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THE CIRCLE LE CERCLE

ON PHILANTHROPY AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA
SUR LA PHILANTHROPIE ET LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES AU CANADA



PhiLab

Coordonnées Contact

philab@uqam.ca
www.philab.uqam.ca
514-987-3000 #8576

Directeur de publication Publication Director

The Circle on Philanthropy
and Aboriginal Peoples in
Canada

Rédacteurs en chef Editors in Chief

Kris Archie
Jean-Marc Fontan

Comité de rédaction Editorial Team

Shereen Munshi
Katherine Mac Donald

Contributeurs Contributors

Kris Archie
Anaïs Bovet
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Jean-Marc Fontan
David Grant-Poitras
Adela Tesarek Kincaid
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Adam Saifer
Dorla Tune
Martina Ulrichs

Conception graphique Graphic Design

Katherine Mac Donald
Diane Alalouf-Hall

Traduction Translation

Diane Alalouf-Hall
Stéphane Gregory

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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé “Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes”. Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom “Evaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l’enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux”. Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d’information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d’acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou partenaires.

Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy (PhiLab), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called “Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations”. From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations’ knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.



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QUE FAIT LE CERCLE?

Le Cercle sur la philanthropie et les Peuples autochtones du Canada (le Cercle) transforme la philanthropie et contribue à mettre en œuvre des changements positifs entre la philanthropie et les communautés autochtones. Il le fait en créant des espaces d'apprentissage, d'innovation, d'établissement de relations, de co-création et d'action. Le Cercle travaille aux côtés d'organisations dirigées par des autochtones, d'organisations autochtones informées et d'organisations ayant des bénéficiaires autochtones. Nos membres et organisations philanthropiques signataires de la Déclaration d'action encouragent les individus et les organisations à se renseigner, à reconnaître, et à mieux comprendre la réconciliation et la décolonisation de la richesse.

ABOUT US

The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (The Circle) transforms philanthropy and contributes to positive change between Philanthropy and Indigenous communities by creating spaces of learning, innovation, relationship-building, co-creation, and activation. The Circle works alongside Indigenous-led organizations, Indigenous informed organizations, organizations with Indigenous beneficiaries, our members and philanthropic signatories of The Declaration of Action to encourage individuals and organizations to learn, acknowledge, and understand more about reconciliation and the decolonization of wealth.

ENTREVUE | INTERVIEW



Entrevue avec **Kris Archie**,
Directrice Générale du Cercle, **Sara
Lyons**, vice-présidente de
Fondations Communautaires
Canada, et **Tim Fox**, le Président du
Calgary Foundation.

Interview with **Kris Archie**, CEO of
The Circle, **Sara Lyons**, vice-
president of **Community
Foundations Canada** and **Tim
Fox** the President of the Calgary
Foundation.

Photo: Governing Circle Board
Retreat - Seasonal Walk:
Winter, Unceded Territories of the
Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-
Waututh Nations, November 2019

ENTREVUE | INTERVIEW

**Kris Archie, Sara Lyons
& Tim Fox, The
Governing Circle.**



To listen to this as a
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here.**

Par | By:

Interviewer: [Alexander Dirksen](#), Community Knowledge Exchange (CKX).

Interviewees: Kris Archie, The Circle. Sara Lyons and Tim Fox, The Governing Circle.

The Circle will be hosting the All My Relations gathering 2021 virtually June 14 - 16 2021.

The following interview was recorded at The Circle's 2019 All My Relations (AMR) gathering, a conference offering held biennially. The conversations that follow capture the values and experience of the AMR, and The Circle's co-chair Governing Circle model.

This interview was recorded as a podcast, in partnership with Community Knowledge Exchange (CKX). The interview begins with an interview between Alexander Dirksen, Director, Programs and Community Accountability, CKX, and Kris Archie, CEO of The Circle. Alex and Kris' conversation leads into a fireside chat between Sara Lyons and Tim Fox, Co-Chairs of The Governing Circle. Since this interview, Sara has completed her tenure on The Governing Circle but remains close to The Circle's team and work.

