Exploring the Contribution of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations to Indigenous-led Conservation in Canada

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Abstract for M. Sc.

Exploring the Contribution of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations to Indigenous-led Conservation in Canada

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In recent years several Canadian Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs) have publicly declared their commitment to conservation partnerships with Indigenous Nations and communities. However, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities they experience is lacking. The current research project investigated how these partnerships contribute to advancing conservation projects, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). A review of literature underscored the importance of such partnerships, however the mechanisms to establish and maintain these relationships have received limited attention. To address this gap, a pilot survey of 5 national ENGOs was conducted, followed by semi-structured interviews of representatives from 24 ENGOs and one Indigenous educational non-profit organization focused on conservation. Using the framework developed by Stein, Ahenakew, and Kui (2023), ENGO efforts to transform and decolonize conventional conservation approaches were categorized into four non-linear, non-exclusive stages: representation, recognition, redistribution, and reparation. The responses most often fell within the "recognition" category, while the "representation" and "redistribution" categories were less frequently addressed. Notably, no responses fit well within the "reparation" category, highlighting a need for a more fundamental shift in how conservation is practiced. While ENGOs cannot achieve this transformation alone, the findings of this study indicate that ENGOs occupy a unique position in the sector which they should leverage to challenge colonial approaches and drive positive change.

Territorial Acknowledgment

To begin this thesis, I would like to acknowledge that I grew up on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territories of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw, shíshálh, Tla'amin, Klahoose, and Homalco Nations. This territory fundamentally shaped who I am, and I will spend the rest of my life loving it. I have conducted this research project through Concordia University, which is located on unceded Kanien’kehá:ka territory. This territory is a gathering place today for a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I acknowledge the Kanien’kehá:ka Nation as the recognized custodians of the lands and waters. I lived and learned on Kanien’kehá:ka territory between 2021 to 2022 and am so thankful for my time there. In late 2022, I moved to Edmonton, Alberta, which is located within Treaty 6 Territory and within the Métis homelands and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. This territory is home to many First Nations, including the Anishinaabe, Denesuliné, Nakota Sioux, Nehiyaw, and Niitsitapi. This territory has held me as I worked to complete this research project, and I am very appreciative of it. I also acknowledge all Indigenous Nations and communities across so called “Canada” for their consistent stewardship and care of all lands and waters and acknowledge their unique relationships to their own territories. As my research addresses conservation partnerships involving Indigenous Nations and communities across so called “Canada,” I feel immense gratitude to them all for their persistent care and efforts towards a more collaborative future. Through this research, I share my findings with the intent of informing more effective and collaborative conservation work on all territories.

Acknowledgments

My sincerest appreciation to the ENGO representatives who generously shared their experiences and insights with me. I am so grateful for your time and the incredible contributions you make to the conservation field.

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Monica Mulrennan, for her constant support throughout this learning experience. I hugely value your wisdom, advice, and guidance. Thank you also to my external examiner, Dr. Justine Townsend, and to committee members, Dr. Robin Roth and Dr. Bengi Akbulut, for their expertise and support throughout this process. In addition, I am appreciative of the support of Allison Bishop, Project Manager with the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP), and Jennifer Srey, Concordia University's Graduate Program Assistant. Finally, I thank Ted Cheskey, Naturalist Director with Nature Canada, and Véronique Bussières, Biocultural Conservation Director, with the Sociéte pour la Nature et les Parcs du Canada Section Québec (SNAP), for their valuable guidance in the development of my interview questions.

Thank you, as well, to my friends and colleagues, without whose care and support this thesis would not have been possible. Finally, thank you to my mother, Darianne Burnett, and late father, Johnathan Peter Fox, who taught me the value of curiosity, humour, kindness, and hard work. I love and am so thankful for you all.

Statement of Contribution

I, Sicily Piper Burnett Fox, am the author of all chapters presented in this thesis. Dr. Monica Mulrennan, through regular discussions, provided substantive intellectual contributions related to the development of research design, methodological approaches, research, and analysis. I am responsible for conducting the research and for writing this thesis, to which Dr. Mulrennan provided guidance related to its organization and framing, in addition to technical and creative support as a thorough reviewer and editor. I also acknowledge the use of ChatGPT, an AI language model developed by OpenAI, for minor copyediting support. While these edits contributed to the clarity of some statements, all findings, interpretations, conclusions, and written content are my own.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

To situate this thesis, I offer some critical context and introduce my research statement, objective, and questions below, followed by a description of the organization of my thesis. Additionally, I offer insights into my positionality, to support a more fulsome understanding of the approach and findings offered here. Finally, I describe my organizational affiliations and the challenges to this research project.

Please note that the use of "Indigenous Nations and communities" throughout this thesis is understood as including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. Additionally, the use of the word "Nation" is meant to recognize any related government structures used by Indigenous Peoples. In some limited instances, I have used "Indigenous Peoples" when the topic at hand is more interpersonal, but this should be understood as representing the same groups described above.

Critical Context

A Brief History of the Interactions between European Settlers and Indigenous Nations and Communities in Canada

I begin with a brief history of the relationship between Indigenous Nations and communities and European settlers. This is based on a four-stage history presented in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and summarized in Mulrennan (2015): pre-contact, contact and co-operation, displacement and assimilation, and negotiation and renewal. The first stage (Separate Worlds – pre-contact) occurred prior to European settlers' arrival to the lands now called "Canada," when Indigenous Nations and communities had been living on their traditional territories, engaging in cultural, spiritual, and sustenance activities on the lands and waters, since time immemorial.

The second stage (Contact and Cooperation) began after contact, as early European settlers increasingly relied on Indigenous Nations and communities for essential supports to their survival. Europeans exercised entitlement and superiority which was informed by the Doctrine of Discovery, a presumed access to lands and waters, and terra nullius, an understanding of territories as not being owned by anyone (Assembly of First Nations, 2018). These beliefs led European settlers to exert increasing control over areas to which Indigenous Nations and communities had longstanding relationships (Assembly of First Nations, 2018). While marital, trading, and military alliances became common, exposure to foreign diseases and incidences of conflict also arose during this stage (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). The British Crown also began entering treaties with Indigenous Nations or communities. However, differing cultural understandings of ownership, including in relation to lands and waters, were held by the treaty signatories. Indigenous Nations and communities generally held that lands and waters could not be owned, while the British Crown believed the reverse. Importantly, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 decreed that Indigenous Nations and communities had a right to their lands, unless sold or ceded to the British Crown. This proclamation created a nation-to-nation framework for interactions between Indigenous Nations and communities and European settlers. Increasing arrival of British Loyalist settlers after the end of the American War of Independence concluded this stage.

The third stage (Displacement and Assimilation – 1812 to early 1970s) saw economic shifts (e.g., movement away from fur trading toward farming) and increasing settlement which worsened the relationship between settlers and Indigenous Nations and communities, while

settler land use needs increased. In 1867, the Dominion of Canada was created through Confederation and the British North American Act, while legislative authority over Indigenous Nations and communities was prescribed to Parliament. These changes led to additional processes of treaty making aimed at accessing and consolidating lands for the newly born country, in exchange for limited reserve land, resources, preservation of subsistence rights, and commitments to non-interference in internal governance for Indigenous signatories. 11 new treaties, titled with numbers (now called the "numbered treaties"), were created in areas now identified as Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories between 1871 and 1921. Early in this period of treaty making, the Indian Act was introduced in 1876, with amendments following over time. The Indian Act provided critical guidance in the "…domination, isolation, and assimilation of [Indigenous Nations and communities] and their culture by the Canadian government and dominant white society" and, through its implementation, created unprecedented, meticulous mechanisms of control over Indigenous Peoples lives (Mulrennan, 2015, p. 61). Indigenous Nations and communities and their rights were largely disregarded and ignored by the Canadian state and non-Indigenous society until the 1970s, when increasing social awareness, outrage over past and ongoing harms, and landmark legal decisions created the context for change.

The fourth, and current, stage (Negotiation and Renewal – early 1970s to the present) has included legal, political, and social efforts by Indigenous Nations and communities in Canada, and internationally, which has been combined with sympathetic public opinion to create a context that is supportive of dialogue, consultation, and negotiation between Indigenous Nations and communities and the Canadian state toward reconciliation of past harms. Although these developments are positive, it is important to note that there is still significant resistance and that colonial harms persist. Some central developments during the current phase include: the creation of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples; development of comprehensive land claims processes; establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to address harms done by residential schools; and numerous landmark legal decisions which describe Aboriginal rights and title.

More recently within the fourth stage, there have been increasing efforts at all levels of Canadian society to address the myriad harms done to Indigenous Nations and communities by settlers and move towards a new era of reconciliation. The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a significant international milestone within the recognition and protection of Indigenous rights (United Nations, 2007). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples…

> "… [details] the rights of indigenous peoples in international law and policy, containing minimum standards for the recognition, protection and promotion of these rights. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, wellbeing and rights of the world's indigenous peoples" (United Nations, 2007, para. 3).

Although the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was widely supported, Canada was one of four countries to vote against it in 2007 (United Nations, 2007). It endorsed the document in 2010, but only officially adopted it in 2016 (Duhamel, 2022).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 2015 Final Report was another significant national milestone. The Final Report included 94 Calls to Action addressed to all levels of Canadian society, focused on resolving a variety of longstanding harms experienced by Indigenous Nations and communities as a result of colonization ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," 2015). Significantly, the Final Report calls…

> "…upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts" ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," 2015, p. 9).

Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs), and the conservation sector more broadly, have a role to play in addressing this report's calls to action. In addition, the Final Report calls on Canada to adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," 2015). Since the Final Report's release in 2015, several other significant policies and reports have become available, including: Reclaiming Power and Place: the Indigenous Circle of Expert's We Rise Together report (2018); The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019); the 10 Principles Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (2021); the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021); and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan (2023).

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act,* another particularly important milestone, received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021, committing Canada to, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Nations and communities, "…take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the [United Nations] Declaration [on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]" (2021, para. 35). The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* also includes calls for the involvement of Indigenous Nations and communities within conservation work (2021). The implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* is supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, which identifies three overarching goals in efforts toward environmental wellbeing:

> "[1. Ensure a Canada where] Indigenous peoples enjoy the right to a healthy natural environment with Indigenous ways of knowing incorporated into the protection and stewardship of lands, waters, plants and animals[;] [2. ensure a Canada where] Indigenous peoples play a central role on biodiversity conservation, water and environmental conservation, and climate change action planning, policy development and decision-making [;] [3. ensure a Canada where] [s]elf-determined climate action is supported as critical to advancing Canada's reconciliation with Indigenous peoples[]" (2023, p. 36).

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan includes five measures (*37, 40, 42, 47, and 95*) which are specifically relevant to the conservation sector and calls for increasing consultation and cooperation with Indigenous

Nations and communities (2023). The rising number of public federal commitments to improving relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities reflects the shifting social and political context within which the Canadian conservation sector operates. This is increasing informed by efforts and expectations associated with the creation of relationships between settlers and Indigenous Nations and communities.

The Indigenous Circle of Experts' 2018 report is another very influential publication in the Canadian reconciliation landscape. Led by Indigenous experts, the report offers some key recommendations toward effective collaboration between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples toward positive environmental and social outcomes ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018). The report champions the importance of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and offers some key tools toward effective collaboration: two-eyed seeing and ethical space ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018). In the report, Albert Marshall, an Elder from the Mi'kmaw Nation, describes two-eyed seeing as…

> "…learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of western knowledges and ways of knowing—and learning to use both of these eyes together for the benefit of all" ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018, p. 57).

Ethical space is necessary to the use of two-eyed seeing ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018). In recognition of the hesitancy Indigenous Nations and communities may feel in collaborating with non-Indigenous organizations or governments, efforts to nurture relationships at all levels allow for the creation of ethical space, which ensures the safety, respect, and collaboration of all partners ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018). These recommendations are highly valuable, as they recognize the tensions in the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples within the conservation sector and offer some tools to support collaboration between them.

A variety of national commitments toward environmental goals have also influenced the conservation sector toward increasing collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities. Guided by the international Aichi environmental targets put forward by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada's Pathway to Target 1 "…is committed to conserving 25 percent of Canada's land and 25 percent of its oceans by 2025" through the development of protected and conserved areas ("Aichi Targets," n.d.; "Canada Target 1 Challenge," n.d., para. 1).

Canada has also been a party involved in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which influenced the adoption of The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022. This framework sets out a variety of conservation targets focused on addressing biodiversity loss ("Toward a 2030 Biodiversity Strategy for Canada: Halting and Reversing Nature Loss," n.d.). Through the framework, Environment and Climate Change Canada has created the 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy, which includes additional sources of funding for conservation efforts, including Indigenous-led conservation ("Toward a 2030 Biodiversity Strategy for Canada: Halting and Reversing Nature Loss," n.d.). This strategy also includes the commitment to "…respect and weave together western science and Indigenous knowledge systems" towards goals ("Toward a 2030 Biodiversity Strategy for Canada: Halting and Reversing Nature Loss," n.d., para. 16).

National commitments to conservation goals like these, and the associated funding made available, are significant influences on the ENGO sector, as many organizations rely on government funding packages to facilitate their work. These key Canadian commitments to conservation, through their ideologies and funding models, are encouraging and supporting increasing collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities in the conservation sector.

The Canadian Conservation Sector

As Canada evolved throughout the phases described above, a central concern of European settlers was their access to resources. Western ideological approaches also informed colonial environmental protection efforts, including an imperative to exert power over nature and to favour exclusionary models of conservation (Colchester, 2004). These approaches have caused significant harm to Indigenous Nations and communities in Canada by contributing to their displacement and dispossession (Colchester, 2004). A variety of conservation efforts have excluded and marginalized Indigenous Nations and communities in Canada, however parks and protected areas are of particular interest because they were such a central approach used by settlers to conserve lands or waters.

According to Mulrennan (2015), four generalized phases regarding the level and type of engagement of Indigenous Nations and communities in parks and protected areas can be identified. The first of these – "marginalized outsiders" – was characterized by the establishment of early protected areas, such as national parks, without any acknowledgement of Indigenous rights and titles. In this phase, Indigenous Nations and communities may have traded their reserve lands for spaces outside of park boundaries due to pressures created through rules that prohibited traditional practices within protected areas.

The second phase – "tolerated users" – included some limited toleration of Indigenous Nations and communities which allowed them to practice limited harvesting and hunting in parks and protected areas (Mulrennan 2015). This shift was, in part, caused by the practical challenges limiting Indigenous Nations and communities' access to these spaces. Input from Indigenous Peoples within protected area planning or management was generally not welcomed at this time.

The third phase – "reluctant partners" – began in the 1970s when, due to social and political pressures, Canada began to reluctantly partner with Indigenous Nations and communities, often to settle outstanding claims or address treaty rights (Mulrennan 2015). Landmark policy shifts, including the 1979 Parks Canada Policy, began an embrace of co-management with Indigenous Nations and communities. The development of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982,* which recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, is also a significant development during this phase. Despite these developments, this phase sees inconsistent outcomes for Indigenous rights holders.

Within the fourth phase – "enthusiastic instigators" – it is increasingly understood that many Indigenous ideologies support healthy, productive relationships with nature (Mulrennan 2015). Over time, and through working with nature, Indigenous Nations and communities have integrated the value of working collaboratively and developed unique knowledge, which is progressively known as "Indigenous Knowledge" (Mulrennan, 2015, p. 68). Increasingly, non-Indigenous actors within the conservation sector are turning to partnerships with Indigenous Nations and communities to benefit from their political or legal power and unique knowledges.

ENGOs Unique Positionality within the Canadian Conservation Sector

Among many actors, ENGOs hold a unique position within the conservation sector. Below, I provide a brief overview of what an ENGO is, along with some common dynamics

within the ENGO sector. This aims to enhance clarity and understanding of this core institution before proceeding. An ENGO is a non-profit organization operating independently from any government, dedicated to environmentalism (Folger, 2024). ENGOs fall under the category of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Folger, 2024). Well-known Canadian ENGOs include, but are not limited to, the following: Greenpeace Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, David Suzuki Foundation, World Wildlife Fund Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada.

While ENGOs maintain independence from state governments, they often seek funding from private or governmental sources and are required to regularly apply for these streams of funding (Folger, 2024). Although they typically operate independently, ENGOs may engage in collaborations with various entities, including other ENGOs, Indigenous Nations and communities, and/or different levels of government (Folger, 2024). While there is limited coordination among ENGOs throughout Canada, collaboration may occur, particularly when organizations are in the same area. In partnership with others, ENGOs may be able to provide expertise, resources, and knowledge specific to the location they operate within (Schoon et al., 2017). ENGOs are also uniquely placed to provide opportunities for informal environmental sustainability education, often through project work supporting environmental action (Haigh, 2006). However, public engagement with the work of ENGOs may be affected by discourses and meta-narratives which describe ENGOs as acting either wholly positively, practically, or negatively – there is a need to reassess assumptions about the work done by the ENGO sector (Larson, 2016).

ENGOs work on different types of initiatives, across a variety of environments, with IPCAs being one category where ENGOs may contribute (usually if invited by Indigenous Nations and communities to provide support). IPCAs are defined as "...lands and waters where Indigenous governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance, and knowledge systems" ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018, p. 5). As such, an "IPCA" is an umbrella term for various types of Indigenous led conservation initiatives (Indigenous Circle of Experts Report, 2018). IPCAs are often created through unique partnerships between Indigenous Nations and communities and other entities, such as ENGOs, Crown governments, academics, and other entities ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018).

