally because people don't have the capacity to confront the reality of their history. "Settlers need to learn their own history and what that process of colonization continues to do here in Canada – not just for Indigenous communities, but for many racialized communities. Canada has a long history of really atrocious behavior towards to all kinds of racialized communities" (personal communication, 2018).

Archie also feels that some philanthropies need to acknowledge that their own organizations were blemished from the very beginning. "When you look at the larger family foundations in this country, they were predominantly built on the wealth created from resources extraction and other settler activities. What would be really amazing would be if one or more of these philanthropic organizations would do some analysis of how their original endowment came off the backs of

Indigenous communities and acknowledge that their organizations contributed to behaviours like the residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and unethical research. They could offer to pay reparations or restitution" (K. Archie, personal communication, 2018).

Nothing for us, without us

If this is our current reality, how are we ever going to get to the future that we have envisaged?

One way for philanthropic organizations to start is by working to support our economic self-sufficiency and development. That is key to ensuring sustainable Indigenous communities, but it is not addressed by most foundations in Canada. We must have a more holistic approach. Although there are specific needs in communities, a transformational change is essential in order to sustain a reciprocal approach to philanthropy.

This is the challenge we bring to philanthropy. The philanthropic sector needs to realize we have the solutions, and the ability to develop new solutions for challenges that may occur in the future. The question we need philanthropists to answer is whether they would like to join us in developing decolonized, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples – not to "help" them because they are "poor and needy", but rather to strengthen our own ability to realize our potential, so that we may then make our full contribution to society and to the future of everyone's children.

If that is to happen, we have to work together to change the rules of engagement. It is my hope that we will be successful in meeting this challenge and that our success will be a proud example that will encourage others to develop reciprocity in their own fields. It would be a tool for decolonizing many of the terribly damaging relationships that continue to prevail in every part of the world.

We need to join together as two parties working jointly toward a shared goal. In those terms, philanthropy's move to reciprocity would mean two cultures building bridges, maturely moving beyond assessing blame and concentrating instead on creating solutions (for more on this, see Rowe and Rousin's discussion of Winnipeg Boldness in Chapter 8).

We need to remember that Indigenous values generally cause us to distrust anyone who refuses to share, and to distrust a person who refuses to accept offers of sharing from others, however humble they may be. That's because reciprocity is intended to maintain a balance, an equilibrium in a relationship. With reciprocity, we feel good about giving, and we feel good about being offered a gift. We feel nourished by the exchange, both as giver-receivers and receiver-givers.

When reciprocity is not practised, things can easily go awry: givers feel unappreciated and resentful, receivers believe their dignity has been diminished, and guilty about not having been able to give back. This loss of balance is felt in our hearts.

Philanthropy is too precious an activity to be limited to people of means. People with limited resources have few chances to be philanthropic. But we can create our own opportunities. I believe philanthropists have an important role to play in creating more opportunities for people of limited means to be philanthropic. Not just by giving to charities, but by allowing them to enjoy the same satisfactions that philanthropists enjoy: opportunities to feel involved; opportunities to be useful contributors, rather than just perpetual recipients of someone else's generosity.

If we are to move into a philanthropy of reciprocity, philanthropists have to build long-term relationships that are built and nourished for the sake of the relationship itself, long before there is any thought of "philanthropy". Enduring relationships have to be developed, even if it turns out that no money is provided. It also means linking any philanthropy program to the strategic goals of Indigenous communities.

The relationships that are formed must be intended to continue even after the "giving" is over – they will cherish opportunities for "giving" and "giving back" many times over. Indigenous reciprocity requires developing an interconnectedness.

As Indigenous peoples we all see ourselves as part of the same whole. There is no room in our way of thinking for "us" and "them". Everyone is "us", members of the same family, children of the same earth, part of the same Creation.

Doing it right

The recent donation by the Slaight Family Foundation of $12 million dollars for Indigenous youth programs is an example of how philanthropic organizations can work with Indigenous communities to achieve Indigenous goals. The foundation was established in 2008 and, until recently, had little experience in Indigenous philanthropy.

Gary Slaight, president of the Slaight Family Foundation, has developed a unique way of giving: he supports several organizations working on a similar concern, at the same time, to really make a difference to a particular sector. The foundation's most notable donation to date has been a gift of $50 million to five Toronto hospitals for major priority areas important to each hospital.

Given the difficulties experienced by our Indigenous communities, Gary wanted to address some of the issues facing our Indigenous population by working with several organizations at the same time.

The foundation's philanthropic advisor, Terry Smith, said they consulted a wide range of Indigenous leaders and experts to determine the focus of the initiative: "Gary very specifically wanted to make sure that whatever funding came from the foundation came because Indigenous communities wanted it and felt it would make a difference" (personal communication, July 3, 2018).