Alexander: Hello and welcome to a special edition of CKX Questions produced in partnership with The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. This spring, The Circle hosted their biennially All My Relations gathering on Treaty 7 Territory. In this episode, we hear from The Circle's CEO Kris Archie on the gathering. Reflections that set the stage for a conversation recorded at All My Relations between Tim Fox and Sara Lyons, the co-chairs of The Circle's board of directors. We open with my conversation with Kris, followed by Kris introducing the fireside chat between Sara and Tim.

AD: I'm here with Kris Archie, Executive Director of The Circle. Perhaps a good place to start would be, what is the All My Relations Gathering? What's the intention and spirit behind it? And what brought this amazing group of folks together?

Kris Archie (KA): All My Relations is about this concept of being in relationship with one another. The All My Relations that we did this past summer, we hosted it at the Grey Eagle Resort which is located on the Tsuut'ina First Nation in Treaty 7 just outside of Calgary. Its focus was really to provide participants with an experience for what it could mean if we

were doing our thinking and are doing differently. And by doing it differently, can we invite people to be in a relationship with one another, framed around the four seasons of spring, summer, winter and fall? And if we did that, could we help people have an experience that recognizes that when we take the time to embed Indigenous worldviews into our practices of philanthropy, or community building or relationship building, that we could have a transformed sector.

AD: I feel that the vision and intention that was held in the design process powerfully came through in the course of our time together at the gathering. I was wondering if you could maybe just share a little bit about how that time together was held and structured and a little bit about the flow? Because I feel like that really contributed to the magic of those days together.

KA: The All My Relations structure this year was really focused on exploration. We wanted to take people on a journey through the seasons and so the format was essentially two days together. It was broken into four kinds of chunks of time and each quadrant of time was focused on a particular season. Being in a rhythm was really important to us, inviting people into an understanding of like, the flow of what comes next. It gives people the spaciousness to sink into what they're feeling and what they're noticing. It provides folks with enough structure, or we hoped to provide folks with enough structure that they would be willing to keep coming along with us into the next season. What I know about seasons is that we, most folks who are living here in Canada have a sense of like, what happens in spring and what happens in fall, and having that be a major framework for our work meant that folks didn't have to belabor their brains too hard to understand what we're talking about and we gave enough space for them to make sense for what each season meant. The other pieces that were important were to move folks from a conference experience where you have, there are a million things you want to do you never get to all the sessions you want to get to, that at the end of it all you feel sick and or tired. We didn't want that experience. Not only did we want our tiny team of just Shereen and I to walk out of the other side of the All My Relations gathering and feel well, we also wanted the participants to feel well. To feel nourished and connected and to feel like they were leaving with specific tools that they can apply to their work. So that was part of the design of how we did the work together.

We focus first on spring and for us at the Circle, spring is a time for connecting and emergence. It's time for planting new seeds. It's also a time for starting to notice where there are new shoots

coming up and where buds are beginning to blossom and bloom. What does that mean in the context of the work that we do? It means paying attention to the sparks of new connections and opportunities for partnerships. It means amplifying and making visible the emergence of the new trends that are happening in the philanthropic sector, while also knowing that there to be in that kind of springtime feeling. You need to have a bit of faith that the seeds that you plant with the right amount of sunlight and watering and with the right soil can lead to beautiful things. We don't always know what is going to flourish. But we require some faith to do that work, so we tried to set up that first morning together with an emphasis on that energy.

Summer was in the afternoon of day one. Summer for us is really about engagement. It's about relationships, it's the time when you start to pick berries, and picking berries is a time for being out on the land. It's for sharing stories with family. One of the things I talked about was just how the sweetness of berries is such a gift. If someone goes out and they find huckleberries, for example, and they come back and they share those huckleberries with you, it's such a treat. So we really wanted to focus summertime on the acknowledgment and the celebration of where partnerships between Indigenous organizations and philanthropic organizations were turning into these sweet fruits. Where are some really amazing things happening? What does that look like? Why, why did that come to be? And what could others learn? There was this connection about how if you're going to be in a relationship with folks through a period of summer, you can tell the depth of your relationship, if they invite you to their secret berry patch. And for others, if you really want to get there and they don't invite you, how important it is that you honor and acknowledge that. Being in that period of engagement in relationship building is one that is really important. And when a funder comes along, or a new person comes along, and it's like, hey can I come to your community? Can I come to your berry patch? You know, folks can be a little bit cautious, right? What are you gonna do, at my berry patch? Do you know how to behave out there? Or, do you know that there are some bears, we're in their territory? Are you going to pick too much? Are you going to take them away and sell them like, you know, these are metaphors for the ways in which extraction happens in our communities. And how harmful that is, and why there's a lot of caution for making space for outsiders or for funders to enter into Indigenous community spaces. Summer is really about where there are beautiful things happening, and how can we learn from it and amplify that.