Research Statement

Within Canada, several national-level ENGOs have publicly declared, in recent years, their commitment to collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities. Many have a dedicated section on their website which describes their collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities as part of their efforts to protect and/or conserve land and ocean spaces. For example, the World Wildlife Fund Canada presents a section on their website entitled "Our Partners," n.d., which states:

> "WWF-Canada recognizes that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are vital stewards of natural resources and essential partners in realizing our mission. We are committed to supporting Indigenous-led conservation; affirming the importance of traditional knowledge in guiding our work; and advocating on issues of common concern."

Nature Conservancy Canada has a webpage entitled "Indigenous Conservation," n.d., where they describe how…

> "the dynamics of conservation in Canada are changing. Today, Indigenous Peoples are increasingly being heard and recognized as conservation decision-makers and stewards of the land" and the organization envisions "…building meaningful relationships [with Indigenous Nations and communities] that are grounded in mutual respect and the desire to achieve significant and lasting conservation outcomes."

The David Suzuki Foundation, in a section on their website entitled "Protected and Restored Areas," n.d., describes how…

> "Indigenous communities have been stewards of the lands and waters of their traditional territories for thousands of years. They continue that work to this day, leading the way to protect their traditional territories with Indigenous protected and conserved areas…" and the organization is "… working with Indigenous Peoples to help [them] establish IPCAs in marine environments and on land."

Finally, Nature Canada, in a page on their website entitled "Our Commitment to Equity and Anti-Racism," n.d., outlines:

> "the call for Indigenous-led conservation is central to Nature Canada's campaigns for protected areas, nature-based climate change and forest restoration," describing how the organization is "…dedicated to working with our supporters, partners and Indigenous peoples to defend nature and hold government and industry to account. Crucial to this is strengthening our relationships with Indigenous organizations."

These statements indicate that many ENGOs in Canada are actively partnering with Indigenous Nations and communities. As mentioned above, these collaborations are taking place within a national political context which is increasingly encouraging partnerships with Indigenous Nations and communities, toward reconciliation. However, there is a lack of detailed information regarding the nature, challenges, and best practices underpinning the relationships necessary to achieve these commitments, in the context of conservation. ENGOs, working within their distinct operational and social contexts, may enter arrangements with Indigenous Nations and communities that either impose limitations on or enhance Indigenous agency, particularly in the context of Indigenous community-led conservation initiatives (Mabee & Hoberg, 2006). The motivation for the current research project was inadequate comprehension and recognition of the challenges and obstacles as well as opportunities and positive strategies used in relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities in the Canadian conservation sector. An enhanced understanding of this topic holds significant potential to inform future partnerships and promote equitable conservation efforts within Canada.

Additionally, although IPCAs must be fundamentally created and led by Indigenous Nations and communities, ENGOs have the potential to play a role as collaborators and positively influence outcomes ("Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership," n.d.). Given the potentially important contribution ENGOs can offer in the success of current and future conservation initiatives, including IPCAs, a more comprehensive understanding of their involvement in relational work and the unique social and political position they occupy within Canada is needed. This forms the core focus of my thesis.

Research Objective and Questions

The primary objective of this research project is to investigate the extent to which partnerships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities contribute to the success of conservation initiatives, including IPCAs, and the factors that play a role in either facilitating or hindering these relationships. The leadership of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) has expressed a keen interest in this research topic, as it aligns with some of the objectives of the CRP (see the *Affiliations* section).

This thesis endeavors to uncover practical insights that can offer valuable guidance to similar relationships between Indigenous Nations and communities and ENGOs in Canada in the future. Furthermore, the research aims to address a gap in the existing literature by offering additional insights into this unique partnership dynamic, while contributing to the broader literature on IPCA creation, and the role of ENGOs in the Canadian context.

To achieve these goals, the research was guided by the following key questions: *What realities and barriers influence the working relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities in conservation initiatives, including IPCAs, in Canada? What recommendations does the ENGO sector offer towards successful relationship building with Indigenous Nations and communities?*

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 offers some critical context and outlines my research statement, objective, and questions; positionality; key challenges; and the affiliations. Chapter 2 offers an overview of literature focused on ENGOs and conservation initiatives involving state and Indigenous actors in Canada and, to a lesser extent, Australia, outlining trends, examples, and considerations therein. Chapter 3 offers a description of my methodology, noting the key limitation that it only engages with ENGO representatives. The methods include a pilot survey and semi-structured interviews with 24 ENGOs and one Indigenous educational non-profit organization focused on conservation. Chapter 4 describes the findings by exploring the data gathered through each method. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of results, contextualized by the reviewed literature, and a summary of the presented research to conclude, along with several recommendations for future research. The thesis adheres to a traditional format, with a conscious effort to use plain language whenever feasible, to support a broad understanding of its contents. Through these means, the insights gathered in this research may be shared widely with the ENGO sector, promoting the effective communication of knowledge and practical application of insights gathered.

Positionality Statement

Informed by Andrew G. D. Holmes (2020), I offer the following statements on my positionality to better contextualize my research. I will introduce myself and demystify, as much as is possible, the personal and academic context from which I approach this research. As Holmes effectively referenced, "…it is crucial that researchers are clear in their minds as to the implications of their stance, that they state their position explicitly" (2020, p. 4). My ability to understand, synthesize, and present information is both fundamentally limited and created by my experiences and identities. In recognition of this, I will state some relevant information about myself below to highlight my positionality.

To begin, I grew up in a small, settler town on the west coast of British Columbia, Canada. Although increasingly recognised by settlers as Sechelt, Squamish, Tla'amin, and

Klahoose Nations' territory ("Sunshine Coast Tourism," n.d.). Other members of my family hail from central and eastern Canada. I loved the forests and ocean I grew up around. This feeling fostered an early reverence for the environmental world in me.

I am currently a 28 year old cis-gendered female, who grew up in a single-parent household and am one of the first people in my family to obtain a bachelor's degree. In the spring of 2021, I graduated from the University of Victoria (located on lək̓ʷəŋən, Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ territory) with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) with double majors in Environmental Studies and Sociology ("University of Victoria," n.d.). I pursued these disciplines because I, like many people my age, have grown up shadowed by the looming presence of climate change and, because of this threat, felt inspired to further understand social and environmental systems. This helps to explain my interest in my current academic pursuits, as well. While studying at the University of Victoria, I was inspired by the efforts of Wet'suwet'en land and water defenders and participated in various direct actions in support of a healthy environment ("Unist'ot'en," n.d.). This engagement fits into my on-going experiences of being inspired and encouraged by the radical and resilient work of Indigenous Nations and communities, especially as it related to environmental preservation.

My formal and informal education guided my decisions to move east to pursue a master's degree at Concordia University which is located in Montreal, Quebec (including Kanien'kehá:ka territory) ("Concordia University," n.d.). I benefited from a robust education on social and environmental systems at the University of Victoria but felt there was still more I needed to learn from experts in the realm of environmental governance, as I see this aspect as vital to our collective wellbeing. I hoped to be able to learn from, and contribute to, the work of experts in this field and felt that pursuing a master's degree was the best approach to this goal. After reviewing potential master's programs in Canada, I felt that the MSc program in Geography, Urban, and Environmental Studies at Concordia University best aligned with my interests and desired outcomes. Additionally, I selected to work with Dr. Monica Mulrennan and felt inspired by the network of experts she was a part of, including the unique access she offered to the CRP and their fundamental contributions to IPCA creation ("Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership," n.d.). This made me confident that I would find my desired education and connections at Concordia University.

Generally, a core reverence for environmental systems (and the place social systems have within them) influences all I do. I feel a fundamental need to position my work so that it may benefit, to whichever extent possible, the health and resilience of our shared environments. This principal has guided me here. I feel it is imperative to understand how collaborative conservation may be best supported, as this work will directly benefit what I hold most dear.

Challenges to Research

To effectively address my imperative, it is important to state the primary challenges I encountered in my research, so that these limitations to the work are clear from the outset. The main challenges arise from the constrained timeline of my master's program, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and my personal and academic positioning.

I am currently registered in an academic institution which mandates a two-year timeline for the completion of my thesis project ("Concordia University," n.d.), inherently limiting the scope of my research. While the prescribed timeline did affect my ability to create meaningful contacts before engaging in research activities, I was permitted to extend my research timeline and have been able to create the necessary connections to conduct this limited research in a meaningful way. The support provided by my supervisor, Dr. Mulrennan, which granted me

access to a network of academic, professional, and other experts, was fundamental in overcoming this challenge.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic may have constrained my research due to its effects on individuals and communities. I endeavored to maintain effective communications with ENGO participants and practiced flexibility throughout the research process. This approach, I believe, enabled me to successfully engage with the appropriate ENGO participants despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, my entanglement within colonial systems of being, both personal and academic, limits my capacity to understand, engage with, and analyze other ways of being (Stein, 2018). Acknowledging the politics of positionality, as articulated by Benjamin P. Davis and Jason Walsh, I recognize that all thought is shaped by its origin, and knowledge is inherently positional. To quote Stuart Hall:

> "I am committed to the idea of a politics of location. This does not mean all thought is necessarily limited and self-interested because of where it comes from, or anything like that. I mean something rather looser—that all thought is shaped by where it comes from, that knowledge is always to some degree 'positional.' One can never escape the way in which one's formation lays a kind of imprint on or template over what one is interested in, what kind of take one would have on any topic, what linkages one wants to make, and so on" (2020, p. 374).

Considering this perspective, I continually strive to understand the challenges and insights that my positionality allows. Given that my research aims to analyze and interpret the experiences of others, the limitations of my own positionality are important to consider. Simultaneously, my lived experience and my ability to synthesize information through my unique lens represents my most distinctive contribution. I am mindful of the dual nature of the benefits and challenges associated with my positionality and encourage the reader to be mindful of these considerations, as well.

Affiliations

My connections to the following entities were forged to facilitate my research and bolster my efforts to overcome the challenges described above. Primarily, I relied on connections to my supervisor and the CRP network to guide my work ("Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership," n.d.).

The CRP describes itself as "…an Indigenous-led network that brings together a diverse range of partners to advance Indigenous-led conservation, including [IPCAs] and to transform the conservation sector in Canada," whose membership includes ENGOs, Indigenous leadership, representatives from academia, and communities ("Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership," n.d., para. 1). I became a member of the CRP in September 2021, contributing to the Conservation Governance Stream, through founding member of the CRP, Dr. Monica Mulrennan ("Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership," n.d.; "Concordia University," n.d.). Through this connection, I subsequently recruited Dr. Robin Roth, the Principal Investigator of the CRP, as a member of my thesis committee ("Concordia University," n.d.; "Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership," n.d.; "University of Guelph," n.d.). Dr. Roth provided guidance from within the CRP, while Dr. Mulrennan shared relevant expertise and instruction from her experience within the CRP and from three decades of partnered conservation research with Indigenous Nations and communities. The addition of Dr. Bengi

Akbulut to my thesis committee provided complementary insights from her expertise in the areas of economy, policy, and environment. Finally, Dr. Mulrennan secured Dr. Justine Townsend, who has expertise in Indigenous-led conservation, to act as my external examiner.

In addition, I have benefited from conversations with PhD candidate Véronique Bussières, who is the Biocultural Conservation Director at the Sociéte pour la Nature et les Parcs du Canada Section Québec (SNAP, the Quebec chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society) and a fellow member of the Partners in Indigenous Conservation and Environmental Futures research group, directed by Dr. Mulrennan. She has provided support for my thesis work and related relationship creation ("Partners in Indigenous Conservation and Environmental Futures," n.d.; "SNAP," n.d.).

Finally, Dr. Monica Mulrennan also utilized her network of connections to support my work through some other key supports, such as was provided by Ted Cheskey, Naturalist Director with Nature Canada. In these ways, relationships have fundamentally supported the creation of my research project and this master's thesis. However, despite the support provided, it is important to note that all perspectives, errors, and oversights in the research and thesis creation process are my own.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Partnerships between Indigenous Nations and communities and ENGOs are becoming increasingly prevalent in Canada's conservation landscape. The following literature review will explore major themes within the literature which focuses (primarily) on the Canadian conservation sector and partnership dynamics between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities in that context.

The reviewed literature is described in seven sections, which explore: (1) key considerations in the Canadian ENGO sector, (2) insights from the Australian conservation sector's movement toward Indigenous inclusion, (3) ENGOs entanglement with colonial structures in Canada, (4) considerations within the movement toward Indigenous inclusion in the Canadian conservation sector, (5) examples of positive and negative interactions between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations or communities in conservation efforts in Canada, (6) insights from Indigenous-led approaches to conservation work in Canada, and (7) insights from primarily non-Indigenous conservation leaders perspectives on collaboration within the Canadian conservations sector.

I have attempted to gather relevant, published, academic literature to create these sections, but it is important to note that the following literature is not exhaustive, despite my best efforts to make it so. Notably, I have not engaged with literature focused on co-management, as these arrangements are primarily created between state actors and Indigenous Nations and communities. ENGOs have limited direct roles within co-management arrangements.

I have primarily gathered and reviewed literature that is focused on the Canadian context with some, limited, literature from the Australian context. The Australian conservation sector, which has been undergoing a shift toward the use of conservation arrangements that are more inclusive of Indigenous Nations and communities (or center Indigenous leadership), offers some valuable insights to support the current research project (Hill, et al., 2013). The Australian literature is pertinent to the Canadian context as both countries share similar past and ongoing experiences of colonial injustice, are a part of the Commonwealth, and are engaged in similar processes toward Indigenous-led conservation initiatives. Given the extensive nature of

Australian literature focused on (Indigenous involvement in) inclusive conservation, the literature presented here should be understood to offer an initial, broad overview rather than an exhaustive exploration, considering research scope and resource limitations.

To locate relevant literature, I employed various search terms, including combinations of relevant keywords, such as: "Indigenous," "Indigenous led," "Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations," "Non-Governmental Organizations," "ENGO," "Conservation," "Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas," "IPCA," "Tribal Parks," "Indigenous protected areas," "conserved areas," "Relationship(s)," "Partnership(s)," "Collaboration," "Australia," and "Canada." I utilized various databases, such as: Web of Science, Concordia University's Sofia discovery tool, Scopus, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. In addition, I consulted reference lists from relevant sources, resulting in the identification of 45 sources. I compiled only published academic literature, through these means.

Considerations within the Canadian ENGO Sector

Key challenges, considerations, pressures, and opportunities within the Canadian ENGO sector are explored in this section. ENGOs in Canada are grappling with the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss (Beazley & Olive, 2021). The impact of these crises on protected areas is compounded by the pressures to find swift solutions, as climate change threatens to degrade these areas and intensifies social expectations on conservation leaders for effective responses (Dietz et al., 2021). An additional limitation, identified by Beazley and Olive (2021) is the Canadian federalist system, which due to its division of powers among federal, provincial, and territorial governments, results in fragmented environmental legislation. This decentralization complicates the implementation of cohesive environmental solutions and creates uncertainties that can hinder ENGO efforts. Social, political, and institutional influences further add to the complexity of the regulatory environment, impacting the effectiveness of conservation initiatives (Beazley & Olive, 2021).

According to Lemieux et al. (2018, 2019) national targets, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Canada's Pathway to Target 1, put pressure on ENGOs to meet conservation and climate goals, sometimes resulting in a prioritization of quantity over quality in project work. However, these targets may also encourage holistic approaches, including collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities, which are crucial for achieving meaningful environmental and social outcomes, if done well (Zurba et al., 2019). However, it is recognized that these commitments may not always come with the necessary capacity supports to allow for these meaningful collaborations to take place (Lemieux et al., 2018; Lemieux et al., 2019; MacKinnon et al., 2015).

Carroll and Ray (2021) have highlighted how Canada's geographic context and significant contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions put it in a unique position to influence climate action. Many areas in Canada function as de facto protected areas, allowing for potential rapid expansion of conservation efforts through collaboration with industry, government, and Indigenous communities (Wulder et al., 2018). However, as Berkes et al (2009) have underscored in their work, it is essential for conservation efforts to avoid exclusionary models and adopt holistic approaches that consider the interconnectedness of human and natural systems.

The benefits of integrating Indigenous knowledge and practices into conservation efforts are receiving more and more attention (Beazley & Olive, 2021). This transformation of ENGOs away from colonial approaches toward reconciliation and biodiversity conservation is seen as crucial (Beazley & Olive, 2021). Bridging Western and Indigenous knowledge systems can

enhance conservation efforts, but it is vital to avoid extractive practices that perpetuate colonial harms and instead focus on genuine co-creation with Indigenous knowledge holders.

In conclusion, ENGOs are navigating complex environmental challenges shaped by political, social, and legislative factors. To address these challenges effectively, they must include Indigenous Nations and communities, overcome fragmentation, and balance national goals with equitable, long-term conservation efforts. Understanding the interplay between human activity and biodiversity, and co-creating strategies with Indigenous Nations and communities, is key to addressing the practical realities of conservation and achieving positive outcomes.