Smith said they didn't have any notion of what the Foundation would support when they started the discussion: "Gary knew he wanted to help and also knew he needed assistance identifying the best way his support could really make a difference. Do we deal with water? Do we deal with housing? Do we deal with youth? Do we deal with suicide prevention?"

Based on what it heard, the foundation decided to focus on programs for Indigenous youth that would produce long-term benefits for the communities. Criteria were developed with guidance and input from Indigenous leaders. Smith said, "This was done with extreme care given our lack of expertise within the foundation, so the feedback and advice provided from the Indigenous community was critical to ensuring a successful initiative" (personal communication, July 3, 2018).

The final criteria are outlined below:

- The proposed programs should be national in scope or have an ability to expand nationally
- They should help indigenous communities build their own capacity
- They should leave a long-term legacy
- The programs must be led or directed by Indigenous people and provide leadership capacity that will stay in the community
- The programs should have measurable impact and produce quantifiable change
- If supported, organizations must have the capacity to deliver on the initiative

As well as ensuring that programs met these criteria, the foundation met and worked closely with each organization to ensure their proposals would be relevant to their communities. In some cases, proposals and budgets had to be rewritten several times to ensure all initiatives were of the calibre to be included as part of the initiative.

In the end, the Slaight Family Foundation committed to giving $12 million over five years to fifteen Indigenous-led programs, including: the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund, which supports Indigenous education and culture; the Moosehide Campaign, which develops programs to reduce violence against women; and my own organization, Indspire, to support increased scholarships for Indigenous students to continue their schooling.

One of the unique aspects of this group giving is that the Slaight Family Foundation brought all the recipients together in a meeting to share their initiatives with one another and to ensure the organizations were aware that they were part of a larger initiative that would be monitored and assessed collectively over the term of the grant agreement. Since that time, several of the groups have contacted one another and have created their own partnerships, something the foundation hoped would happen but did not insist on.

Foundations such as the Slaight Family Foundation take huge risks in trying to support a specific sector or deal with a specific social problem. Their nimbleness and ability to get funds out of the

door quickly is often the instigator that leverages government or other funders to contribute to a cause. The grants from the Slaight Family Foundation all required successful applicants to make their own commitments, rather than simply disbursing funds from the Foundation.

For example, the Slaight Family Foundation had been supporting an Indigenous coordinator position at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) on a project basis for several years to increase awareness of the Indigenous collection and to incorporate Indigenous teachings within ROM programs. As a result of the Slaight Family Foundation's Indigenous initiative, ROM has now created and funded from their own budget a permanent full-time staff position responsible for Indigenous programs. This will now enable ROM to incorporate Indigenous teachings and beliefs fully into their programs on a more permanent basis.

Right to Play is an international organization that uses play and sports as a means to empower children and youth in war-torn and disadvantaged communities.

It has developed a successful model that allows these children to learn new skills, build relationships and establish leadership through play, sport and recreation, while helping youth in the very worst situations. In Canada, Right to Play has extended its program to at-risk youth and, with the support of both the federal and provincial governments, has begun operating play programs in Indigenous communities to help reduce the incidents of suicide and overdosing.

While Right to Play has provided these programs many times in many different situations, their staff were not prepared for what happened when it began to deliver programs in the Indigenous communities. Right to Play found that, once young people really trusted its program leaders, they would come up and say, "I tried to commit suicide last night", or "My brother overdosed". This would give the program leaders critical information that, if they had been trained, they could have used to refer the young people to services and help. But, at that time, they were just the program leaders.

So, Right to Play asked the Slaight Foundation for funding to develop a training program, in cooperation with experts such as the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. It developed an entire training program,[1] which, while initially intended for the program leaders on Indigenous communities, is now being used to train all their program leaders. It provides answers to questions such as "What do you say? What do you do? How do you refer them? Who else can they talk to?"

A grant to Right to Play is a good example of how a philanthropic organization cannot just take a successful program and expect the same results in an Indigenous community. This is a hard, but necessary, message for charities to learn.

1 http://www.righttoplay.ca/Learn/ourstory/Pages/PLAY-Program.aspx

The Slaight Family Foundation does not dictate how organizations should report on their accomplishments. Smith says it is more concerned about letting the organizations report back by telling their own story, rather than filling in a bureaucratic form that may be of benefit only to the donor. Instead, organizations are asked to send in a report in whatever manner they choose and to simply tell the Foundation what they did, whether the intended results were achieved and whether they spent the money as they had originally planned. If the Foundation finds the reports lacking in content or requires further details, it then contacts the organization and seeks clarification. Charities seem to appreciate this flexible method of reporting back, as many funders insist on a formalized format that may not truly reflect what the organization has actually achieved in the past year.