Fall was the morning of day two and fall for us at the Circle is really about harvest. The concept of harvest is about the

“It’s an acknowledgement that being in a relationship gives you an opportunity for a harvest.”

practice of extraction from the land. We try really hard to be clear that that's not what we're doing, or that's not our intention when we use this language. It's an acknowledgment that being in a relationship gives you an opportunity for a harvest. In our specific context, we are thinking about policies and practices, the learning that comes from doing good work together and kind of what it is that you can take away. Fall is about understanding the research and data that exists and making sense of it alongside others. It's about mobilizing the knowledge that we have - the knowledge that exists in the community for the purpose of benefiting the community. For us, our community is both Indigenous charitable organizations and the philanthropic sector.

That was a fun time because we did some playful things. We have a data date, where the Circle kind of opened up a bunch of bags of sticky notes connected to previous gatherings we had and said like, help us make sense of this - help us identify the patterns that exist here and help us to tell a story about the wisdom that exists in communities as it relates in this instance, specifically to decolonizing wealth.

But it was also about understanding that harvest in the traditional sense, if you're out in the fields, or if you're gathering from the bush, you don't always use everything you harvest, the moment that you have it. So when my brother gets a deer, that deer gets used in so many different ways. The meat is used really quickly, but the hide is something that needs to be prepared over a long period of time. That perhaps the creation of antlers with the hooves happened in the right ceremonial time. Some of the meat might be kept, jarred, it might be frozen, it might be ground up, it might be smoked and turned into jerky. But there are lots of ways to do that. You have to be in enough relationship to both land and community and to what's coming in, down the road, to make best use of that harvest. It's been fun to think about the ways in which the harvest from that gathering was, there was a multiplicity of it. There were things that we were learning that were directly applicable to the work that was happening in real-time between people. Months later, there are these like stories of how people are still learning from

and reflecting upon what they experienced at AMR, or what they learned or the relationship they built with someone and how that's playing out now, all these months later, has been really beautiful.

Winter for us is a time for contemplation and ceremony. But it's also a time when the earth looks like it's sleeping. In lots of places, the snow makes things look like nothing's happening. But if you pay attention, you will recognize that actually, lots is happening. There are all kinds of different tracks in the snow. That underneath the snow, there is growth, and there's decay, and there's death, and there's composting happening. Kind of being undercover and dampened both in sound and in, in the quality of what it is that you're seeing becomes really important when we need to do the work of integration. Organizationally, winter's a time for making sure that the foundation or the infrastructure for the work that's going to come is built. So how do we prepare ourselves in the ground for the labor that needs to come? In order to really honor what's come before and then to prepare for what comes after. That format was unique for us, it seemed to really have an impact on people that there was a pace and a rhythm that was both repetitive, while also being kind of free enough for people to know what was coming.

AD: To me there was I think, both in terms of the thought and care that went into that flow, but then also the folks in the room, what felt like a really special group of humans as well. Can you speak a little bit to who was in the room, and just around the kind of the model of the Circle as well in terms of how those folks were brought together?