Insights from the Australian Conservation Sector's Movement Toward Indigenous Inclusion

This section delves into the literature on the Australian conservation sector's movement towards Indigenous inclusion, offering insights and drawing parallels with the Canadian ENGO sector. The similarities between these two conservation landscapes provide a valuable comparative framework for understanding global trends and challenges in incorporating Indigenous perspectives into conservation efforts.

Indigenous-led land management has become an integral part of the Australian conservation landscape, paralleling trends in Canada. These initiatives are rooted in the deep, holistic relationships between traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and their customary land and sea estates (Hill et al., 2013). This profound connection has evolved over at least 50,000 years, forming the basis for contemporary Indigenous-led conservation efforts.

There is growing recognition among Australian non-Indigenous conservation practitioners of the depth of Indigenous history and the significant contributions of Indigenous Nations and communities to conservation initiatives (Hill et al., 2013). Australian governments have increasingly acknowledged and supported these efforts, mirroring similar trends in Canada. This shift reflects a broader global movement towards recognizing Indigenous contributions to conservation, although the evidence from only two countries does not necessarily represent a global phenomenon (Hill et al., 2013).

The Australian conservation sector's recognition of Indigenous contributions also underscores the importance of collaborations between different cultural entities to create holistic conservation efforts. Moorcroft has highlighted how acknowledging Indigenous connections to their territories and past colonial harms can lead to substantial land returns to Indigenous Nations and communities by Australian state governments. In this respect, there is often an intrinsic link between conservation and Indigenous social justice (Moorcroft, 2015). This link can create a paradox where achievements in Indigenous social justice are enjoyed by the conservation sector, while Indigenous social justice increasingly depends on conservation agendas. According to Moorcroft, this creates a risk for Indigenous communities, as their rights and connections to land may become entangled with the outcomes of conservation initiatives co-led by non-Indigenous People.

Historically, the Australian conservation sector has excluded and dispossessed Indigenous Nations and communities from their traditional territories through the establishment of protected areas based on colonial conservation perspectives (Ross et al., 2012). According to Ross et al (2012), a shift towards partnership, communication, and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors in conservation has been much needed, a sentiment that is often echoed in Canadian conservation efforts.

Australia is at a critical juncture regarding the recognition of Indigenous rights within conservation initiatives. Moorcroft & Adams (2014) in a study from a decade ago characterized the Australian conservation landscape as innovative, with increased NGO influence, and rising recognition of Indigenous involvement. Despite this progress, they observed a limited understanding of the impacts of these novel approaches on Indigenous communities and a need for further examination of their benefits (Moorcroft & Adams, 2014).

Leiper et al. (2018) explored 156 Australian conservation projects that included Indigenous Nations and communities, emphasizing the importance of integrating Indigenous rights, priorities, and traditional obligations into all aspects of project work. Similarly, other authors argue that effective collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems is crucial for successful conservation initiatives (Ens et al., 2012). Importantly, within effective collaboration, it is necessary to validate all knowledge systems, identify opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration, involve Indigenous communities at all stages of work, and ensure adequate resources and supportive political and legal frameworks (Ens et al., 2012).

Although Indigenous-led initiatives contribute to protecting at-risk Australian species, the use of various governance types impact the creation of protected areas differently. According to Archibald et al. (2020), the success of Indigenous-led initiatives contrasts with traditionally colonial conservation approaches, which have often been less effective in addressing the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

Heiner et al. (2019) identified the need to balance various values within conservation project planning, reflecting the importance of collaboration between different knowledge systems. This build on earlier work by Pickerill (2009) who noted key issues in collaborative conservation campaigns, including economic considerations, language use, power divisions, and project scale and timeframes. Addressing these issues is essential for creating mutually agreed definitions and indicators of effectiveness.

Methods to gauge the effectiveness of partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors in conservation are also needed (Austin et al., 2018). This is particularly relevant as the Australian conservation sector continues to evolve, implying a similar need in Canada.

In conclusion, the Australian conservation sector's movement towards Indigenous inclusion offers valuable insights for similar efforts in Canada. Both contexts emphasize the importance of acknowledging Indigenous contributions, fostering effective collaborations, and addressing historical harms. However, further research is needed to understand the impacts of inclusive conservation approaches and to develop practical methods for assessing the effectiveness of these partnerships. The comparative analysis of these two conservation landscapes highlights the potential for shared learning and the importance of continued efforts towards Indigenous inclusion and leadership in conservation globally.

ENGOs Entanglement within Colonial Structures in Canada

Understanding the dynamics between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities in Canada necessitates an exploration of the colonial structures within which these organizations operate. ENGOs, despite their conservation goals, may inadvertently perpetuate colonialism by legitimizing state control over Indigenous territories (Finegan, 2018). This section critically examines how ENGOs' conservation efforts intersect with colonial practices and the implications for Indigenous Nations and communities.

According to Finegan (2018), conservation efforts by ENGOs are often perceived positively; however, they can lead to exclusionary practices that dispossess Indigenous Nations

and communities of their lands, reinforcing colonial authority over these territories. Examples of this phenomenon are evident in some Canadian National Parks, where the creation and management of protected areas have historically marginalized Indigenous Nations and communities (Colchester, 2004). The relationship between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities, therefore, must be scrutinized for its potential to serve colonial interests through superficial inclusion (Lee, 2011).

The entanglement of ENGOs within state structures complicates their role in conservation. Choudry and Kapoor (2015) have highlighted how ENGOs often underestimate the influence of power dynamics, particularly their complicity with state and market forces. They assert that for ENGOs to support decolonization effectively, they must adopt methods that promote critical reflection and resistance to dominant structures. This involves acknowledging their reliance on state control and market forces and addressing the contradictions inherent in their operations (Choudry & Kapoor, 2015).

Decolonizing ENGOs is crucial given their significant role in the Canadian conservation sector. For Cadman et al. (2020), ENGOs possess the flexibility and boundary-spanning capabilities necessary to influence conservation decision-making processes positively. However, to leverage these strengths, ENGOs must strive for independence from governing bodies, despite the challenges posed by their reliance on government-designed funding structures (Cadman et al., 2020).

The reliance of ENGOs on state structures has been observed to often result in contributions that inadvertently benefit colonialism (Choudry & Kapoor, 2015; Lee, 2011). Consequently, if ENGOs fail to decolonize, their conservation efforts may prove harmful to Indigenous Nations and communities (Choudry & Kapoor, 2015; Lee, 2011). Finegan (2018) suggests that reflective processes that center truth and justice to produce positive outcomes for both the conservation sector and Indigenous communities are needed. ENGOs must navigate the delicate balance of maintaining independence while operating within politically influenced frameworks (Cadman et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the relationship between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities in Canada is complex and fraught with colonial entanglements. For ENGOs to foster genuinely positive relationships and support decolonization, they must critically examine their role within state structures, adopt reflective practices, and strive for independence. Only through these efforts can ENGOs contribute to a more equitable and just conservation sector in Canada.

Toward Indigenous Inclusion in the Canadian Conservation Sector

Indigenous Nations and communities' involvement in the conservation sector in Canada often fails to benefit them due to entrenched exclusionary policies and practices. Historically, conservation efforts have aimed to exert control over nature while marginalizing Indigenous Peoples (Colchester, 2004; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2021). Currently, there is an ongoing debate within the conservation sector about the role of protected areas, highlighting the shift from top-down, exclusionary models to more inclusive, community-based approaches (Shultis & Heffner, 2015).

The conservation sector has traditionally been dominated by preservation-oriented approaches that exclude Indigenous participation, rooted in historical national park legislation. According to Shultis & Heffner (2015), these exclusionary models often result in the dispossession of Indigenous lands, perpetuating colonial control. Recent trends, however, show a shift toward inclusive conservation practices that involve grassroots and community engagement,

which are crucial for effective and sustainable conservation outcomes (Dawson et al., 2021; Shultis & Heffner, 2015).

International and national policy evolutions have increasingly recognized Indigenous rights, supporting their ownership and management of protected areas (Colchester, 2004). These shifts, along with legal evolutions, are essential for fostering collaborative arrangements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors, contributing to positive social and environmental outcomes. Dawson et al. (2021) call for the recognition of local cultural and social contexts and the empowerment of communities in decision-making processes as critical factors for successful inclusionary conservation efforts.

Anna Willow (2016) provides an interesting case study on Indigenous participation in multi-sector conservation efforts in Canada's boreal forests. The case involves the Boreal Leadership Council, comprising Indigenous Peoples, ENGOs, private sector actors, and others who collectively created opportunities for Indigenous empowerment through projects that integrated cultural preservation, land rights, and resource use. Unfortunately, the project also perpetuated marginalization by positioning Indigenous participants peripherally within an inequitable socio-political structure (Willow, 2016). This case underscores the complexity of achieving genuine inclusion in conservation efforts.

The literature reflects growing support for reconciliation and decolonization within the Canadian conservation sector, influenced by broader societal and political commitments. ENGOs are increasingly incorporating Indigenous Nations and communities into their conservation work to improve social and environmental outcomes (Beazley & Olive, 2021; Stein et al., 2023). However, the effectiveness of these efforts varies, with many ENGOs falling short of achieving meaningful transformation. To address this, Stein et al. (2023) developed a framework for assessing ENGOs' efforts to transform traditional approaches and build positive relationships with Indigenous Peoples. They categorize these into four non-linear, non-exclusive stages: representation (selective, limited, superficial inclusion), recognition (limited, often symbolic engagement), redistribution (seeking and sharing resources to address uneven inequalities between parties; at times limited within the organizational mandate), or reparation (relational repair and material restitution). Most conservation campaigns tend to fall between recognition and redistribution, indicating a need for more transformative actions (Stein et al., 2023). This framework is applied in this thesis to evaluate the efforts of the ENGOs consulted.

In conclusion, top-down, exclusionary conservation models are rooted in colonialism and harm Indigenous Nations and communities. While there has been progress toward more inclusive conservation approaches globally, there is still a need for significant transformation to achieve long-term positive outcomes. Legal and policy changes, along with increased social recognition of Indigenous contributions, support this transition. Effective inclusionary conservation work requires acknowledging local cultural and social contexts and empowering communities in decision-making processes. There is need for continued efforts toward meaningful inclusion and decolonization in the Canadian conservation sector.

Exploration of Positive & Negative Interactions Between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and Communities

To further understand the complexities of conservation arrangements, it is crucial to examine both positive and negative collaborations between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities. This section explores examples that highlight the possibilities and limitations of these interactions.

One of the most notorious examples of a negative interaction is Greenpeace Canada's campaign against commercial seal hunting, which began in 1976 (“Greenpeace,” n.d.). This campaign aimed to end the commercial hunting of marine mammals, particularly targeting Canada's seal hunt (“Greenpeace,” n.d.). While it gained global popularity and resulted in legislative changes and market degradation for seal pelts, it had devastating impacts on Inuit communities. Seal hunting is vital to Inuit culture and sustenance, and the campaign's negative repercussions created mistrust between Indigenous communities and ENGOs (Burke, 2021; “Greenpeace,” n.d.; Peter et al., 2002; Rodgers & Ingram, 2019). Inuk sealskin activist Aaju Peter highlighted the severe consequences of the campaign, suggesting that Greenpeace should compensate each Inuit $1 million for the harm caused (Oudshoorn, 2016). He also “…liken[ed the campaign] to burning someone’s house willfully” (Oudshoorn, 2016, para. 4). This case underscores the profound harm that exclusionary conservation initiatives can inflict when designed without Indigenous input.

Asymmetrical power dynamics have been common in alliances between environmentalists and Indigenous communities, often resulting in the dissolution of relationships and perpetuating systemic hardships (Willow, 2012). Despite these challenges, some alliances have been reconfigured towards more positive outcomes, facilitated by social and political changes which center decolonialization (Bowie, 2013; Willow, 2012). Positive examples, while not universally beneficial, represent more equitable practices and outcomes, though potential harms still exist (Bowie, 2013; Willow, 2012).

One significant positive example is the establishment of the Great Bear Rainforest Land Use Order and *Great Bear Rainforest (Forest Management) Act* in 2016 ("Great Bear Rainforest," n.d.). This collaboration between ENGOs, Indigenous Nations and communities, the British Columbia Government, forest industry representatives, and other groups resulted in conserving 85% of the forest and 70% of old growth over time ("Great Bear Rainforest," n.d.). This case illustrates the potential for positive outcomes through inclusive, co-developed conservation efforts.

Sylvie Guénette and Jackie Alder (2006) provide insights from Marine Protected Areas and Integrated Ocean Management Initiatives in Canada. They emphasize the importance of using social capital, such as collective knowledge, leadership skills, and consensus building, to create engaged stakeholders and maintain project momentum (Guénette & Alder, 2006). They also note that increasing the number of issues or stakeholders involved in a project requires additional resources and presents challenges in gathering support and participation (Guénette & Alder, 2006). This highlights the need for ENGOs, and their collaborators, to have additional capacity to facilitate inclusive conservation work (Guénette & Alder, 2006).

Another example is the collaboration between the Ocean Wise Conservation Association and the Átl’ḵa7tsem/Txwnéwu7ts/Howe Sound community (Chapman et al., 2020). This partnership emphasizes the importance of sustainable socio-ecological relationships with the ocean, supporting both ecosystem health and community well-being (Chapman et al., 2020). Communities empowered to address ecological concerns often make efforts that benefit both the environment and their social and economic health, demonstrating the interconnected nature of natural, social, and economic systems (Chapman et al., 2020).

Brianna Scrimshaw Botchwey and Caitlin Cunningham (2021) examined protected areas establishment in Canada over a 59-year period, finding that these efforts occurred under governments of all parties and at various points in their mandates. This suggests that the establishment of protected areas is influenced by factors beyond colonial governments,

potentially indicating the influence of Indigenous political power (Botchwey & Cunningham, 2021). Supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation can mitigate the harmful impacts of exclusionary practices and amplify positive outcomes (Youdelis et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the historical and ongoing interactions between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities reveal both the potential and challenges of inclusive conservation efforts. Negative examples, such as Greenpeace's seal campaign, highlight the harms of exclusionary practices, while positive examples, like the Great Bear Rainforest collaboration, demonstrate the benefits of inclusive, co-developed approaches. Effective conservation requires recognizing and addressing asymmetrical power dynamics, providing additional capacity for inclusive efforts, and supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation initiatives. Building strong relationships and overcoming barriers through collaborative efforts are essential for achieving interconnected environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Insights from Indigenous Led Approaches to Conservation Work in Canada

While this research project primarily explores the experiences and recommendations of ENGOs in collaborating with Indigenous Nations and communities, it is crucial to also examine successful conservation strategies led by Indigenous Nations and communities. This broader perspective helps contextualize non-Indigenous ENGOs' practices and highlights key approaches in Indigenous-led conservation efforts, with a particular emphasis on IPCAs.

IPCAs are a notable approach used by Indigenous Nations and communities to achieve conservation goals. IPCAs are increasingly acknowledged by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors for their effective environmental stewardship and contribution to reconciliation ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018; Mansuy, 2023; Townsend & Roth, 2023). IPCAs are a progressive model for conservation which are created by Indigenous leadership and center traditional knowledge (Mansuy, 2023). For example, the James Bay Cree community in Wemindji, Quebec, successfully used an IPCA to protect their territory and support community needs (Mulrennan, Scott, & Scott, 2019). The Indigenous Circle of Experts (2018) advocates for supporting IPCAs and recommends that ENGOs provide necessary capacity-building assistance, as appropriate.

Despite increasing support from colonial society and governments, IPCAs face several challenges (Mansuy et al., 2023; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Degradation of Indigenous lands caused by resource extraction; disregard for Indigenous laws; limited financing opportunities; historical impacts on relationship-building; and jurisdictional conflicts between Indigenous and colonial actors are key challenges IPCAs may face (Mansuy et al., 2023; Townsend & Roth, 2023).

IPCAs may operate independently or through partnerships aimed at achieving shared goals (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Indigenous values and self-determination are central to the development and implementation of IPCAs (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). While IPCAs generate ecological, social, cultural, and political benefits, they may also face challenges related to limited management and governance capacities, in addition to the above (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Improving state conservation frameworks is essential to supporting IPCAs effectively (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020).

The Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation Territory IPCA exemplifies how insufficient support from state and non-Indigenous actors can overburden Indigenous communities (Tran et al., 2020). This situation highlights the need for supportive state conservation frameworks, equitable distribution of responsibilities, and meaningful capacity support for Indigenous leadership (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Building and maintaining effective relationships

between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors may be crucial for supporting successful IPCA creation and implementation (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020).

Some Indigenous Nations and communities have established their own ENGOs as a strategy to achieve conservation goals within the broader colonial conservation sector. According to Hardy & Peachey (2016), Indigenous-led organizations often succeed by leveraging community-driven efforts, committed leadership, capacity building efforts, integrated approaches, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Although the current research focuses on non-Indigenous-led ENGOs, it is important to recognize that Indigenous-led ENGOs also play an important role in the Canadian conservation landscape (Hardy & Peachey, 2016).

Indigenous Nations and communities may also take leadership roles within traditionally colonial conservation frameworks led by non-Indigenous actors. Examples include Land Claims Boards that integrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership for environmental regulation and wildlife management (White, 2020). Within another assessment of the efforts to protect the Great Bear Rainforest, Artelle et al. (2022) observed a tendency for non-Indigenous leaders to rely on Indigenous leaders for solutions, potentially resulting in them neglecting their own responsibilities. In this way, Indigenous leaders may find themselves reluctant to take on leadership roles within colonial frameworks. Addressing this requires a deeper understanding of how prevailing conservation management approaches can be practically decolonized (Artelle et al., 2022).