"If foundations don't take these kinds of risks," says Terry Smith, "we may never find innovative solutions to many of our social problems nor would we know if such support can really make a difference." The Slaight Family Foundation is one of those funders that are willing to take the risk, try innovative solutions and hope to make a positive difference in the lives of Canadians.

Certainly, there is a time and place for more scientific reporting, but sometimes qualitative and quantitative data is not a key element of the issue that is being supported; it is more valuable that the result of an experience be documented. At the end of the initiative, the Foundation will review with each organization the successes and lessons learned and will use the successful ventures as examples that can be shared with other Indigenous groups across the country.

The criteria for grants set by the Slaight Family Foundation served it well when determining who would get funding. The principles ensured the programs engaged with Indigenous communities and met their needs. But it would be presumptuous to think those six points contain all that is required to have respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. Just as Indigenous communities are diverse, so are their relationships. One size does not fit all.

A number of other organizations have also developed principles and guidelines that would benefit philanthropies in their relationship with Indigenous peoples. The International Funders for Indigenous Peoples talks about the four Rs: reciprocity, respect, responsibility and relationships (International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, 2014, p. 33).

My own organization, Indspire, has a set of Seven Foundational Guiding Principles. These include the recognition that Indigenous knowledges are a valued and foundational aspect of learning, because they convey our responsibilities and relationships to all life; and that the process of decolonization must seek to strengthen, enhance and embrace Indigenous knowledge and experience (Indspire, n.d.).

Indspire's Global Ethics Policy promotes ethical research, data collection and evaluation in Indspire-funded programs involving Indigenous communities. The policy's core principles are:[2]

- Any research program depends on the active involvement, participation and consultation of the Indigenous community
- Any data collected must be considered as the shared ownership of both Indspire and the Indigenous community or organization that supplied the data
- The participating First Nations, Non-status First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples must have access to the research data, not just the resulting reports
- Meaningful capacity development will be built into all projects
- All community protocols will be respected

I have my own suggestions for what philanthropic organizations should think about when approaching Indigenous organizations. They go a bit further than the criteria I have previously cited and reflect my own experience:

- Anybody who wants to get into the business of working with our people needs to be authentic. Don't pretend. Our people will decide whether or not they want to work with you. But we need to know who you are
- Know the history of the Indigenous community you are involved in, the trauma that was involved and the impact that continues to this day
- We want to establish relationships before we discuss money. We want relationships that continue after the philanthropy ends
- We are looking for ways to offer reciprocity in return. Indigenous reciprocity is dynamic, and constant. It requires on-going renegotiation, arising from a respectful relationship of mutual trust and the assurance of mutual obligations
- Concentrate on outcomes and goals, rather than on the means to achieving the outcomes and goals. Rather than talk about how programs will operate, talk about a future in which our children will feel validated, a future in which First Nations, Inuit and Métis will be economic players and live the kinds of lives that all human beings are entitled to live

If Canada is to surmount its historic and continuing injustices to Indigenous communities, we must encourage exercises in which we work together to develop a new vision; a vision of a future where all communities have conditions worthy of Canada and where we become examples of how people from different cultures and origins can work together to create sustainable communities and futures.

Why should anyone care about this? Why should people contribute to resolving these issues? Because if we do not attend to these situations now, they will fester and worsen and overflow into

2 https://indspire.ca/seven-foundational-guiding-principles-2/

general society. If we do not deal with these issues now, they will grow beyond our ability to deal with them and poison our entire society, socially, economically and spiritually. Ironically, if left unattended, they will reduce the ability of philanthropists to be philanthropical.

On the other hand, if solutions can be found, designed and implemented by Indigenous communities for Indigenous communities, they will provide new ways of doing and thinking that all Canadians can learn and benefit from. I think that's the biggest invitation with the work we are trying to do.

The truth is that all of us, indigenous and settler, are in a world where more and more communities are living together in smaller and smaller spaces. All of us need to be more inter-culturally fluent, more inter-culturally literate. We need to figure out how to get along better with people who are "different" from ourselves, and to offer reciprocity to the natural world that sustains all of us.

Am I dreaming that the changes I have been talking about can be accomplished? I know from the many examples offered by Indigenous cultures that this way of working does happen. That means it can happen.

I am convinced that cross-cultural philanthropy is achievable, and that philanthropy can be transformed in our generation.

Let's do it.

Three key takeaways

1

Examine your own intentions before engaging with Indigenous communities.

2

Establish authentic relationships. Design programs and decide on funding *together*.

3

Programs must be led or directed by Indigenous leaders and build capacity that stays in the community.

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