KA: One of the reasons that gathering felt so different for me was that previous to the gathering starting, I was invited to co-convene alongside the organization called IFIP, which is the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples. IFIP is a global member organization based out of the States. I'd met them a few years ago, attended their gathering in Santa Fe last fall, and connected with Lourdes Inga who's the executive director there. And we co-hosted the second gathering of Indigenous philanthropic organizations. We spent two days together in a group of about 20 or 30 folks who lead Indigenous-led philanthropic organizations. We were in these beautiful conversations related to like, what does Indigenous-led philanthropy mean? Understanding the ways that we wanted to build connection and relationship. Recognizing as well, the wisdom that Indigenous philanthropic practice and behavior and grant-making, could have on the settler-created philanthropic sector, was really alive and present. There was a clear desire for just how beautiful it is when Indigenous people

get together in the same room for the purpose of sharing stories, talking, learning and building relationships. There's lots of laughter, and lots of 'aha' moments. Also lots of celebration for the good work that's already happening when you think about 'philanthropy'. You don't think about Indigenous people, predominantly. I mean, I do, and you do. But generally when you hear the word philanthropy for most folks, they're thinking about old, white rich people. And what I know to be true is that Indigenous communities are filled with both actions of deep individual and collective philanthropic behavior, and have been since the beginning of time. In fact, the reason that Indigenous communities continue to be alive is because of our adaptation and our generosity.

Some of the folks from that gathering stayed on with us and attended the rest of the All My Relations gathering. It was really beautiful to have their presence and their wisdom in the space with us. Our invitations for the gathering went out pretty far and wide. But what I really enjoyed and what I noticed is that there was a range of folks from the settler creative philanthropic sector who were there. Folks who were on the front line, whether as program officers or grant managers from various organizations, from community foundations to private family foundations and corporate foundations. There were CEOs present, there were board members of some of our member organizations present. There were Indigenous leaders who were either leading and or working in senior management in charitable organizations and in philanthropy. I felt like the diversity of both experiences to the philanthropic sector, both the Indigenous philanthropic behaviors and the settler creative philanthropic behaviors were really well-matched. We try often, in every gathering the Circle does, to decenter whiteness. We intentionally create spaces and host in a way that prioritizes the comfort and well-being of Indigenous and racialized folks as a priority over the comfort of white folks.

AD: And what else have you either heard or what else have you been reflecting on?

KA: One of the big takeaways was just how clear it was both for me in my body, but also in my brain and heart space. How good it feels to work at a different pace. At a pace that prioritizes connection, reflection, and marrying that with action I can take outside of the room. What I was really struck by in the months that have come since is that there were a handful of folks who are in senior positions inside of settler-created philanthropic organizations who I know are really moved by the experience by the flow, by the topic, by the concept of how we held our time together. They developed fantastic connections and deepened

relationships with other folks. It's been really striking to me how quickly that can disappear in the face of the pressure that the nonprofit sector and the philanthropic sector puts back on people or rather that we accept as a norm. A way of being together that is so harmful to our bodies and harmful to our relationships with one another, it's harmful to our decision-making capacities. And yet, it's like [Kris snaps fingers 21:21] that, we can be right back into these sets of behaviors that are not nourishing, that actually cause us harm and move us towards burnout. So it's been really striking to just see that, like how quickly people are like, 'oh, that was a really beautiful experience, I really enjoyed that, I learned a lot, it felt good.'

KA: The Circle when I arrived in July of 2017, had a fairly typical non-profit kind of setup in that it had a treasurer and a chair and a vice-chair and all of those kinds of titles that we all think of when we think of board of directors. The other thing they had though was an openness to really thinking and doing things differently which is part of why I was excited to work at the organization. The chair at the time, was Sara Lyons. Sara and I really hit the ground running in terms of having to build our relationship fast and quick to deal with the whole myriad of things that come up when you're a new chair to the organization, and I was a new ED. So, we got to do a lot of our learning alongside one another about what it means to be in those particular roles. What I really appreciated was just how present she was willing to be in a space alongside me as a strong Secwepemc woman with some desire and some impatience for doing things. Sara was really well-balanced to that energy and has always been and continues to be really great at asking thoughtful questions and helping think through a myriad of possibilities. The other thing that was really beautiful was how open she was to doing her own labor of



Photo: Governing Circle Board Retreat - Seasonal Walk: Winter, Unceded Territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, November 2019

understanding what it means to be a white person in an organization that had an explicit desire toward being and becoming an Indigenous-led organization. Through that experience, Sara and I were able to build a connection. For her own learning, in full recognition that it would mean a personal transformation, but also that it meant a demonstration of solidarity toward where our organization wanted to be, so it was a real gift.