Understanding power dynamics within Indigenous-led conservation initiatives is essential for achieving positive outcomes and avoiding potential harms. Murray and King (2012) based on their work with the Tla-o-qui-aht Nation, describe how the First Nation effectively used various forms of social, political, and legal power to advance conservation efforts within their jurisdiction. This highlights the diverse ways in which Indigenous Nations and communities can exert influence to achieve conservation objectives (Murray & King, 2012).

In conclusion, IPCAs are an important Indigenous-led approach in the conservation sector, offering significant social and environmental benefits despite challenges related to colonial structures. Indigenous-led conservation efforts, including the establishment of their own ENGOs and leadership within traditional frameworks, provide valuable insights into the need for supportive, decolonial structures.

Primarily Non-Indigenous Insights on Collaboration within the Canadian Conservation Sector

This final section offers primarily non-Indigenous insights from literature focused on the Canadian conservation sector, toward effective collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities. The work of Cadman et al (2020) underscores the crucial role ENGOs play within the conservation sector by leveraging their ability to act flexibly, engage with various stakeholders, and adapt to evolving environmental challenges. Increasingly, non-Indigenous conservation actors recognize the importance of inter-jurisdictional and inter-organizational collaborations in project work to address complex environmental issues (Conteh, 2013; Kothari, Camill, & Brown, 2013; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2021). Effective collaboration, through all parts of project work, is seen as essential for achieving positive environmental outcomes (Alexander et al., 2019; Walker & Daniels, 2019). Access to practical resources and long-term organizational commitments are essential for facilitating meaningful collaboration and achieving these outcomes (Stephenson et al., 2014).

Collaboration offers the advantage of drawing on diverse forms of knowledge, which can enhance conservation efforts and support organizational goals (Conteh, 2013; Kothari, Camill, & Brown, 2013; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2021). This is particularly relevant for ENGOs working with Indigenous Nations and communities, as such partnerships provide access to place-specific knowledge that can enrich conservation strategies (Stephenson et al., 2014). However, non-Indigenous conservation leaders may have varying values and uses for different knowledge sources (Kadykalo et al., 2021; Lemieux et al., 2021). There is often a preference for internally produced knowledge over Indigenous knowledge, which may be underutilized despite its recognized value (Kadykalo et al., 2021; Lemieux et al., 2021). Kadykalo et al. (2021) suggest that barriers relating to trust and the perceived reliability of Indigenous knowledge can hinder its integration by non-Indigenous practitioners.

To bridge knowledge systems and facilitate collaboration, co-developed approaches are recommended (Alexander et al., 2019; Berkes et al., 2005). These approaches understand and integrate diverse knowledge bases for mutual benefit (Alexander et al., 2019; Berkes et al., 2005). Employing multiple evidence-based approaches can also offer a more comprehensive understanding of shared issues and contribute to effective outcomes (Tengö et al., 2014). The concept of Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space, as advocated by the Indigenous Circle of Experts (2018), supports this approach, highlighting its relevance in collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities.

There is a noted "knowledge-action gap," where the creation of knowledge does not always translate into its application (Cooke et al., 2020; Lemieux et al., 2018). Co-development of knowledge is also potential solution to this issue, as it ensures that knowledge is relevant and actionable within specific contexts (Cooke et al., 2020).

Many colonial conservation approaches still grapple with a development versus conservation paradigm, where goals are often seen as conflicting (Smith, 2015). This perspective contrasts with Indigenous approaches that emphasize Indigenous responsibility for land stewardship (Smith, 2015). Additionally, ENGOs may face a "size versus efficiency" dilemma, where they must choose between conserving larger areas with less community involvement or smaller areas with more effective community engagement (Aldashev & Vallino, 2019). This dilemma can create barriers to collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities, as the outcomes may not always be equitable (Aldashev & Vallino, 2019).

To overcome these challenges, non-Indigenous conservation actors, including ENGOs, need to re-evaluate traditional conservation approaches (Schoon et al., 2017; Smith, 2015). They must engage Indigenous Nations and communities as key decision-makers and foster meaningful collaboration to achieve positive social and environmental outcomes. Building trust, addressing barriers to knowledge integration, and committing to long-term, equitable collaboration are crucial steps for advancing effective conservation initiatives in Canada (Schoon et al., 2017; Smith, 2015).

In conclusion, collaboration is important to positive conservation outcomes. By integrating diverse knowledge systems, particularly Indigenous knowledge, conservation efforts can be significantly enhanced. However, challenges such as the knowledge-action gap and colonial conservation paradigms must be addressed to foster effective partnerships. Re-evaluating traditional approaches and committing to long-term, equitable collaboration is essential for achieving sustainable environmental outcomes. This review helps to set the stage for the current research project, which will continue to explore how these collaborative efforts can be optimized for mutual benefit.

Conclusion

I have used this literature review to examine some key considerations related to relationship building and collaboration between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities.

Complex environmental crises, national and international climate goals, and social and political pressures toward reconciliation and decolonialization have substantially impacted ENGOs and the broader Canadian conservation sector (Beazley & Olive, 2021; Dietz et al., 2021; Lemieux et al., 2018; Lemieux et al., 2019; MacKinnon et al., 2015; Zurba et al., 2019). ENGOs face challenges due to the fragmentation of environmental legislation in Canada's federalist system, capacity limitations, and the necessity to address social and political pressures toward effective action (Carroll & Ray, 2021; Wulder et al., 2018). Recognizing the interconnectedness of social and environmental systems is crucial for ENGOs to enhance project work and co-creation of initiatives with Indigenous Nations and communities can lead to increasingly positive social and environmental outcomes (Beazley & Olive, 202; Berkes et al., 2009).

Insights from the Australian conservation sector offer relevant parallels for Canada, particularly in the shift towards Indigenous inclusion in the conservation sector. Historical exclusion of Indigenous Nations and communities from conservation efforts in Australia, and the subsequent movement towards meaningful inclusion, underscores the necessity of recognizing Indigenous rights and incorporating novel approaches for knowledge collaboration (Ens et al., 2012; Moorcroft & Adams, 2014; Leiper et al., 2018; Moorcroft, 2015; Ross et al., 2012). The successful protection of at-risk species and increasing co-development in Australia highlight the importance of understanding effective partnership methods (Heiner et al., 2019; Pickerill, 2009). Similar approaches in Canada are needed to support inclusive conservation work which center collaboration.

ENGOs in Canada are often entangled within colonial structures, which influence their conservation approaches and outcomes (Choudry & Kapoor, 2015; Lee, 2011). Decolonizing approaches is essential to mitigate harm in collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities. For instance, protected area creation in Canada has frequently limited the access Indigenous Nations and communities have to their traditional territories, underscoring the need for transformative approaches to benefit all parties involved (Finegan, 2018). Reflective practices, centering truth and justice, and maintaining flexibility and independence from state governments are crucial approaches for ENGOs in their efforts toward equitable collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities (Finegan, 2018; Cadman et al., 2020).

The shift away from exclusionary, top-down approaches toward more inclusive conservation practices in Canada is evident, with increased social support and relevant political and legal evolutions underpinning this movement (Colchester, 2004; Dawson et al., 2021; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2021; Shultis & Heffner, 2015). Examples from the Canadian boreal forest illustrate how inclusive approaches can yield positive outcomes, although colonial forms of exclusion may still coexist (Willow, 2016). Stein et al. (2023) offered a key framework which will be applied in this thesis to further analyze the effectiveness of ENGOs efforts toward meaningful collaboration.

Indigenous-led approaches, such as IPCAs, represent a promising pathway forward for the conservation sector, offering significant social and environmental benefits despite colonial challenges ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018; Mansuy, 2023; Mulrennan, Scott, & Scott, 2019; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Addressing challenges related to extractive

activities, devaluation of Indigenous laws, and limited financing is critical, although effective relationship building can help mitigate these issues (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Indigenous Nations and communities may also influence the conservation sector through their own ENGOs or through leadership roles in primarily non-Indigenous ENGOs (Artelle et al., 2022; Hardy & Peachey, 2016; White, 2020). Committed, community-centered efforts are essential for both Indigenous-led and primarily non-Indigenous ENGOs (Artelle et al., 2022; Hardy & Peachey, 2016; Murray & King, 2012; White, 2020).

Non-Indigenous insights on collaboration emphasize the unique role of ENGOs in the conservation sector (Cadman et al., 2020). As ENGOs and other non-Indigenous actors reassess traditional conservation approaches, there is a growing understanding of the value of collaborative, inclusive methods involving Indigenous Nations and communities (Conteh, 2013; Kothari, Camill, & Brown, 2013; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2021; Walker & Daniels, 2019). Collaboration between different knowledge systems is critical, although may face challenges relating to trust (Kadykalo et al., 2021; Lemieux et al., 2021). Supported by organizational commitment and practical resources, co-development approaches are essential for effective collaboration (Kadykalo et al., 2021; Lemieux et al., 2021; Stephenson et al., 2014). Unfortunately, ENGOs face contradictions between community engagement and organizational deliverables, which can hinder collaboration (Aldashev & Vallino, 2019). Reevaluating and transforming traditional approaches is vital in creating positive social and environmental outcomes through collaboration (Schoon et al., 2017; Smith, 2015).

With the insights gathered throughout this literature review, it is now possible to introduce the methods I have used to facilitate my research on relationship building and collaboration between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities toward positive social and environmental outcomes for all.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

This chapter describes the methodology and methods used to support two related data gathering efforts; an initial ENGO pilot survey, followed by semi-structured interviews with ENGO representatives.

Methodology

While the objective of this research is to improve understanding of relations between Indigenous and ENGO collaborators, it is essential to acknowledge that it exclusively involved individuals from the ENGO sector. I deliberately focused on the ENGO sector, in recognition of the colonial legacy present in both the ENGO and academic realms. This emphasis underscores the mutual obligations of these sectors to engage in self-reflective practices and to commit to initiatives aimed at fostering meaningful participation in reconciliation efforts. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of some common challenges and opportunities encountered by the ENGO sector, with the hope that these insights will promote and support improved relations between Indigenous and ENGO collaborators.

This choice to focus on the ENGO sector was also informed by the limited scope of a master's thesis. In this regard, my decision was pragmatic, considering the time and resources required to respectfully engage Indigenous Nations and communities in a comparable inquiry. Furthermore, there was a recognition that capacity constraints, or internal priorities, might impede the active involvement of Indigenous Nations and communities in this research. Given

these limitations, especially exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, I made the decision to focus on ENGOs engaged in such partnerships. This approach avoided imposing additional burdens on Indigenous Nations and communities, while simultaneously encouraging ENGOs to take responsibility for enhancing relations towards reconciliation.

Since this was a one-sided inquiry, the data gathered solely reflects the perspectives of the ENGO representatives engaged in this project. The research was designed to incorporate qualitative and quantitative methods, although my research is primarily informed by qualitative research.

Methods

ENGO Pilot Survey

I conducted a pilot survey targeting representatives of national Canadian ENGOs who are partnered with the CRP. The process of developing survey questions supported the preparation of relevant interview questions for the subsequent semi-structured interviews.

Survey questions were drafted based on insights from the reviewed literature. Following the initial drafting, I shared the pilot survey questions with Allison Bishop and Robin Roth, of the CRP, and with Véronique Bussières, who is the Biocultural Conservation Director at Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Quebec ("Sociéte pour la Nature et les Parcs du Canada Section Québec") and a member of the Partners in Indigenous Conservation and Environmental Futures research group, for their input and editing suggestions. Ted Cheskey, of Nature Canada, also contributed valuable feedback to refine the survey questions.

The QualtricsXM platform was used to format the survey content and questions, gather data, and export a data report. In collaboration with Allison Bishop, I used a targeted approach to share the pilot survey with seven Canadian national ENGOs who are key partners with the CRP: Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, David Suzuki Foundation, World Wildlife Fund Canada, Nature United, and Ducks Unlimited Canada. The contacts identified for these key national ENGOs were able to coordinate responses within their respective organizations, supporting consistency in the gathered data. The invitation included contextual details and requested completion within an approximate timeframe of 6-weeks, by April 14, 2023 (Appendix B and Appendix C).

The pilot survey comprised three open-answer questions, ten multiple choice questions, and six ranking questions (enabling respondents to rank prepared responses). A copy of pilot survey content is available in Appendix A. Five ENGO representatives completed the pilot survey, out of the seven groups contacted. A report outlining pilot survey findings was created using QualtricsXM. Of the five pilot survey respondents, three expressed interests in being interviewed as well, to dive more deeply into the subjects covered. Of those three, one responded to an interview request and was interviewed.

Interviews

The qualitative aspect of this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with representatives of Canadian ENGOs. Drawing on insights gained through the pilot survey development and analysis, I crafted interview questions aimed at exploring central concepts and building a deeper understanding of common best practices, challenges, and benefits. Interview questions were organized around thematic areas, covering basic and contextual information, preparation for collaboration, characteristics of collaboration, challenges within collaboration,

opportunities and benefits, and recommendations for other organizations. A copy of the interview questions is available in Appendix E.

In the process of identifying interviewees, I began by requesting an interview with Véronique Bussières and sought her recommendations for additional interviewees. By leveraging recommendations from each, subsequent interviewee, I successfully secured more interviewees. Additionally, I reached out to various organizations through “cold-emails,” utilizing a template (Appendix F) for communication. To identify these organizations, I reviewed online sources which listed Canadian ENGOs and then reviewed each organization’s website to determine if their mandate would align with the intention of this research project. I primarily used a web-page from the Government of Canada titled “Non-governmental organizations” (2019) and another from GoodWork.ca titled “Environmental Organizations” (n.d.). Through these efforts, I conducted interviews with 24 ENGO representatives from a range of Canadian organizations, and 1 representative from an Indigenous educational non-profit organization focused on conservation in Canada. All interviewees have or had worked closely with Indigenous Nations and communities on conservation projects.

While it was not feasible to interview representatives from organizations in every province or territory, I ensured representation from each Canadian region, as defined by the Government of Canada. I have grouped the organizations based on region, below. Most respondents were working-level staff, although four interviewees held Director positions and another five held Executive Director positions. It is important to note that five of the respondents were representatives of CPAWS, although each represented a unique regional chapter, and its regional context. Based on these considerations, I am confident that the perspectives gathered through this research reflect those of many of the key ENGO representatives who have experience working with Indigenous Nations and communities in Canada.

Table 1 – ENGO Interview Respondents

Region	Location	Organization(s)
Atlantic Region	Newfoundland and Labrador	1. Social Justice Co-operative NL
	Prince Edward Island	
	Nova Scotia	
	New Brunswick	
Central Canada	Quebec	2. CPAWS Ottawa Valley 3. CPAWS Quebec
	Ontario	
Prairie Provinces	Manitoba	4. CPAWS Northern Alberta 5. Ducks Unlimited Canada
	Saskatchewan	
	Alberta	
West Coast	British Columbia	6. Átl’ḵa7tsem/Howe Sound Marine Stewardship Initiative 7. Clayoquot Action 8. CPAWS BC 9. Georgia Strait Alliance 10. Living Oceans Society 11. Ocean Wise

		12. REDD Fish 13. Sierra Club BC
North	Nunavut Northwest Territories Yukon Territory	14. CPAWS NWT
Across Canada	All	15. Canadian Wildlife Federation (*interviewed two representatives from this organization*) 16. David Suzuki Foundation 17. Nature Canada 18. Sierra Club Canada Foundation 19. The Council of Canadians 20. Wild Lands League 21. Wildlife Conservation Society Canada 22. IISAAK OLAM Foundation
Not Disclosed	N/A	23. Anonymous 24. Anonymous

Each interview began with an overview of my research project and an explanation of the interview question categories, emphasizing that respondents should only answer to their level of comfort. I sought permission to record each interview and obtained verbal consent before proceeding. All interviewees permitted recording, with two interviewees requesting to remain anonymous.

Interview recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai software. I then reviewed transcriptions and identified the key topics discussed within each interview and created a summary document with key topics for each interview. Using the summaries, I counted the frequency of key topics between all interview transcription to create the results explored below.

Additionally, I shared an early draft of the thesis with each interviewee for their review and confirmation of included quotes. I applied requests for deletions or edits, as appropriate. Respondents supported the version provided for their review and all quotes used were approved.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter examines the data collected from the pilot survey and semi-structured interviews with respondents. The limited data obtained from the pilot survey is summarized first, followed by contextual information drawn from the interview data. Drawing on the work of Stein et al. (2023), the interview data is examined by applying the categories of representation, recognition, redistribution, and reparation, as used in their analysis of efforts by ENGOs to engage in more inclusive conservation work. As described in Chapter 2, these four, non-linear, non-exclusive categories are:

1. Representation – selective, limited, superficial inclusion;
2. Recognition – limited, often symbolic engagement;
3. Redistribution – seeking and sharing resources to address uneven inequalities between parties, at times limited within the organizational mandate; and
4. Reparation – relational repair and material restitution (Stein et al., 2023).