One of the things that was really evident in lots of ways, Sara and I are quite similar. We explored that conversation of a shared leadership model at the chair level. And that if we were going to do that, what might it look like to do it in a way that honoured the fact that we wanted to be an organization in that space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks. So as the new board came on, we had been sitting with this concept of a shared leadership model and long comes Tim Fox, who if you haven't met, Tim, is, first of all, he's a really tall Blackfoot guy from Alberta, who works at the Calgary Foundation. He exemplifies this quiet, calm, generous, and patient energy, which is not like me. This would be a beautiful pairing to come together. What I really love about working alongside Tim and Sara is just the fact that they're both so different, both in lived experience, in professional experience, and the ways in which they think about and conceptualize the work. The other thing that's really beautiful about working with them is how similar they are in terms of their values, and what matters to them. I think they both believe very much at their core, that we are stronger when we work alongside one another. It's just been a real joy getting to work with them and getting to know them.

Fireside Chat with Sara Lyons & Tim Fox

KA: The fireside chat that they had was a totally candid conversation and I think it gives a unique glimpse into the structure of our governance at The Circle. I really enjoyed hearing Tim and Sara discuss the opportunities, the creativity and the learning that they have come to through this time together. I'm hoping that we can look forward to hearing more reflections in their time together as they do their co-chairing with The Circle.

Sara Lyons (SL): Sara: My journey into this relationship is I've been on the board of The Circle for a very long time and had already been the chair for over a year when we made this decision as a board and with guidance from our staff to appoint

a second chair. We felt we would do better by sharing that role a little bit. One, it's been born out of a very authentic desire to share leadership. So no experience on my part of something being taken away or being forced to give something up, but quite the contrary. An opportunity to move into a different space and learn from a new relationship. But secondly, I think that Tim and I are doing this for the same reason. We had this really amazing moment of kind of mutual recognition around that shared purpose, the very beginning of our relationship, because we both have daughters of the same age. And we had this for me, I still think about it really often, this really profound conversation about as parents, you know, as parents in Canada, in this country, with daughters of the same age, what a different set of fears, expectations, histories, sense of the future we were living with, and I think that gap, which we identified quite organically, really speaks to our shared purpose as co-chairs of The Circle at the biggest level, it's closing that gap.

“We had...this really profound conversation about ... as parents in Canada, in this country, with daughters of the same age, what a different set of fears, expectations, histories, sense of the future we were living with...”

Tim Fox (TF): I think it's helpful for me to talk about the reasons why I got into this work in the first place.

For me, two years ago that's when my experience started in the philanthropic sector where I was tasked to sort of facilitate the change process at the Calgary Foundation and literally try to shift the culture of an organization that was built on the infrastructure of a Western model, similar to a lot of foundations and organizations today. So exactly what Sara said whenever I get into this work, it's not easy work to do because it takes an element of vulnerability. I'm often having to do a lot of truth-telling in these spaces because context is needed in

order to understand why reconciliation is needed in the first place, why systems need to change in the first place, if you don't have that context or that full understanding as a whole system, then it's a huge challenge for the person trying to lead that change to make change happen. But for me deep down, the very root of why I do this work is for that generational change. I wanted to become a part of The Circle to inform the work that I'm doing at the Calgary Foundation because I saw so many parallels. And I was really clear about that in the beginning. I'm trying to bring in my perspective as an Indigenous person, where we come from, and that consideration not that it's missing but I think it enhances that balance.

SL: The magic or the complementarity of this relationship is how freeing it's been for me to give myself over to the idea that Tim as well as Kris, and others on our board know something that I don't know. It sounds so basic, but it's quite shocking as a person who works in my day job in traditional philanthropy in Canada how infrequently I encounter a conversation, where I don't feel like I have the highest standing in the conversation. It's been amazingly freeing. There's something for me to just take in here with respect to the culture of the organization, the behaviour, the way we make decisions, and what those decisions are.