By applying these categories, I evaluate how transformative the actions described by interview respondents are in fostering positive relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities. The data gathered, along with interviewee quotes, is explored to provide a deeper understanding of the topics, followed by summary tables. The majority of interview data is presented in tables, organized into the categories developed by Stein et al. (2023), arranged from the most to least frequent responses from the ENGO representatives, and sub-divided into "opportunities" and "barriers." Each table includes groupings of high (20-25), middle (10-19), and low (2-9) frequency responses. Although some topics have low response values, they are included because they reflect the diversity of viewpoints.

Key recommendations for trust and relationship building are also summarized in table form, organized by the categories developed by Stein et al. (2023), near the end of the chapter.

Stein et al. (2023) explain that organizations, or individuals within them, may engage in activities spanning any of their framework's categories, and may simultaneously apply actions which fall into multiple categories. They emphasized the importance of context in influencing the chosen approaches. The application of these categories is intended to support an understanding of broad trends in the data. It is important to note that the data gathered can be interpreted in various ways depending on the audience and perspective. I have used my understanding of Stein et al. (2023) to categorize interviewee responses but acknowledge that the categorization of some actions is open to interpretation.

In applying the categories developed by Stein et al. (2023), I have aimed to distinguish between approaches that may represent initial efforts by ENGOs to build relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities, and those that support deeper, more effective relationship outcomes. This categorization allows for a comparison of my findings with theirs in Chapter 5, facilitating an assessment of broad trends in how the represented ENGOs are engaging in collaborative conservation work with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Pilot Survey Data

Among the five organizations that responded to the pilot survey, all had between 45 and 395 full-time employees, with two organizations also employing fewer than 5 part-time employees. Four out of the five organizations collected data on whether their staff identified as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or another Indigenous identity. Among those that gathered this data, all reported having 1-6 full-time employees who identified as Indigenous.

All pilot survey respondents indicated that they had formally adopted reconciliation, as defined by the Government of Canada, as a goal or principle within their organization's mandate or mission statement, and explicitly stated this on their website or promotional materials. It is important to note that reconciliation can be understood differently by different groups. The Government of Canada's understanding of reconciliation likely to be more limited than that of some Indigenous groups.

Three pilot survey respondents indicated that very few of their organization's current projects involve collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities, while two noted that most of their organization's projects do entail such collaborations. This misalignment between stated commitments to reconciliation and practical collaboration with Indigenous Nations and

communities suggests the presence of barriers in these ENGOs efforts toward reconciliation. It could also imply that organizations are taking time to carefully develop meaningful relationships, reflecting the time involved in building trust and capacity. Respondents described their organization's projects involving Indigenous Nations and communities as fitting into the following categories (ordered from most to least common): nature conservation, IPCAs, climate change, marine conservation, and endangered species.

Three pilot survey respondents reported initiating active collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities before the release of the TRC's Final Report in 2015, while two began their collaborations after. A minority of respondents noted that since 2015 their collaborations have increased in frequency or involved more Indigenous collaborators. Some highlighted that Indigenous partners have gained political or legal power, influencing project work since 2015. Similarly, a minority of respondents mentioned that their organization's capacity has grown since 2015.

One respondent expressed uncertainty about attributing these shifts directly to the release of the TRC Final Report in 2015. However, all respondents affirmed that the report positively influenced their organization's engagement in collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Pilot survey responses offered some insights into the challenges encountered by respondents at all stages of collaborative projects with Indigenous Nations and communities. During the project proposal and design phase, respondents identified the following key challenges (ordered from the most to least common): limited organizational capacity, funding constraints, ineffective co-development of project design, insufficient time, and uncertainty about identifying appropriate partner(s).

In the later stages of project implementation and management, the main challenges identified were (ordered from most to least common): insufficient time, related political or structural changes, capacity limitations, lack of appropriate or consistent funding, and issues with advertising and/or communicating the project(s) to the public.

When seeking to obtain appropriate project funding, respondents identified several barriers, including the highly competitive nature of funding opportunities, a lack of available or appropriate funding opportunities, administrative requirements, and timelines associated with funding opportunities.

Respondents also described key challenges in managing secured project funding, which included (ordered from most to least common): reporting requirements (e.g., demonstrating "deliverables"), capacity challenges relating to ongoing administrative requirements for maintenance of funding package(s), effective allocation of payment to collaborators (e.g., relating to honoraria or other payment to collaborators, etc.), and issues relating to negotiating collaboration agreements.

Pilot survey responses provided some limited insights into benefits experienced by respondents from project collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities. Identified benefits include (from most to least common): enhanced relationships, collaborations, networks, followed by the addition of diverse perspectives and knowledge. Other benefits noted were increased understanding of project contexts, improved project effectiveness; access to additional funding and resources (e.g., office space, administrative tools, technology, etc.); increased stability in project implementation and management, and increased access to political or legal influence access to additional project resources. Respondents also highlighted enhanced capacity within project implementation and monitoring.

Additionally, respondents detailed organizational practices aimed at advancing reconciliation and fostering good relations with Indigenous Nations and communities. These practices (ordered from the most to least frequently applied), include support for Indigenous land governance; territorial acknowledgments; review of relevant external resources (e.g., the TRC's 2015 Final Report, the Indigenous Circle of Experts We Rise Together report, etc.); relationship building practices between parties; attendance of internal or external training(s) on Indigenous history, culture, rights, or similar; participation in relevant community events; involvement in ceremony; guidance from Indigenous Elders; running intentionally equitable hiring campaigns; land rematriation (e.g., return of land); and material divestment.

The interview data presented below expands on these insights to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and benefits ENGOs encounter in their collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities.

All pilot survey respondents expressed intentions for their organizations to continue collaborating with Indigenous Nations and communities on similar initiatives in the future. When asked for advice for other ENGOs interested in or currently engaged in such collaboration, respondents emphasized several key points. One respondent stressed the importance of securing leadership support for this work, ensuring that it is integrated into strategic plans, work plans, and budgets. Another highlighted the importance of listening, learning, and earning trust over time through sustained community engagement. A third respondent underscored the significant capacity required to maintain these relationships effectively. Finally, a fourth respondent emphasized the value of organizational humility in these collaborations.

Interview Data – Contextual Information

The 25 interview respondents had a wide diversity of experiences in collaborating with Indigenous Nations and communities. These varied from formally defined co-development arrangements to more informal engagements. All respondents acknowledged each collaboration as unique and shaped by the collaborators. ENGOs assume different roles depending on the specific arrangement.

Interviewees highlighted the significance of regional-political contexts. Local, provincial, territorial, and federal governments influence the political dynamics of collaborations. Ted Cheskey, the Naturalist Director for Nature Canada, described provincial particularities in the context of IPCAs, stating how provinces may be…

> "…an obstacle to progressing in protecting, identifying protected areas, doing things like land withdrawals, because provinces control the resources. And resource extraction, they don't want to give up, they may not want to cede that right to another entity, like an Indigenous government. Provinces [can be] pretty protective around it. So, that's an obstacle for sure."

The political context within an Indigenous Nation or community, or other considerations in and around the project area, were described as significantly influencing the available approaches to, and outcomes of, project work. An organization must work to understand relevant contexts to support relationship building with Indigenous Nations and communities and related project work.

All interview respondents observed that staff within their organization exhibit a range of experiences in relationship building work, with some needing to build relational skills from scratch. Most respondents believed that relationship building with Indigenous Nations and

communities is a learn-by-doing, learn-as-you-go, process. Kilian Stehfest, a Marine Conservation Biologist at the David Suzuki Foundation, described the process of relationship building as follows:

> "I think it was probably learn as you go, like quite a while back, and now there's quite a lot of expertise and experience. And I think a lot of it really has been going to communities and building relationships. I think that's such an important part of [learning/relationship building]. And there's a few staff that have really put in the groundwork for that."

Learning-by-doing resonates as a central process to these respondents' experiences. The process of learning as you participate in relationship building activities is relevant to all categories defined by Stein et al. (2023). Descriptions of this process may imply that ENGOs are improving in their efforts to meaningfully collaborate with Indigenous Nations and communities, although they often have a short history of such collaboration. These efforts should be undertaken carefully to support transformative conservation work. ENGOs should actively learn from Indigenous Nations and communities to foster positive collaborations now and in the future.

All interviewees agreed that there is no one path in this work and that each ENGO must find how they may add value in a collaboration. This insight is relevant to all categories of the Stein et al. (2023) framework, underscoring the need for flexibility of approaches used. However, it is important to note that this does align well with the Stein et al. (2023) description of how an organization may apply various approaches, spanning categories. Kate MacMillan, Ocean Conservation Manager at CPAWS British Columbia, described this flexibility by saying:

> "…there is no direct path, or similarities, in the steps everyone has to take because we all have our own histories, where we come from, our families, and abilities to access spaces. So, I think maybe that is my advice: just keep going and ask that question 'what's next?' I think we always have to keep asking that. I have to keep asking that – reflecting on what's happened, and what's next."

Organized within the categories developed by Stein et al., further exploration of some practices used by ENGOs will be offered below, in an effort to understand common challenges and opportunities of interviewees.

Interview Data – Representation Category

Interview responses indicated a growing engagement of ENGOs with Indigenous Nations and communities. While this trend appears positive, the comments do not assess the practical application and quality of this increased involvement. At its most basic level, this shift often falls under the representation category, potentially amounting to selective and performative inclusion aimed at enhancing the ENGOs' public image. It is crucial that ENGOs move beyond this initial step of representation towards more meaningful, inclusive collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Funding streams that require Indigenous involvement are an important driver influencing ENGO's efforts to collaborate. These efforts also align with the representation category. Such involvement may be motivated primarily by the pursuit of additional funding, as opposed to genuine relationship building. Nonetheless, securing adequate funding is essential for ENGOs to

operate effectively, regardless of their intentions to engage meaningfully with Indigenous Nations or communities.

Collaboration among ENGOs can support their enhanced understanding of key issues and prepare them to initiate or advance relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities. While this practice aligns with the representation category as a preparatory step, it does not necessarily lead to more effective, relational engagement. Only four respondents mentioned engaging in such inter-organizational collaborations to support their relationship building efforts with Indigenous Nations and communities. Strengthening these collaborative networks among ENGOs could potentially support more effective and sustainable collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Respondents noted an increase in available training options, webinars, papers, reports, and other resources related to Indigenous issues, emphasizing the importance of inter-organizational communication in supporting learning. While training initiatives are crucial for building foundational knowledge, they primarily represent initial efforts by organizations to understand relevant issues. Effective inter-organizational communication, however, shows promise in facilitating deeper discussions among staff about core concepts, although it still represents a relatively early stage in collaboration efforts.

Aligning well with the early efforts described within the representation category, some respondents shared how individual and organizational fear of causing harm, especially considering past and ongoing colonial injustices, can create decision or action hesitancy, or paralysis, for ENGO staff. For example, an ENGO practitioner may be afraid of saying the wrong thing and causing harm when reaching out to build a connection with an Indigenous Nation or community, delaying their efforts to connect. Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director of the Georgia Strait Alliance, described this phenomenon as follows:

> "…there has been so much harm done to Indigenous communities that I think the other barrier is that there's mistrust of settler organizations, because some of them have done some really horrible things and continue to do really horrible things. Completely rejecting Indigenous rights and title and not understanding history. And so, you can get lumped together with other organizations or even things that happened 40 or 50 years ago. And that's a barrier because you can't really do anything about it other than move forward and try to rebuild and have them get to know you. And then, I think, it's just our fear of causing harm. It's an impediment, because we're so afraid, we just don't know. Relationships just kind of happen. They kind of build. But we just don't know how to do that with Indigenous communities. So that's a challenge. …you just get paralyzed? It's a fear of failure, a fear of causing harm."

This type of fear was identified as particularly affecting junior practitioners, creating a significant barrier to entry in relational work. It was also mentioned how existential questions, relating to the impacts of colonialism, may lead to hesitancy. ENGOs' work involves a high level of emotional and mental labour. Those whose work aligns primarily with the representation category may not consider existential questions. However, this lack of critical consideration for broader "existential," topics can hinder ENGOs from developing more meaningful collaborations based on honest recognition of colonial realities. The described hesitancy partly reflects an awareness of colonial harms. To move forward, internal supports must be developed to help ENGO employees overcoming uncertainty.

ENGOs find it challenging to recruit staff who have experience working with Indigenous Nations and communities, as well as the necessary project related qualifications. This aligns clearly with the representation category, wherein ENGOs may not have any previous experience working with Indigenous Nations or communities. Notably, finding a person with community experience was commonly described as "very challenging". Community experience is fundamentally place-based, limiting eligible candidates. This consideration is challenging for ENGOs to navigate and requires long-term solutions, especially within the academic sector. Generally, the certification of environmental professionals is outside of the ENGO sector's control. As individuals in an area develop their skills through relevant educational or practical experience it may increase the number of eligible hires who have experience working in community, although this will take further time and resources.

Within hiring processes, well-suited Indigenous candidates often have limited capacity or interest in the ENGO sector due to competing priorities or opportunities. Gillian Chow-Fraser, the Boreal Program Manager at CPAWS Northern Alberta, in exploring challenges to hiring in the ENGO context, described how her organization makes…

> "…an effort, when it's positions that work with First Nations, to be advertising in the community and in the reserves… And, then there's just sometimes a lack of availability there. And it's that they already have jobs, or they already are working in another position. And so, the ideal situation is when we're hiring Indigenous people for a lot of this work, but I think that's something that's still going to take time."

Despite the challenges, respondents described how their organizations are working to hire Indigenous employees. Subcontracting elements of project work to Indigenous Nation or community members was also described as contributing to capacity sharing between collaborators. These efforts fit well into the representation category as they are limited to bringing Indigenous Peoples within the ENGOs mandate.

ENGOs experience issues in accessing appropriate funding. This is a clear barrier to creating more meaningful collaborations, as it reduces organizational capacity and limits the ability to share resources with Indigenous Nations and communities. Notably, the political nature of funding allocation was highlighted – one respondent explained how funding is often designated for specific issues but doesn't always cover the necessary salary costs to facilitate the work. Alternatively, when funding is allocated to hiring, respondents described how it often includes specific hiring requirements, such as the hiring of students, which may lead to relatively unqualified or short-term appointments. The remedy to this is clear: increased funding for project work must be flexible and include provisions for the necessary salary costs.

In addition, relatively low salaries are a significant challenge, along with competition, in ENGO hiring. An organization may struggle to find and retain the necessary staff to participate in these long-term relationship building activities due to these challenges. As hiring can be seen as preparatory work, these challenges align most clearly with the initial efforts described by the representation category and do not speak directly to the quality of relationships being developed by those individuals hired by an ENGO.

As relationships are created and maintained by individuals, staff turnover can create another significant challenge for ENGO collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities. When a staff member leaves an ENGO, the relationships they hold may be lost. Efforts to support consistent tracking and maintenance of relationships may be a solution. For

example, an ENGO could work to maintain a list of each staff member and the relationships they have with Indigenous Nations or communities to support consistency within transition.

Table 2 – Interview Data – Representation Category

Category Name & Description	Response Description
Representation – Selective, limited, or superficial inclusion.	High (20-25)
	Opportunities:
	General trend of increased ENGO collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities resulting in shifts in discourses on conservation, governance, organizational identity, and similar topics.
	High level of interest among ENGOs in collaborative projects with Indigenous partners and strong recognition of benefits these collaborations bring.
	Organizations offer training and resources to support learning, while believing there is no substitute for experience.
	Barriers: N/A
	Middle (10-19)
	Opportunities: N/A
	Barriers:
	ENGOs' scope is a significant factor influencing chosen approaches to collaboration.
	Low (2-9)
	Opportunities:
	Hire an Indigenous advisor or consultant.
	Subcontract work to Indigenous Nation or community members.
	Prior working experience in, and connections to, community, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous is valuable.
	Collaborations between ENGOs can support organizations in building relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities.
	Funding requirements, access to additional funding streams, or additional requirements for Indigenous involvement in existing funding streams increase ENGO involvement with Indigenous Nations and communities.
	Indigenous ENGO employees are beneficial to organizational relationship building.
	Political movements, such as Idle No More or Black Lives Matter, are key events prompting increased or initial involvement of ENGOs with Indigenous collaborators.
	Social media is an increasingly important tool within the creation and development of relationships.
	Barriers:
	Within hiring, there is a limited pool of Indigenous candidates with the appropriate qualifications, interest, or availability.

	Structural elements of the ENGO sector (e.g., funding, etc.) result in a high turnover for existing staff.
	Within hiring, there is a lack of candidates who have experience working with Indigenous Nations and communities and the necessary project related qualifications.
	Individual and organizational fear of causing harm can create decision/action hesitancy/paralysis in ENGO staff.
	Projects are shaped by site-specific realities, such as location and geography. Practical challenges stemming from geographic realities may distance an ENGO from the project site, or Indigenous collaborators.
	There is competition between ENGOs for funding, especially for opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous Nations and communities (and related funding streams).
	Indigenous Nations and communities may be hesitant to work with ENGOs, due to past or ongoing negative experiences.

Interview Data – Recognition Category

An increased understanding of colonial impacts, as described within the table below, aligns with the recognition category, although the depth of this awareness may be limited. Within those interviews that revealed an increased awareness of colonial harms, there were descriptions of ENGOs moving towards the "real questions" and reflecting on their organizations' position within the conservation sector. Reflective practices, along with relevant training, imply a growing understanding of colonial harms which aligns well with the recognition category. Descriptions of reflective processes are promising but it is important to note that a limited number of respondents described them. This type of deep reflection is necessary to move beyond superficial action towards meaningful decolonization and should be encouraged and supported within ENGOs.

Existing connections or similarities are useful in supporting further collaborations between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities. This consideration could fit within any of the categories suggested by Stein et al. (2023) but I have placed it here as it implies the development of broader relationship networks. However, it does not address the health of these networks, which is discussed within the recognition category.

Importantly, interviewees emphasized that ENGOs must not assume that Indigenous Nations and communities want to work with them. ENGOs must reflect on their organizational leadership and associated funding options, to determine if their organization is prepared to deviate from the status quo. To move beyond the recognition category, resources for this type of work must be directly allocated to Indigenous collaborators. It was also described how organizations must work to understand how white guilt may influence their desire to pursue these types of collaborations. Collaborations must not be performative and must be meaningfully supported through practical resources.

Several interviewees mentioned that organizations should reflect on why they want to do this type of work. An ENGO should engage in reflective processes to strengthen their approaches and move beyond the relatively superficial awareness and engagement efforts of the recognition category. Anna Baggio, Conservation Director of Wildlands League, elaborated upon this point, saying:

> “Not every ENGO leadership is suited to do work with Indigenous Peoples. And so, if you find yourself working with an ENGO, and you want to do this work, but you’re not getting the support of your upper people, whether it’s your presidents or your executive director or your vice president, you might need to evaluate whether or not to go ahead with that. Because I think sometimes the biggest thing that people forget is that, yes, you want to work with Indigenous People, and, yes, you have this desire, and especially [white people], we’re often motivated by ‘white guilt.’ So, we need to understand how our white guilt is motivating us and pushing us, but you kind of need to do the work and ask yourself the question ‘is this a relationship I should be getting into?’ Like, should I do the work to have a relationship here? But also, be aware that you may do that evaluation, all that assessment, and then you might just have to walk away and say ‘no.’”

Building trust is important and challenging. There isn’t implicit trust between the ENGO sector and Indigenous Nations and communities. Interviewee respondents were aware of this, which implies an understanding of colonial harms, a central understanding within the recognition category. Chelsea Martin, Head of Indigenous Relations from Ducks Unlimited Canada, articulated the centrality of trust, saying:

> “…there’s pockets of success within [Ducks Unlimited], that working with Indigenous People is mutually beneficial, reciprocal, all of those buzzwords that you want to throw out there, but I think what it really boils down to, is like, are those relationships trusting? And are they fulfilling the community’s needs? Or the Nation’s needs? Or the Indigenous organization’s needs?”

Another respondent described how relationships are built “at the speed of trust.” Having a shared purpose was highlighted as a valuable tool in building trust. Broadly, asking potential partners what they need, listening, and acting upon what is learned was highlighted by all respondents as fundamental to trust building. Related to this, the importance of learning to listen more than talk was highlighted by several respondents. One noted that humans are born with two ears and one mouth for a good reason. Although building trust is central to healthy relationships, it is a foundational practice which aligns well with the recognition category. It implies that organizations are starting from a position of no trust and working to build it.

The importance of being visible within relationship building efforts was heavily emphasized. Similarly, the value of making efforts to understand who you are working with (e.g., their territory, culture, history, values, etc.) was highlighted. These recommendations facilitate trust-building opportunities.

Challenges shared relating to navigating different cultural understandings implied the existence of relationships, aligning more closely with the fledgling connections described within the recognition category. Describing the process of navigating these challenges within relationship development, Cheryl Chetkiewicz, a Conservation Scientist with Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, shared how…

> “…you have to start from scratch, in terms of what does building a relationship look like. And that revolves around [the Indigenous group’s] ability to, first of all,

> whether they want the relationship, and second, how much time and effort and resources they have to actually put into the relationship, as well. It's not rocket science, it's very straight forward about creating trust. I don't think there's a handbook out there with checklists that you can go fill out, you just have to do the work, which requires you to be there, which requires money, which requires your time, and which requires you to prioritize it. It can't be something that you do on the side of your desk. It's too important to do just because there's some funding this year. It's a cross cultural difference that you need to be aware of and really sensitive to. []Spend more time listening than talking."

Past and ongoing colonial injustices create uneven power dynamics between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities. This was identified by all respondents as a barrier to the development of relationships. Internal policies or best-practices to support further development of these understandings would benefit ENGO staff.

Collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities were recognized as "the right thing to do". Additionally, these collaborations were identified as reminding all parties of their responsibility to steward lands and waters. This type of awareness demonstrates an understanding of colonial harms, consistent with the recognition category. However, the contribution of this may be limited if this awareness is not put towards redistribution of resources, or other practical solutions. It was also explained that Indigenous Nations and communities have unique, deep connections to their lands and waters which allow them to provide invaluable insights within conservation work. Nick Lapoint, Senior Conservation Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, shared his perspective from an experience working with an Indigenous community on a project related to a common species that was once vital to their culture and sustenance. He described how…

> "…seeing their passion for it and seeing some of the statements that they've made in joint letters that they built on, you know, they're asking for the same solutions that we're asking for, but they're giving a whole other context to it that is way more powerful than anything I'm saying, and being able to learn from that and be motivated by it is one example [of how collaboration with an Indigenous group has enriched shared work]."

Again, this type of awareness needs to be translated into practical, decolonial, action, which responds to project-specific realities, if it is to create positive outcomes within relationship building with Indigenous Nations and communities.

These relationships were identified as creating an enhanced understanding of the issues, solutions, and benefits from this work. The experience gained from being in community was described as particularly valuable in demystifying "the work" and making results more personally meaningful and fulfilling. Notably, collaborations were also valued for their ability to bring all parties onto the land, an opportunity that was highly valued by respondents. Meaningful engagement with Indigenous Nations and communities, which may include ENGO representatives' engagement with traditional territories, aligns well with the goal of developing understanding of colonial harms as described by the recognition category.

A variety of personal benefits stemming from these relationships were also described, including the development of emotional, spiritual, and cultural understandings. Increased empathy and sensitivity to other ways of being was also mentioned. To support benefits for all

involved, it is crucial that ENGO representatives use this growth to develop approaches which support their ENGOs in moving beyond actions defined within the recognition category.

Collaborations were identified by all as allowing ENGOs to improve the quality of work being done in their sector. Although this is positive, it's important to note that this is from the ENGO representatives' perspectives and does not speak to the perspectives and experience of their Indigenous collaborators. This perceived improvement aligns well with the recognition category, as ENGOs begin to improve the overall quality of their work in recognition of their responsibility to local Indigenous Nations or communities. In addition, collaborations were identified as helping to address the limitations of Western science and conservation approaches.

Conor Curtis, Head of Communications at the Sierra Club Foundation, reflected on his experiences in working with Indigenous Nations and communities and shared how he had "learned so much, and it has enriched so much of [his] understanding of environmental issues over the years." Although these learning opportunities could be understood as aligning with the redistribution category, they are focused on ENGOs' learning and don't necessarily imply benefit for the Indigenous Nation or community involved. To move toward the category of redistribution, ENGOs need to prioritize providing capacity supports in exchange for the learning opportunities described, while centering other reciprocal approaches.

ENGO involvement with IPCAs, which are fundamentally led by Indigenous Nations or communities, implies that some organizations have been able to begin supporting Indigenous priorities. This fits well with the recognition category, as ENGO involvement in this context is still fundamentally within their organization's mandate. However, in a best-case scenario, it could also be aligned with the redistribution category.

Some respondents described how IPCAs may not be recognized or supported by colonial governments, and their frameworks of power. This is a key structural limitation which may impact efforts to move toward approaches that are more closely aligned with the reparation category. One respondent from a national/international ENGO, who wished to remain anonymous, described how…

> "…there's no Canadian legislation that identifies Indigenous Protected Areas. So, the route they have taken is to use existing legislation," continuing that "…whether that needs to be addressed is an important question. But, what's more important, is the question of co-governance, and/or co-management. The federal government, I think, by law isn't allowed to give up the co-governance side of things, [because] this is the way our laws are written – the legal structure." The respondent concluded by saying: "[the federal government] can't delegate the legal responsibility to another entity. However, management is a different story, so a really interesting one."

This quote describes how the political context, and related administrative realities determined by Crown governments, can create limitations for IPCA establishment. A lack of supporting legislation may be a particular barrier to the recognition and respect of IPCAs by Crown governments. It is important to note here that the political shifts needed to create this transformation are largely outside of the ENGO sector's control. However, ENGOs should, and already do, important lobby work to pressure decision-makers, within and outside of their organizations, to make necessary changes to support this.

ENGOs need to reflect on their operational mandates and priorities to understand how they may align or misalign with the goals set out by Indigenous Nations and communities,

particularly with respect to IPCA creation. There is a need to transform political and organizational mandates and policies to support more meaningful collaboration. These transformations require a decentering of the state's terms and priorities.

The importance of co-developing agendas was described but this does not imply that all parts of project work are co-developed. Respondents also identified that organizational mandates can create limitations to co-development. Efforts must be made to shift these organizational barriers and prioritize co-development and co-implementation of all aspects of project work, in support of more transformative change within the ENGO sector.

The importance of regularly checking in with partners and practicing adaptability are constructive suggestions but were only provided by a limited number of respondents. Although described as important, it is difficult to know how effectively these practices have been applied. They are likely to be particularly useful within the context of meaningful co-development and co-implementation and should be prioritized.

Being able to effectively solicit and receive feedback between parties was also identified as a marker of relational success, along with a sense of trust, respect, and connection between collaborators. The development of effective project plans, the appointment and retention of staff and funding, efficient use of steering committees, and effective and direct communication between parties were also described as signifying a healthy and effective working relationship. An increase in internal conversations sparked by their partnerships with Indigenous Nations or communities was also identified as a marker of progress within organizational understandings. ENGOs must work to build on relational achievements like these, prioritizing more material redistribution to Indigenous Nations and communities, if their work is to meaningfully move beyond the approaches described in the recognition category.

Finally, the importance of regular communication, often in the form of (if possible, in-person) meetings, was highlighted by all respondents. Although not uniquely relevant to this category, I have noted it here in acknowledgement of the value of healthy, equitable communication processes to any approach aligned with the recognition category. Kris Brekke, Executive Director of CPAWS Northwest Territories, offered the following reflection on the importance of practicing flexibility in communication:

> "Respecting timelines [is important] – like last summer, we had one meeting, project meeting, scheduled while the Pope was in Canada and I was like 'okay, well, the Pope isn't coming to the territories,' but I didn't realize at the time, you know, it was also… we're talking about residential schools and everything else and the Pope being in Canada was an emotional time. You wanted the meeting, right? Well, that's great, so you've got to move the meeting. When an Elder passes away, and then there's a suicide, and then there's good things that happen… there's some 100th anniversary, and these are the things that make those communities go forward. And those are the things that one has to really roll with, right, and that's – those are big parts of getting the work done."

Table 3 – Interview Data – Recognition Category

Category Name & Description	Response Description
	High (20-25)

Recognition – Limited, often symbolic engagement.	Opportunities:
	Organizations are working to increase cultural aptitude, while acknowledging the need for continued progress.
	Relationships create significant opportunities for cultural exchange and shared learning.
	Doing conservation work in collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities creates significant benefits.
	Working relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities remind all parties of their responsibility to steward lands and waters.
	These collaborations allow ENGOs to raise the quality of work being done in their sector.
	Regular communication, often in the form of (if possible, in-person) meetings, is central to relationship building.
	Barriers:
	There is a high level of inter-personal commitment involved in relationship building. Non-Indigenous people need to familiarize themselves with relevant social, political, cultural, geographic, organizational, and economic realities, including the priorities of any community, to be ready to be a good partner.
	Differing cultural understandings impact relationships (e.g., expectations around time).
	Middle (10-19)
	Opportunities:
	Building trust is the central process within relationships. This process takes time, flexibility, and honesty.
	Shared goals are vital in forming collaborative arrangements. The conservation sector is often advantaged in this way.
	Assessing ENGO goals to determine if they align with Indigenous Nations and communities' goals is important.
	Ceremony, protocols, medicines, and histories must be respected.
	Humility, humour, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural awareness are helpful traits within relational work.
	Relationships deepen individual and collective connections to conservation work by building appreciation, understanding, and respect.
	Do not impose a community conservation plan. Seek co-development of project planning.
	ENGO involvement in IPCAs is initiated by Indigenous Nations and communities pursuing such projects and the necessary supports.
	Barriers:
	COVID-19 impacted Indigenous Nations and communities, mobility, and communication.
	Low (2-9)
	Opportunities:
	Collaborations often grow out of existing relationships or familiarities with individuals connected to Indigenous Nations and communities.

	"Listening to understand" is crucial. ENGO representatives should spend most of their time listening.
	It is important to check in and solicit feedback from collaborators.
	Self-reflection, during all parts of relationship building, is necessary.
	Indigenous Nations and communities, as the first peoples of the lands and waters, are the long-time stewards of it. It is only right to build conservation projects in collaboration with them.
	Adaptability, in all aspects of collaboration, is important.
	ENGOs should reflect on their organization, and its leadership and capacity, to determine if they are well suited to work with Indigenous Nations and communities.
	Spending time with potential partners, especially outside of the project's context or in the community (e.g., at community events), is very important in building trust.
	Practitioners should get comfortable with being uncomfortable, making mistakes, or failing, and being proactive with learning.
	Collaborators should work to co-create project agendas which serve all partners' goals.
	The role of Indigenous Nations and communities in determining what's protected, as well as objectives related to management, is more important than adherence to the label "IPCA" and its specifications.
	Transparency, particularly as it relates to data collection, is important.
	The increasing awareness of Indigenous rights is leading the ENGO sector to more complex reflections on the distribution of power in society and broader considerations of organizational identity.
	ENGOs are undergoing, or have undergone, philosophical changes, generally moving away from colonial perspectives.
	ENGOs may be supported or led by forward thinking managers or directors.
	ENGOs should reflect on their organization (e.g., goals, capacity, and so on) and their position within the partnership to determine how they may add value to a collaboration.
	It is important to provide food/drink to Indigenous partners when meeting.
	ENGOs should bear witness and elevate Indigenous efforts, while advocating for community needs to colonial governments.
	Relationships produce increased certainty within project planning, implementation, and monitoring.
	Indigenous Nations and communities may add significant political power to a project, especially when the work is linked to their constitutional rights.
	When determining who to reach out to, it is helpful to use websites for gathering basic information about a potential Indigenous collaborator.
	Barriers:
	ENGOs are institutions with colonial legacies. This can create barriers in building collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities.
	Indigenous Nations and communities often have a wide variety of needs and responsibilities to address, which may limit their capacity within a singular project or result in that project falling lower on their list of priorities.

	Frameworks laid out by provincial, territorial, or federal governments determine if there is a defined pathway to a given type of project. These frameworks influence progress.
	The application of IPCAs is complicated. The Canadian federal government still has the final say in protected lands, which undermines the designation.
	The term "IPCA" can be confusing. Work of a similar nature has been conducted without that label for as long as Indigenous Nations and communities have been stewards of the land.
	It can be hard to know who to talk to, who the decision makers are, and what to do if priorities are not aligned within each Indigenous Nation or community.
	There is a need for ENGOs to unlearn colonial approaches to conservation and improve their impacts on the environment, cultural awareness, and connections to Indigenous Nations and communities.
	Relationship building is a skill that comes naturally to some, but not others.
	ENGOs may realize they have no role to play within a given project. For example, as IPCAs increasingly involve nation-to-nation collaborations, ENGOs may not have a role to play.
	The nation-to-nation conversations taking place within certain project contexts, such as IPCAs, raises the question of where ENGOs may fit in within these approaches.
	The frequency of communication shifts with the seasons, often due to seasonal cultural practices.
	Differences in interests or goals between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities may lead to complex, politically charged, project-related situations.

Interview Data – Redistribution Category

As mentioned above, ENGOs need to commit significant resources (e.g., money, time, training, etc.) to develop healthy collaborations. While respondents emphasized the importance of offering capacity supports, the extent to which these ENGOs have engaged in providing them meaningfully was not established. This shift is needed in recognition of the traditionally uneven distribution of resources between parties. Providing meaningful capacity supports (monetary or otherwise) to Indigenous Nations or communities is essential to redistribution.

Some respondents shared their observation that Indigenous Nations and communities often face overlapping crises. They voiced particular concern as a result for their capacity to collaborate. Acknowledging the uneven capacity limits between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities is central to the redistribution category. However, it does not directly address ENGOs efforts to influence redistribution. Prioritizing the redistribution of ENGOs capacity is essential to address the capacity limitations of Indigenous Nations and communities. Political and economic changes led by municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal governments in support of enhanced capacity within the conservation sector is also needed to meaningfully overcome these challenges.

It is noteworthy that only four respondents mentioned an increase in funding availability. ENGOs may also have limited capacity, which can impact their ability to redistribute resources.

Additionally, ENGOs might benefit from a more focused mandate, whereas many Indigenous Nations and communities have to deal with a wide range of community needs.