TF: I wouldn't have entertained the thought of joining The Circle if I didn't feel confident that there was some internal work that had been done for the existing board members because it's just a challenge when you're trying to drive this work as an Indigenous person and you're being met with a lot of barriers and these sort of limiting questions and these limiting beliefs there's a mental model that exists in general about philanthropy and you know, love of humankind and all that kind of stuff which is all great but it sometimes impedes the ability to change what you are doing because you are operating at the status quo. So I was confident when I met Sara and there were some board members that had embraced the beginning of a journey of change of understanding and that's sort of what I'm trying to reflect in my day-to-day job at the Calgary Foundation. I felt like that was strong with the board members on The Circle and now I am feeling and am discovering that the next challenge that we have is creating and guiding the works so that the signatories of The Circle sort of take on that responsibility because in some cases I feel like we have signatories or members of The Circle, just as a check box effort so they are members they have signed a declaration but they are not actually doing any internal work. Whereas when I came on board at the Calgary Foundation and I

discovered that we are members, we are signatories, and so I started asking for some truth, asking questions 'well what does that mean for you? What have you done?' And I quickly learned that we haven't really done anything and so trying to change – shift that is, in my internal workspace. I think it's happening, I think it's happening at the board level which makes this work less. When I come to The Circle board I feel like I am working with an informal group of peers or even in spaces like this I am even grappling with the thoughts of sort of formalizing that in the sense of that the next CFC, how can we create sort of a peer gathering of folks who are working for systems change and those Indigenous folks who are working in philanthropy, and non-Indigenous folks.

I guess that's an advantage of being new and not really knowing the history cause The Circle has been around for ten years and mind you I have only been really engaged in my knowledge capacity of The Circle in the last two and then fully in this last year. It excites me when I see us moving in a progressive way and having all these progressive conversations that are very uncomfortable for a lot of people that we work with in the sector but I see it as very brave, I don't have anything else to compare it to. I don't have that history, that knowledge history that Sara has.

SL: I want to give credit to us as a board and especially I think to Kris as a leader. Probably worth acknowledging too that the sands of time has also unfolded too and the context that we're working in as an organization, I mean ten years is a long time in the Canadian conversation about reconciliation and white supremacy. I mean I have been in the philanthropy sector for more than ten years. It's hard for me to imagine coming to

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conferences organized by The Circle but also organized by the mainstream organizations like PFC, CGN where we would be talking quite loosely about settlers and supremacy and whiteness and I mean that has all emerged both because of The Circle and many others but also around The Circle and many others. So it's also the moment we're in, which is an opportunity.

TF: Absolutely. I feel like across the board in this country this conversation is surfacing in different ways, it's surfacing with the release of the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* report. It surfaced in 2015 when the TRC *Calls to Action* were released. It's surfacing in many ways. It's surfacing in the media with land protectors and all this kind of stuff, and my colleagues at the Calgary Foundation are noticing this. What I feel like is happening as well and sort of the unique approach that The Circle is handling all of this in, is they are being very brave and making space for difficult conversation to happen. Making space to be very honest and authentic in a very respectful way when we talk about whiteness and white supremacy, it's not with the intention to make anyone feel guilty or to anger anyone it's just the truth. I believe historically people are scared of that truth and what that means for change. In my experience in the last six years, you take words like decolonization and when you want to change a system and a settler colleague or someone and they see that, their perception of decolonization is Indigenous people and perspectives taking over totally. When all I am trying to do is create some balance. I feel like The Circle has that same approach but they are being very brave and they are being very bold about that approach. And you'll notice that in how we communicate at conferences like this. It's building my own capacity, my own tool box of this knowledge system because ultimately at the Calgary Foundation they have been taught to practice philanthropy in one way, based on one paradigm of thought and practice, whereas I'm getting more confident with the work of The Circle. I feel like Sara is, I don't know if you even realize this but when you are standing there as a Caucasian woman and when you're standing in the front of a group of your peers in this settler-created philanthropic space and when you're confident in saying 'you know what, I am a settler and this is, this makes me uncomfortable but we have to lean into this,' you're breaking down those barriers I really wish that more of my colleagues at the Foundation and in the sector would, were as confident to, to openly talk about that in the way that you do. So that's the beauty of having someone like Sara to surface that language. It is so needed this, this perspec-



Photo: Governing Circle Board Retreat - Seasonal Walk: Winter, Unceded Territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, November 2019

tive. As much as an Indigenous perspective is needed. It's huge.

SL: Kris and I have been working together for almost two years now and I think over that two years together she has increasingly nudged me into that space, but I think I wanted it too and you know that's in some way the beauty of privilege and of being where I am in my own career and my own life. I don't feel a sense of vulnerability in taking on that role. There is this great dynamic that I find between you and I, Tim, and Kris. I think we all have some similar ideas. I will be curious to see what change in the things we directly influence which is kind of the philanthropic sector and the interplay between that and Indigenous leaders, communities, and charities. Most of it would be at the individual level I think, not at the organizational level. For example, people have not given away portions of their assets to Indigenous-led trusts. People have not substantially increased their grant-making in their regular frameworks to Indigenous-led charities. Things have happened but not yet been revolutionary.

TF: Yeah, it's interesting to hear you talk about that because it's a different perspective of how I see the influence that I am hoping to bring into The Circle. So, when I came onto The Circle I felt like there was still a phase of evolution that was happening, even at the ten year mark. Would you agree?

SL: Totally.

TF: Sara is looking at the sector change because I'm definitely about systems like, it's not enough to reach out to an Indigenous community or Indigenous organization with the mindset of how can we increase your capacity? Maybe that's needed, but that's the historical approach. I am more interested in asking the systems, but how are you changing as well? Which is the same question I am mindful of that I am approaching at The Circle as well. How are we shifting? How are we doing things differently? And how are we paying respect to an oral tradition and an oral way of living and being? And it is surfacing in different ways but I think there is more that we could be doing.

“And, how are we paying respect to an oral tradition and an oral way of living and being?”

SL: Yeah, I am super appreciative of all that kind of inside-the-organization work and I think it reflects some of the biggest kinds of wisdom or learning that I've gotten from Kris. I had a phone call with Kris the evening of the Colten Boushie decision and what I called her up seeking was an answer to what organizations like my own CFC or foundations in Canada should do? Like I literally was like I am going to call you up. And your face says it all, you're like you're wild. Well, that was Kris's reaction too but she didn't, I couldn't see that face because we were on the phone so she kind of started going around it and finally I was like you're not going to give me the answer are you? And she was like no definitely not. And I was like all right, ok. And so, she's created this context for no easy button. Which is amazing and I think is the context between the internal work that you've just described but also the kind of yes, you need an answer but I am not going to give it to you this easy. Like that's the kind of alchemy that will lead to change. But it's funny how I can be years into this work at this organization and even working with this person and I am still consistently catching myself being like I am going to, couple of things, I am going to either get the answer from Kris and she will tell me what to do instead of recognizing that's my work or even having said that you know Kris and I have talked explicitly about my role in kind of being a white face of this work and a call to action for white people.

AD: It is about time, I think 'the unlearning is exceptionally long' is a good close, so I would invite you to make a final reflection which, and then we'll head to the plenary because we don't want to miss summer which is our plenary.

TF: I think any thing that I enter into my whole intention is to be a continuous learner, even as a person who is trying to lead some change. I am learning along the way and that's what the belief is that's the seeds that I try to plant in my colleagues at the Calgary Foundation that there is no leader in this work collective leadership - it's a collective responsibility. Circle practice, traditionally, places no titles or roles on people, it provides a space for the voiceless to have a voice, it provides room for different perspectives. If you were to place an object in the centre of a circle and Sara was on one side, and I was on one side, and she described what she saw, it's going to be different from my prospective. It doesn't mean she's right. If I described what I saw, and she described what she saw, and then you guys describe what you - collectively we would sort of create the formation of The Circle. And you know - I always think about that when I think about The Circle work, that's a collective responsibility, and we are constantly going to be learning and that's what excites me about this. That's why I want to inspire other people who are trying to mobilize reconciliation that we don't know what we are doing, it's ok to make mistakes. Let's make the mistakes together and work through them, but provide space for many perspectives, especially non-Indigenous perspectives in this work. You also have responsibility and it's too easy to kind of say 'well, no it's your work.' It's not.