Expectations held by funding bodies may align with more colonial mandates and not support positive working relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities. Respondents described the importance of pushing back on these expectations in favour of more meaningful collaborations. While it's not clear if respondents have had success in pushing back, recognizing the need for this for effective collaboration is a step in the right direction and aligns with the redistribution category. Actions within this category are still constrained by traditional conservation mandates. It's important to note that the positive, reconciliatory intentions of ENGOs may be fundamentally limited by the funding structures they depend on. Most agree that the prescribed applications, timelines, allocation, and reporting requirements (or other "deliverables") of funding opportunities have not adapted to align with what is needed for long-term relationship building with Indigenous Nations and communities. This is a key limitation to the evolution of the ENGO sector.

Efforts by funding agencies to adapt administrative requirements are a critical solution to the challenges described above, although ENGOs may be able to support this type of transition by making efforts to push back and adapt requirements whenever possible.

Table 4 – Interview Data – Redistribution Category

Category Name & Description	Response Description
Redistribution – Seeking and sharing resources to address uneven inequalities between parties. At times limited within the organizational mandate.	High (20-25)
	Opportunities: N/A
	Barriers:
	Capacity limitations are a key challenge for all parties.
	Capacity limitations negatively impact the development of long-term, in-depth relationships.
	ENGOs must commit resources to relational work. This may include money, time, training, or other capacity supports.
	Middle (10-19)
	Opportunities:
	Offering capacity supports to Indigenous Nations and communities is vital.
	Barriers:
	Access to appropriate funding for projects is an issue.
	Low (2-9)
	Opportunities:
	ENGOs should work to support and enhance Indigenous-led initiatives, while providing resources and additional capacity, rather than taking on leadership roles.
	There are increasing amounts of funding available.
	ENGOs who have been able show consistency and value over time, often years, within relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities are advantaged in competitions for additional relationship building opportunities.

	Barriers:
	Expectations held by funders and funding models create obstacles. Setting expectations early and often with funders is helpful in alleviating challenges.

Interview Data – Reparation Category

None of the data gathered aligned with the actions associated with the reparation category.

Interview Data – Recommendations

In addition to the above data, respondents offered various recommendations on how to build trust and foster healthy relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities. I have organized these recommendations based on their relevance to each phase of relationship building (before, during, after) and applied the sub-categories of representation, recognition, redistribution, and reparation to provide some insight into the utility of these practices for building healthy relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Table 5 – Recommendations for Healthy and Effective Trust, Relationship Building

Phase	Recommendations
Before Relationship Building	Category: representation
	• Develop an organizational engagement policy. • Create a manifesto or declaration among ENGOs which states how organizations will work together to support Indigenous Nations and communities. • Create broad guidance for all ENGOs which could be used by organizations to determine individual implementation plans. • Hire an Indigenous relations person.
	Category: recognition
	• Encourage post-secondary institutions to include relationship building skills within the training of conservation scientists. • Take time to find common goals. • Do the work to educate yourself and your organization about Indigenous history and culture. • Do not have a pre-determined agenda. • Apply deliberate effort within co-planning, teasing out what each partner's involvement, capacity, and resources will be.
	Category: redistribution
	• Create additional funding. • Adapt funding structures (e.g., different formats, expectations, supports, or standards of rigor within funding application processes).

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>Category: reparation
• Support and advocate for Indigenous-led conservation efforts and land-back efforts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>During Relationship Building</td><td>Category: representation
• Prioritize relationships and rely on leaders in Indigenous Nations and communities who are willing to support in Indigenizing campaigns.

Category: recognition
• Check in about expectations within partnership (including how much ENGO involvement is wanted).
• Organizations should be realistic and transparent about what they may be able to deliver on.
• Be willing to adapt or let go of your planned approach.
• Follow proper engagement protocol and work to understand particularities of each group.
• Follow the Indigenous Nation or community’s lead about what information can be shared, where, when, and how.
• Be transparent about everything.
• Spend time discussing and addressing concerns.

Category: redistribution
• Offer capacity supports.

Category: reparation
• Support Indigenous partners toward additional leadership or ownership of the project if they are interested.</td></tr>
<tr><td>After Relationship Building/Relationship Maintenance</td><td>Category: representation
N/A

Category: recognition
• Build a list of how an ENGO has worked with different Nations and communities in the past to show potential partners options/practiced outcomes.
• Create a database with all the relationships that are being held within an ENGO to support internal coordination.

Category: redistribution
• Demonstrate to funders the good that can come out of building strong relationships with Indigenous Nations or communities to support adaptations to funding structures.</td></tr>
</table>

	• Facilitate connections between Indigenous Nations and communities and funders, preferred contractors, or other resources.
	Category: reparation
	N/A

Conclusion

The data gathered here, through survey and interview responses, provides insight into the challenges and opportunities ENGOs face in their efforts to collaborate with Indigenous Nations and communities. The four categories provided by Stein et al. (2023) provides a useful framework which supported the organization and understanding of the data.

Within the representation category, respondents noted a high level of interest in collaborating with Indigenous Nations and communities but also described significant barriers in the preparatory work necessary to advance this goal (e.g. hiring). Although efforts are needed by ENGOs to prioritize inclusionary hiring, many of the barriers ENGOs face are outside of their control. This includes funds for hiring which are dictated by available funding packages. There is significant competition for qualified candidates, yet ENGO salary levels are not competitive with other sectors, and so on. Colonial governments, or other funding bodies, must provide longer-term funding packages that also include salary dollars. ENGO respondents described how their organizations are advancing cultural competence through training or other resources while working to strengthen relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities. Another significant challenge highlighted in this chapter was uncertainty – regarding potential harm, whom to contact, and how to collaborate effectively.

Within the recognition category, the importance of building trust to facilitate collaboration was emphasized, along with recommendations about practicing listening and regular communication. Respondents described how collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities create significant personal and project-related benefits. However, past and on-going colonial realities were identified as key barriers in relationship building. The political context and administrative hurdles of conservation projects were also identified as barriers to more positive outcomes. Notably, as IPCAs become increasingly prominent on ENGOs' radars, questions about their role in these arrangements arise. Additionally, the influence of external structures beyond ENGOs' control was noted, as IPCAs may still face procedural limitations or insufficient support due to colonial frameworks.

Within the redistribution category, capacity constraints, for all parties, were frequently mentioned. Providing capacity support to Indigenous collaborators is essential in relationship building. ENGOs' reliance on funding bodies, which are often governed by administrative, social, and political priorities set by colonial structures, poses a significant challenge to genuine efforts toward more transformative approaches. Consequently, ENGOs need to push back against these approaches, when possible, but are not positioned to achieve transformative change in isolation.

None of the data gathered described aligned with the actions of the reparation category. This is likely due, in part, to the challenges mentioned above (e.g., funding limitations, challenges in hiring, the influence of colonial structures, etc.). While significant transformative changes by ENGOs (and others) are needed to align with this category, some practices described in the gathered data have the potential, in their optimal form, to contribute to efforts that align

with the reparation category. Moving forward, it is crucial that ENGOs continue to work toward approaches which…

> "…seek[] to create the conditions under which: settlers can disinvest from colonial promises about their own political and epistemic authority, futurity, and exceptionalism; Indigenous Peoples can determine their own futures; and different, currently unimaginable possibilities for Indigenous-led shared caretaking of the land might emerge" (Stein et al., 2023, p. 9).

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion & Future Research

This chapter supports a discussion of the findings reported in Chapter 4, contextualizing them with respect to the reviewed literature to comprehend how the data confirms, challenges, or builds on existing understandings. To conclude, a synthesis of the findings of this thesis will be provided, followed by suggestions for future research.

Discussion

In their assessment of ENGO efforts towards inclusive collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities, Stein et al. (2023) found that approaches most frequently fell between recognition and redistribution. This contrasts somewhat with my research, which found that approaches used by the ENGOs interviewed fell into the categories of recognition, representation, redistribution, and reparation, in that order of frequency. Given that my research included 13 additional interviews with ENGO representatives, my findings may offer further insights on this topic. However, the variation in categorization could also stem from differences in sorting due to the non-linear, non-exclusive nature of the categories. Notably, my research aligns closely with the findings of Stein et al. (2023) in not identifying any efforts that fit primarily within the reparation category (Stein et al., 2023). This underscores the need, highlighted by Stein et al. (2023), for a more meaningful application of transformative approaches to inclusive conservation in Canada.

Reflecting on the reviewed literature, my study confirmed the significance of the complex socio-political context in which collaborations between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities occur. The study particularly highlighted the challenges of fostering trust to facilitate relationship-building (Conteh, 2013; Kothari, Camill, & Brown, 2013; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2021; Walker & Daniels, 2019). Despite historical and ongoing colonial power-dynamics leading to widespread mistrust, ENGO respondents identified various strategies aimed at building trust with Indigenous Nations and communities (Cadman et al., 2020; Choudry & Kapoor, 2015; Finegan, 2018; Lee, 2011). Respondents provided examples of successful relationships forged while navigating complex contexts. These insights align with the positive examples of collaboration explored in the reviewed literature (Chapman et al., 2020; "Great Bear Rainforest," n.d.; Guénette & Alder, 2006).

It is noteworthy that all respondents indicated that their organizations had successfully established relationships with one or more Indigenous Nation or community, typically involving some kind of project collaboration. This underscores the growing trend of ENGOs either actively engaging Indigenous Nations and communities within conservation initiatives or being sought out for involvement in IPCA projects. This trend was also apparent in the Canadian and Australian literature reviewed earlier, which included a shift towards increased collaboration

with Indigenous Nations and communities in both country's conservation sector (Colchester, 2004; Dawson et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2013; Moorcroft & Adams, 2014; Moorcroft, 2015; Ross et al., 2012). Thus, the data gathered contributes to the existing literature by enhancing the understanding of a broader shift towards collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities in countries with a colonial history.

Several studies, including by Hardy and Peachey (2016), Stephenson et al. (2014), and White (2020), underscore the importance and complexity of co-development in conservation work, highlighting how Indigenous leaders can uncover opportunities and challenges through their engagement in the sector. My findings further support this perspective, revealing a shifting landscape where ENGOs are increasingly supporting Indigenous leadership, in stark contrast to previous dynamics. Respondents noted efforts by some ENGOs to support Indigenous capacity-building, envisioning a future where ENGOs hold increasingly supportive roles. This finding reinforces the discussions by Hardy and Peachey (2016), Stephenson et al. (2014), and White (2020) on co-development. ENGO respondents expressed a growing desire to provide capacity support for Indigenous leadership, introducing a new dimension to the conversation.

Artelle et al. (2022) explain how ENGOs might seek Indigenous leadership in their quest for decolonization. While the respondents in the current research project acknowledged the value of Indigenous leadership, they also offered diverse perspectives on how ENGOs could move beyond colonial models. These included more meaningful integration of Indigenous approaches, such as co-developing project plans and hiring Indigenous cultural consultants. Respondents highlighted the adoption of administrative practices that align more closely with Indigenous methods, such as cultural competency training and flexible project planning. Grounded in relationality, respondents also identified practical strategies to decolonialization, such as various approaches to individual and organizational education. While some of these approaches may have limitations, and there is need to broader transformation in the conservations sector away from traditionally colonial approaches, it is evident that ENGOs engaged in this research have numerous ideas about how to decolonize their work, even if more progress is needed.

There is a risk that ENGO efforts to engage in collaborative conservation work may primarily serve ENGO mandates or administrative requirements (e.g., access to funding), while relying on more limited practices of representation and recognition (e.g., land acknowledgments). This risk suggests that attempts by ENGOs to "Indigenize" campaigns could be extractive and perpetuate colonial harms. ENGOs must make a genuine commitment to collaborating with Indigenous Nations and communities, including providing the necessary resources to support that relationship. It is essential that ENGOs do not undermine Indigenous Nations or communities by subsuming their unique social, political, and cultural realities within organizational conservation efforts. Instead, ENGOs should work to unlearn colonial approaches and seek innovative, inclusive methods that respect the autonomy and authority of Indigenous Nations and communities. Without these efforts, meaningful relationships that support positive, collaborative, inclusionary conservation work will remain elusive. Similarly, when supporting IPCAs, ENGOs must be cautious not to impose colonial approaches or dynamics on Indigenous Nations or communities.

Several studies, reviewed earlier, offer detailed accounts of the unique benefits and challenges of IPCAs ("Indigenous Circle of Experts," 2018; Mansuy et al., 2023; Mulrennan, Scott, & Scott, 2019; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). As discussed in Chapter 4, the pathways to formalizing an IPCA within the framework established by colonial governments may fall short of the autonomy intended by the designation. The research results also indicated

that key considerations, such as transferring or delegating colonial authority over lands to Indigenous Nations and communities, may still require approval from Crown governments, thereby undermining the intention of IPCAs. Some respondents in the current study questioned the role ENGOs might play in establishing an IPCA. While ENGOs can provide capacity support to Indigenous Nations and communities, respondents suggested that ENGOs might not be involved in the critical nation-to-nation discussions necessary for creating, implementing, and monitoring IPCAs. This challenges the prevailing narrative in much of the literature reviewed for this thesis, which often portrays IPCAs as a novel and more inclusive approach to conservation work. However, the type of stewardship recently affirmed under the IPCA designation has been practiced by Indigenous Nations and communities since time immemorial. Consequently, ENGOs may find themselves with a diminished role to play compared to their involvement in previous conservation efforts.

Throughout the data gathering process, efforts were made to understand how ENGOs can contribute to IPCA creation, with most respondents suggesting that ENGOs can add value primarily by providing capacity support to Indigenous Nations and communities. However, this raises significant unresolved issues, particularly regarding whether ENGOs can serve exclusively, or predominantly, as capacity supporters for Indigenous-led conservation efforts. Economic factors may play a role, as ENGOs often depend on successful project ownership to secure the funding needed for their ongoing operations. Although this research cannot fully address this uncertainty, it is noted as a consideration based on the ongoing efforts to increase Indigenous leadership in the conservation sector and the respondents' reflections on the limitations of current funding models.

Much of the reviewed literature portrayed collaborative conservation approaches as instrumental for advancing decolonialization and effective conservation efforts. Respondents in the current research observed a trend toward collaborative project work, with some initiatives either already engaging in, or gradually moving towards, co-development. They emphasized that collaborative approaches are essential for bridging the gap between Western science and Indigenous methods, thereby enhancing conservation outcomes.

Conclusion

Within Canada, there are roughly 15 national-level ENGOs that are actively engaged in collaborative conservation arrangements with Indigenous Nations and communities, including participation in the creation of IPCAs. Additionally, numerous ENGOs at the provincial and territorial levels have made similar commitments. The current research was driven by a recognition of the relatively limited understanding of the nature, challenges, and best practices in relationship building between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities within these conservation efforts. Improving this understanding could help foster more equitable partnerships in a historically uneven landscape. The aim of this research project was to explore how relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities contribute to the success or failure of conservation projects, including IPCAs.

To situate this research, a review of relevant literature was conducted, focused on the conservation sector and the shift toward Indigenous collaboration within Canada, with some reference to Australia. The review explored key considerations in collaborative conservation initiatives and provided examples of both successful and problematic ENGO-led conservation initiatives in Canada to contextualize the relationships examined in the study.

The methodology and research design of this project were then outlined. A key limitation of the methodology was the exclusive focus on ENGO representatives, but this was rationalized

as supporting colonial responsibility within reconciliation efforts. The research adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches, gathering data from a pilot survey of national ENGO representatives and semi-structured interviews primarily with Canadian ENGO representatives. The pilot survey received five responses, all from representatives of national ENGOs, while 24 Canadian ENGO representatives and one representative from an Indigenous educational non-profit organization focused on conservation in Canada were interviewed to compile data for this research project.

The pilot survey was designed to provide basic contextual data about the responding organizations and to gather insights into the influences, challenges, and successes they encountered in their collaborative projects. The study focused on mid- to large-sized organizations that employ a small number of Indigenous staff, despite efforts to hire individuals with relevant community or cultural experience. These organizations largely began engaging in relationship-based conservation work with Indigenous Nations and communities after 2015, with some influence from the 2015 TRC Final Report. Regardless of their initial motivations, all respondents noted an increase in collaborations between their ENGO and Indigenous Nations and communities since 2015.

Most organizations were involved in conservation projects, with some specifically identifying their participation in IPCA initiatives. Key challenges in their relational conservation work included funding constraints, time limitations, political and structural changes, and insufficient capacity. However, the collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities were described as offering numerous shared benefits, such as strengthened relationships, collaborations, and networks; access to diverse perspectives and knowledge; and a deeper understanding of contextual or project-related issues. Respondents also shared key practices their organizations used to advance reconciliation, including supporting Indigenous land governance, using territorial acknowledgments, and reviewing relevant external resources. All respondents indicated that their organizations plan to continue working with Indigenous Nations and communities in the future.

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights from ENGO respondents, organized according to the categories developed by Stein et al. (2023). The nature of the collaborations described ranged widely, from ad hoc engagement to co-development. The basic and contextual information revealed that experience in this relational work varied significantly, with some respondents having over 10 years of experience, while others had little to none. The insights offered by interviewees most often fell within the "recognition" category, while the "representation" and "redistribution" categories were less frequently addressed. Notably, no responses fit well within the "reparation" category, highlighting a need for ENGO representative to shift away from conventional colonial approaches. The research also emphasized that rethinking standard approaches and frameworks by colonial governments and other actors is crucial for transforming the conservation sector in Canada. While ENGOs cannot achieve this transformation alone, they occupy a unique position in the sector which they should leverage to challenge colonial approaches and drive positive change.

Insights from both the pilot survey and interview data underscored the importance of relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities for effective conservation work. When approached thoughtfully, these relationships can also support Indigenous Nations and communities in establishing IPCAs, with ENGOs providing crucial capacity support. The study explored various conditions shaping the working relationships

between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities within conservation initiatives, allowing the research to both confirm and challenge understandings found in the reviewed literature. The ongoing influence of past and present colonial injustices on these relationships was affirmed, as well as the necessity and challenges of building trust in collaborative conservation projects.

Beyond the value of co-development highlighted in the literature, respondents described a shift towards Indigenous leadership in project work, positioning ENGOs in more of a supplementary or supporting role. The literature reviewed also noted that ENGOs often look to Indigenous Nations and communities for guidance and solutions, which can place additional burdens on Indigenous partners, often taking them away from more urgent community priorities and commitments. Many respondents expressed admiration for Indigenous methods and held strong views on practical approaches ENGOs could undertake to decolonize their work. Consistent with other studies, the findings of this study emphasized the importance of ENGOs making significant efforts to move away from colonial approaches.

IPCAs are often regarded as the new frontier of conservation. However, some participants in this research had more nuanced perspectives, viewing the term "IPCA" as new, but recognizing the practice itself as rooted in longstanding Indigenous stewardship. The push for increased Indigenous leadership in the conservation IPCAs may place ENGOs in a more supportive role, which could be challenging under current funding models.

The findings of this research underscored the immense value of building relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities, highlighting how such collaborations can help bridge the divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches. This research also clarified that collaboration between ENGOs and Indigenous Nations and communities can lead to positive outcomes on personal, organizational, and environmental levels. However, these collaborations carry risks, especially for Indigenous partners, due to the ongoing realities of colonialism. While ENGO respondents described positive efforts toward relationship building, the data highlighted the need for more transformational efforts to achieve meaningful decolonization within the ENGO sector. The interconnection of colonial systems makes this transformational change difficult.

For example, as explored in Chapter 4, an ENGO might rely on funding from the Canadian government that requires specific deliverables not aligned with decolonialization. This dependency could hinder the ENGO's ability to engage in long-term capacity sharing and develop decolonial approaches in collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities. However, the ENGO might be able to push back against these funding expectations, or reallocate existing resources, to mitigate negative impacts.

This scenario reflects the reality for many ENGOs in Canada, as informed by the data gathered. Canadian ENGOs must strive to evolve toward meaningfully decolonized approaches while navigating complex internal and external colonial structures with conflicting goals. Although this is immensely challenging, the data indicates that many ENGOs are committed to pursuing this path in their conservation work. The great hope of this research is that ENGOs will increasingly reject colonialism and seek approaches that enable access to the immense personal and environmental benefits of meaningful collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research conducted for the current study can be built upon in several ways. First, similar research could be carried out with a larger number of ENGOs to ensure broader

representation across the sector, including organizations from every province and territory in Canada. A deeper exploration of structural factors, such as financial constraints, would be particularly useful in understanding how these elements enable or hinder ENGOs in making the transformative changes necessary for reparation in their relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities within the conservation sector.

Second, a research project focused on Indigenous consultants, and their roles and influence in the ENGO sector, could provide valuable insights. This would allow for a deeper examination of the perceived colonial-Indigenous divide within the sector.

Finally, a parallel study focusing on the experiences of Indigenous Nations and communities in their relationships with ENGO could significantly build on the findings presented here. Such research would offer critical insights into how these collaborations can be strengthened and made more effective. Given that IPCAs are fundamentally Indigenous-led initiatives, additional understanding of the experiences of Indigenous Nations and communities in these collaborations would be invaluable for fostering more effective and equitable partnerships in conservation work across Canada.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pilot Survey Content

PILOT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (ENGO) WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES ON CONSERVATION PROJECTS.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released 94 Calls to Action to support reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, including a revised approach to conservation that includes and respects the rights and knowledge of Indigenous communities. In 2018, the Indigenous Circle of Experts released a report titled "We Rise Together Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation." This report proposed the use of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCAs) and championed the application of reconciliatory practices within conservation work in Canada. In response, Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs) are increasingly working with Indigenous Nations and communities to advance conservation initiatives, including IPCAs.

This pilot survey seeks to better understand the working relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nation(s)/groups(s)/organization(s)/individual(s) through a series of questions addressed to ENGO representatives whose organizations are engaged in project work which involves such relationships. The information gathered will provide insights on some of the challenges and opportunities experienced and shed light on how ENGOs may most effectively work with Indigenous Nations and communities on future conservation initiatives.

It is requested that only one respondent from each organization complete this pilot survey.

This pilot survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete (19 questions).

Pilot survey responses will be used as data for the researcher's master's thesis and contribute to the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership's knowledge base (https://conservation-reconciliation.ca/).

The anticipated completion date for this thesis project is September 2023.

At that time, the report, based on responses, will be circulated to all ENGOs which have been contacted to complete this pilot survey.

Please be advised that your completion and submission of this pilot survey constitutes your free, prior, and informed consent for the information you provide to be used as data within the researcher's master's thesis and associated materials.

Study Title: "The role of ENGOs in supporting Indigenous Conservation Initiatives"

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Sources of funding for this study: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant, Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP).

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1. Approximately how many of each of the following categories of employees does your organization have?
    a. Full-time:
    b. Part-time:
2. Does your organization collect data to determine if staff identify as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or another Indigenous identity?
    a. Yes
    b. No
3. If the above answer is "yes," approximately how many staff on payroll at your organization identify as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or another Indigenous identity?
    a. Full-time:
    b. Part-time:
    c. No data available (enter "X")
4. According to the Government of Canada, "reconciliation is an ongoing process through which Indigenous peoples and the Crown work cooperatively to establish and maintain a mutually respectful framework for living together, with a view to fostering strong, healthy, and sustainable Indigenous nations within a strong Canada." Has reconciliation been formally adopted (e.g., explicitly stated on the organization's website or promotional material) as a goal or principle within your organization's mandate or mission statement?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. If the previous answer was "yes," which of the following best describes your organization's adoption of reconciliation? Please select all that apply.
    a. Stated support for the Government of Canada's engagement towards reconciliation / broad support for local, provincial/territorial, or national processes of reconciliation
    b. Stated commitment of your organization to reconciliation, as a methodological approach
    c. Stated commitment to specific practices which will advance reconciliation through the work of your organization
    d. Not applicable
    e. Other (please specify)

6. How many of your organization's current projects are conducted in collaboration (meaning any designation which alludes to regular interaction between parties and includes active relationship building and cooperation, towards a shared goal or goals) with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s)?
    a. None
    b. Very few
    c. About half
    d. Most projects
    e. All projects
7. Did your organization begin actively collaborating with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s) before or after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report in 2015?
    a. Before
    b. After
8. If the above answer was "before," how has the nature of those collaborations changed since 2015? Please select all that apply.
    a. Collaborations have become more frequent / your project(s) involve more Indigenous collaborators
    b. Collaborations have become less frequent / your project(s) involve fewer Indigenous collaborators
    c. Indigenous partners have increased political or legal power, which influences project work
    d. Indigenous partners have decreased political or legal power, which influences project work
    e. Capacity of your organization, in terms of "invisible" resources (e.g., knowledge/expertise, cultural understanding, etc.), has increased
    f. Capacity of your organization, in terms of "invisible" resources (e.g., knowledge/expertise, cultural understanding, etc.), has decreased
    g. Capacity of your organization, in terms of practical resources (e.g., funding sources, number of staff, workspaces, technology, administrative tools, etc.), has increased
    h. Capacity of your organization, in terms of practical resources (e.g., funding sources, number of staff, workspaces, technology, administrative tools, etc.), has decreased
    i. No applicable
    j. Other (please specify)
9. Did the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report positively influence your organization's engagement in collaboration with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
10. Which of the following best describes the type of projects your organization is working with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s) on? Please select the two most relevant.
    a. Climate change
    b. Endangered species

    c. Nature conservation
    d. Environmental impact assessment
    e. Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)
    f. Marine conservation
    g. Water quality
    h. Other (please specify)
11. In project(s) involving active collaboration with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s), what were the major challenges or barriers your organization faced, within the early stages of project proposal and design? Please rank from most to least impactful.
    a. Uncertainty of who may be appropriate partner(s)
    b. Funding constraints / lack of funding
    c. Ineffective co-development of project design
    d. Insufficient capacity of your organization, in terms of "visible" resources (e.g., number of staff, workspaces, training resources, etc.)
    e. Insufficient capacity of your organization, in terms of "invisible" resources (e.g., knowledge, cultural safety, epistemological differences between collaborators, etc.)
    f. Insufficient time / constructed timelines (within project development process)
    g. Other (please specify)
12. In project(s) involving active collaboration with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s), what were the major challenges or barriers your organization faced, within the later stages of project implementation and management? Please rank from most to least impactful.
    a. Insufficient time / constricted timelines (within the operation of the project)
    b. Issues with advertisement and/or communication about the project to the public
    c. Insufficient capacity of your organization, in terms of "visible" resources (e.g., number of staff, workspaces, technology, administrative tools, etc.)
    d. Insufficient capacity of your organization, in terms of "invisible" resources (e.g., knowledge/expertise, cultural safety, epistemological differences between collaborators, etc.)
    e. Lack of appropriate / consistent project funding
    f. Related political / structural changes (e.g., changing political dynamics within partnership, etc.)
    g. Other (please specify)
13. If applicable, what were the challenges your organization faced in obtaining (or attempting to obtain) appropriate project funding? Please rank from most to least impactful.
    a. Administrative challenges in accessing funding
    b. Funding opportunities are highly competitive
    c. Lack of available or appropriate funding opportunities
    d. The timelines associated with funding do not align well with the project(s)
    e. No applicable
    f. Other (please specify)
14. If applicable, what were the challenges your organization faced in managing secured project funding? Please rank from most to least impactful.

   a. Reporting requirements (e.g., demonstrating "deliverables")
   b. Capacity challenges relating to ongoing administrative requirements for maintenance of funding package(s)
   c. Effective allocation of payment to partners (e.g., relating to honoraria or other payment to partners, etc.)
   d. Issues relating to the negotiation of collaboration agreements
   e. Not applicable
   f. Other (please specify)
15. How has your organization benefited from its work with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s)? Please rank from most to least impactful.
   a. More effective project objectives, planning processes, or similar.
   b. Access to additional funding
   c. Addition of different perspectives, knowledge, etc.
   d. Access to additional project resources (e.g., office space, administrative tools, technology, etc.)
   e. Access to additional political or legal power
   f. Enhanced relationships, collaborations, networks
   g. Enhanced capacity (e.g., within project implementation, monitoring, etc.).
   h. Increased knowledge / understanding of context or related project issues.
   i. Increased certainty / stability within project implementation and management.
   j. Other (please specify)
16. Which resources and/or practices does your organization engage to advance reconciliation/good relations with relevant Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s)? Please rank from most to least applied.
   a. Attendance of internal or external training(s) on Indigenous history, culture, rights, or similar
   b. Running intentionally equitable hiring campaigns
   c. Land rematriation (e.g., return of land)
   d. Material divestment
   e. Support for Indigenous land governance
   f. Guidance from Indigenous Elders
   g. Involvement in ceremony
   h. Participation in relevant community events
   i. Relationship building practices between parties
   j. Review of relevant external resources (e.g., the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report, the Indigenous Circle of Experts We Rise Together report, etc.).
   k. Territorial acknowledgments
   l. Other (please specify)
17. Does your organization plan to partner with Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s) on similar work in the future?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Other (please specify)

18. What is your top piece of advice for other ENGOs who may want to work with, or are already working, with Indigenous group(s)?

Text answer.

19. Would you be interested in being interviewed on the working relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous Nation(s)/group(s)/organization(s)/individual(s) within conservation initiatives, to offer more nuanced insights?
    a. No
    b. Yes – please include your name, organization, and contact information in the following text-box.

Appendix B: Pilot Survey Communication Sheet

Study Title: "Exploring the Contribution of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations to Indigenous-led Conservation in Canada"

Sicily Fox, the researcher, is a MSc student within the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment at Concordia University (Montreal), working under the supervision of Dr. Monica Mulrennan. Both are members of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP). In addition to contributing to Sicily's master's thesis, this pilot survey will contribute to the IPCA Knowledge Basket, to the benefit of Indigenous Nations and the conservation sector more broadly.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released 94 Calls to Action to support reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, including a revised approach to conservation that includes and respects the rights and knowledge of Indigenous communities. In 2018, the Indigenous Circle of Experts released a report titled "We Rise Together Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation." This report proposed the use of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCAs) and championed the application of reconciliatory practices within conservation work in Canada. In response, Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs) are increasingly working with Indigenous Nations and communities to advance conservation initiatives, including IPCAs.

With recognition to Canadian ENGO's increased engagement with Indigenous collaborators, Sicily's research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) What is the "state of affairs" of ENGO/Indigenous collaborations within conservation/IPCA creation initiatives in Canada?
2) What are the common challenges and benefits within these arrangements?

The final research thesis, and associated reports, will provide a snapshot of Indigenous-ENGO collaborations in Canada and offer all parties insight into common challenges and possible solutions in support of more effective and impactful collaborations.

Adding to data gathered through one-on-one interviews with ENGO representatives across Canada, this pilot survey is addressed to national ENGO representatives whose organizations are engaged in project work which involves active collaborations with Indigenous Nation(s), organization(s), groups(s), and/or individual(s).

Appendix C: Email Template to Pilot Survey Respondents

Dear [FILL NAME],

I'd like to introduce you to Sicily Fox, a CRP-affiliated master's student studying at Concordia University with Monica Mulrennan. Sicily is conducting research exploring the state of affairs of ENGO/Indigenous collaborations within conservation/IPCA creation initiatives in Canada, with the goal of highlighting common challenges and opportunities/benefits in these collaborations. This much-needed study will contribute a resource to the IPCA Knowledge Basket (please see the attached for more information).

We are hoping [FILL ORGANIZATION] might be willing to contribute to this work by **completing this pilot survey**. We would be grateful if you could help us coordinate a response from your organization, as some of the questions will be more relevant to program areas, and others will require input from HR.

We are hoping the pilot survey might be completed by **Friday, April 14th**. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out directly to Sicily and Monica (cc'd).

In partnership,

[SIGNATURE]

Appendix D: Interview Background and Questions

Contextual Information:

[Introduce myself, university, department, supervisor, etc.].

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released 94 Calls to Action to enable reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, including a revised approach to conservation that respects Indigenous communities, rights, and knowledge. ENGOs have a long and complicated history of interaction with Indigenous communities and are increasingly engaging in collaboration with Indigenous group(s) to advance various conservation initiatives, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). As Canadian society moves towards reconciliation, ENGOs may be uniquely positioned to support this work.

The objective of my research is to understand how collaboration between ENGO and Indigenous partners are going (including within IPCA creation).

[Ask to record interview – only record if given approval].

Interview Questions:

A. Basic/contextual information:

- How many of your organization's projects currently involved Indigenous participation/collaboration/partnership?
- Is your organization involved in any Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) initiatives?
- Which factors influenced your organization's involvement with Indigenous Nations and communities?

B. Preparation:

- Are there individuals with experience in working with Indigenous Nations and communities involved in relevant project work?
- Please describe the resources available to employees working in collaboration with Indigenous group(s) below (e.g., training, etc.).
- How are collaborations between ENGOs happening?

C. General collaboration:

- How would you classify the state of communication within collaborations between your organization and relevant Indigenous group(s)?
- How adaptable is your project, within the context of adjusting to change, surprise, and other factors that cannot be envisioned at the beginning?
- What considerations are important when working with Indigenous Nations and communities?

D. Challenges:

- Within partnerships/projects, what were the challenges your organization faced in:
    - Initiating contact, developing partnership(s)
    - Project planning and design
    - Obtaining (or attempting to obtain) appropriate project funding
    - Project rollout or implementation
    - Project maintenance (e.g., impact management, benefit sharing, addressing grievances, etc.)

E. Opportunities/benefits:

- Which interventions or solutions have been most effective in resolving challenges?
- How has the collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities enriched your shared work?
- Within your project, how do you identify when shared goal(s) have been achieved?

F. Recommendations:

- Please share any recommendations you may have to other ENGOs who may want to collaborate, or are already collaborating, with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Appendix E: Email Template to Interview Invitees

Hi [FILL NAME],

My name is Sicily Fox and I am a student working under Dr. Monica Mulrennan, at Concordia University. I'm currently working to find interviewees for my master's project and I am reaching out in that capacity.

I was given your contact information by [FILL NAME], who I have interviewed, and who suggested we connect. After hearing a bit about you from [NAME], I completely agree and feel excited to be introducing myself here.

To offer a brief synopsis of my master's project: I am interviewing ENGO representatives to compile an understanding of the "state of affairs" of their partnerships with Indigenous partners within conservation initiatives in Canada.

If you are interested, I would love to interview you. I'm happy to chat further, answer any questions you may have, and so on. Please let me know if you might be interested in being an interviewee.

Thanks so much,

Sicily Fox