“Let's make the mistakes together and work through them, but provide space for many perspectives, especially non-Indigenous perspectives in this work.”

SL: I'll just add that, to say I spent ten years with some engagement as a person working in philanthropy in this conversation about reconciliation. I got told so many times that the first step, the most important thing, that the basis of everything is relationship. But if I am honest with myself and with the whole world, it was probably only like three years ago

that I actually really understood the value and the importance and took the steps to really be in a relationship, and not a transactional relationship.

AD: A heartfelt thank you to Kris, Tim and Sara for sharing their wisdom, reflections, and stories. It's been such a privilege to work with them and bring this episode to life. Thank you as well to Shereen at The Circle and to my colleague Kelsey at CKX for your support on this episode as well. This podcast is being made in partnership with The Circle. I will turn it over to Kris to share with you the ways in which you can continue to follow, engage in, and support their work.

KA: The fastest way to connect with us is actually to follow The Circle on Twitter @CircleCanada and you can find me on Twitter as well as Shereen Munshi and that's a great way to stay up to date with the work that we are doing. One of the things about being a tiny but mighty team is the Twitter actually gives us an ability to communicate to our members and to our community in a way that is far more responsive and faster and it's less of a headache to do that work. So that's the best way to get in touch with us.

AD: CKX Questions is a podcast from CKX, Community Knowledge Exchange. Until next time, take care, and let's take care of each other.

Transcription: Sabina Trimble, PhiLab Masters Student.

Edits: Heather O'Watch and Shereen Munshi, The Circle.

Tim Fox (Natoyi'sokasiim) is a proud member of the Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) from the Kainai (Blood) reserve located two hours south of Mohkinstsis (Calgary), within Treaty 7 territory. Tim is the Vice President of Indigenous Relations with Calgary Foundation where he hopes to strengthen, enhance and shift the culture and practice at the foundation while incorporating work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission both internally and in the broader community. In 2019, Tim was named one of Calgary's Top 40 under 40 for his efforts of facilitating change for reconciliation and decolonization in the community. Also in 2019, Tim participated in a language revitalization project and then wrote and published his first book, a children's book titled, "Napi kii lmitaa" (Napi and the dogs). Tim facilitates Indigenous men's domestic violence groups at the Calgary Correctional Centre and sits on various local committees striving for ways to

mobilize efforts of change. Tim is the proud father of an 8 year old daughter who he considers to be his greatest achievement, inspiration and motivation behind everything he does in work and in life.

Sara Lyons grew up in Toronto but currently lives in Montreal and is a mother of two girls. She has been involved with the Circle from the beginning and is a founding Board member. She is grateful and inspired to have been on a long journey with this organization, its staff, volunteers, friends and champions as it grows, learns, influences and transforms.

Sara is Vice President, Strategic Initiatives for Community Foundations of Canada (CFC). Sara has been with Canada's community foundation movement for more than a decade, working in local community foundations as well as at the national leadership organization. Over her years with CFC, Sara has played a leadership role in bringing foundations together for impact, often in partnership with the corporate sector and government such as through the Community Foundations and the Environment program, Vital Signs, the Youth Catalyst Fund and the Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees and most recently the Investment Readiness Program.

Alexander Dirksen

Director, Programs + Community Accountability

Driven by a deep commitment to decolonizing himself and the world around him, Alexander channels his energy into initiatives that recenter, renew and reimagine. A proud member of Métis Nation BC, he is grateful for the opportunity to work in service of those embodying just futures. Alexander lives as an uninvited guest upon the unceded territories of the x^mməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwəta/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

CKX Questions holds space for dialogue, reflection and action on issues and ideas central to transformative change.



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Université du Québec à Montréal
Pavillon Saint-Denis (AB), 10e étage.
1290, rue Saint-Denis
Montréal (Québec) H2X 3J7