



Reconciliation Action Plan

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Acknowledgements

Cathexis acknowledges that our office is located on the ancestral lands and waters of many Indigenous groups, including the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (also known as the Six Nations Confederacy), the Wendat, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. We give our respect to the caretakers of this land, past, present, and future.

Many individuals have contributed to this Reconciliation Action Plan. We are especially grateful to:

- Briteweb, for inspiring us to develop our own RAP by sharing theirs.
- Kim van der Woerd and Sofia Vitalis from Reciprocal Consulting, for their thoughtful feedback and advice that helped shape this plan.
- The team at Cathexis, whose ideas and commitment are the fuel for this work.

Photo credits

Right: Ontario tree grove reaching skyward, by Rochelle Zorzi

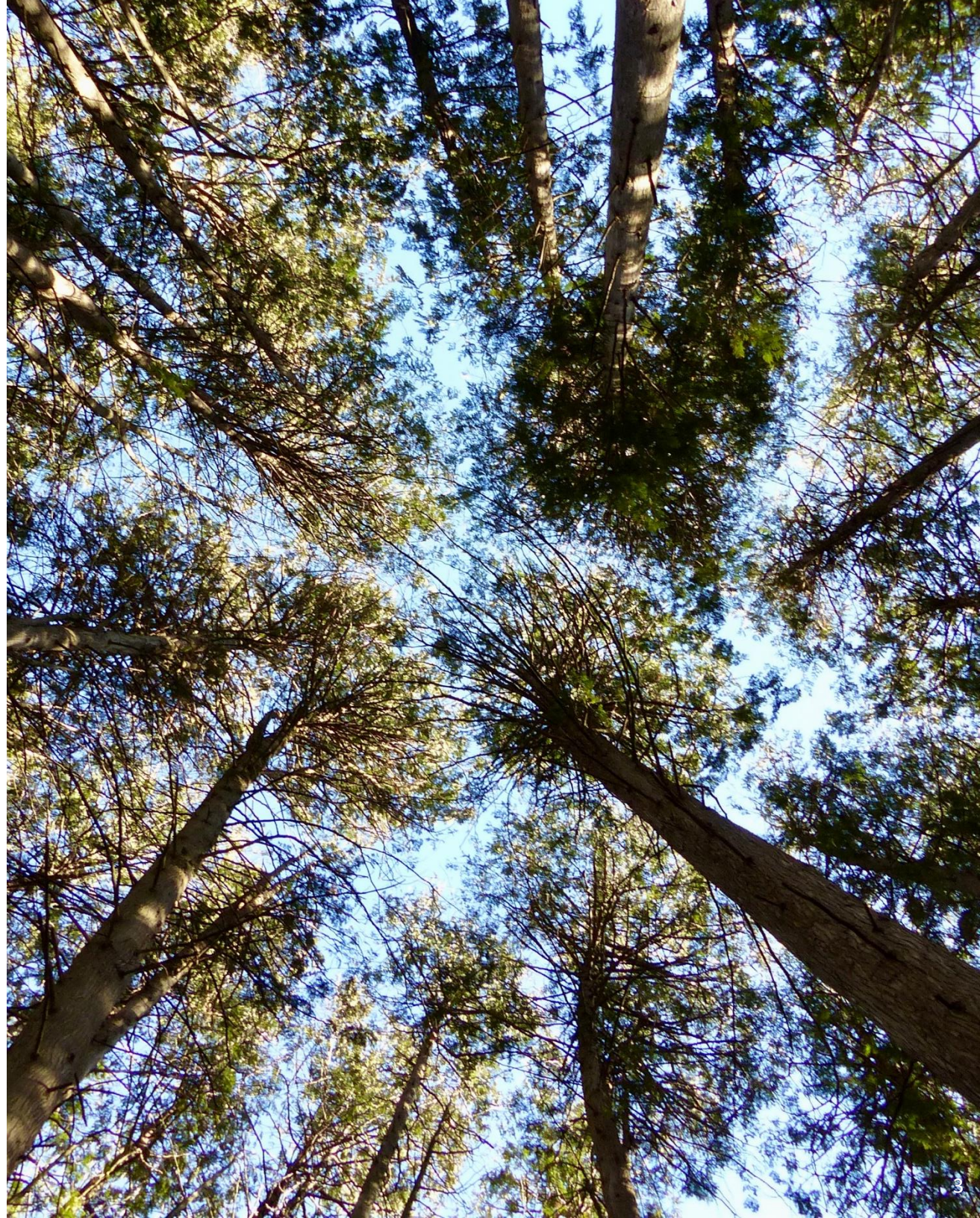
Cover: Mazinaw Lake looking North, by Liz Martin

“Our journey so far: overview”: Alderville Black Oak

Savanna in summer, by Liz Martin

Links and resources we like: View from Mont Kaaikop, QC. Photo by Miranda Horn.

Back cover: View of Belle Island and the Cataraqui River, by Liz Martin



A message from our partners

September 30, 2022

A few summers ago, the Cathexis team read Bob Joseph's *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*. We learned how government representatives had moved First Nations to small parcels of land where it was impossible to sustain themselves through their traditional hunting, gathering or farming; how traditional languages, regalia and Ceremony were banned; and how children were pulled away from their families so they could be "educated" in colonial ways.

We've since learned that there has been a systemic colonial effort to keep us from learning about our shared history. We recognize that our privilege kept us from questioning what we'd learned before.

We condemn the systemic racism that has fractured Indigenous communities and undermined hundreds of Indigenous cultures. We acknowledge that systemic oppression continues today, and we accept our responsibility to dismantle oppressive systems, both individually and collectively.

Our commitment to action was informed by recommendations in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action* and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

This is our first reconciliation action plan. It is a living document that we will continue to update and we welcome community input. We've prepared it because we know it's hard to follow through on good intentions when things get busy in a fast-paced consulting firm. This plan will help us hold ourselves accountable for slowing down and doing the important work that needs to happen as part of reconciliation.



Rochelle Zorzi, Partner



Melissa McGuire, Partner

The need for reconciliation

Our Reconciliation Action Plan takes inspiration from the Calls to Action laid out in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report.

There are Calls to Action throughout the TRC Final Report that apply to each of us as individuals and professional evaluators. In addition, Call to Action #92 identifies specific actions that we, as a corporation, need to take.

"In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada began a multi-year process to listen to Survivors, communities and others affected by the Residential School system. The resulting collection of statements, documents and other materials now forms the heart of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

"In 2015, the TRC released its report with 94 recommendations applicable to a variety of different stakeholders. The TRC engaged Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian Reconciliation. The report released in 2015 made a 'Call to Action' to specific audiences.

"Call to action #92 asks the corporate sector and their leaders to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The commission calls for meaningful consultation, long term sustainable opportunities from economic development projects, as well as education and training for managers on the history of Indigenous people, intercultural competency, human rights and anti-racism."

Excerpt from CBRE Global Workplace Solutions Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-2023. Pg. 7

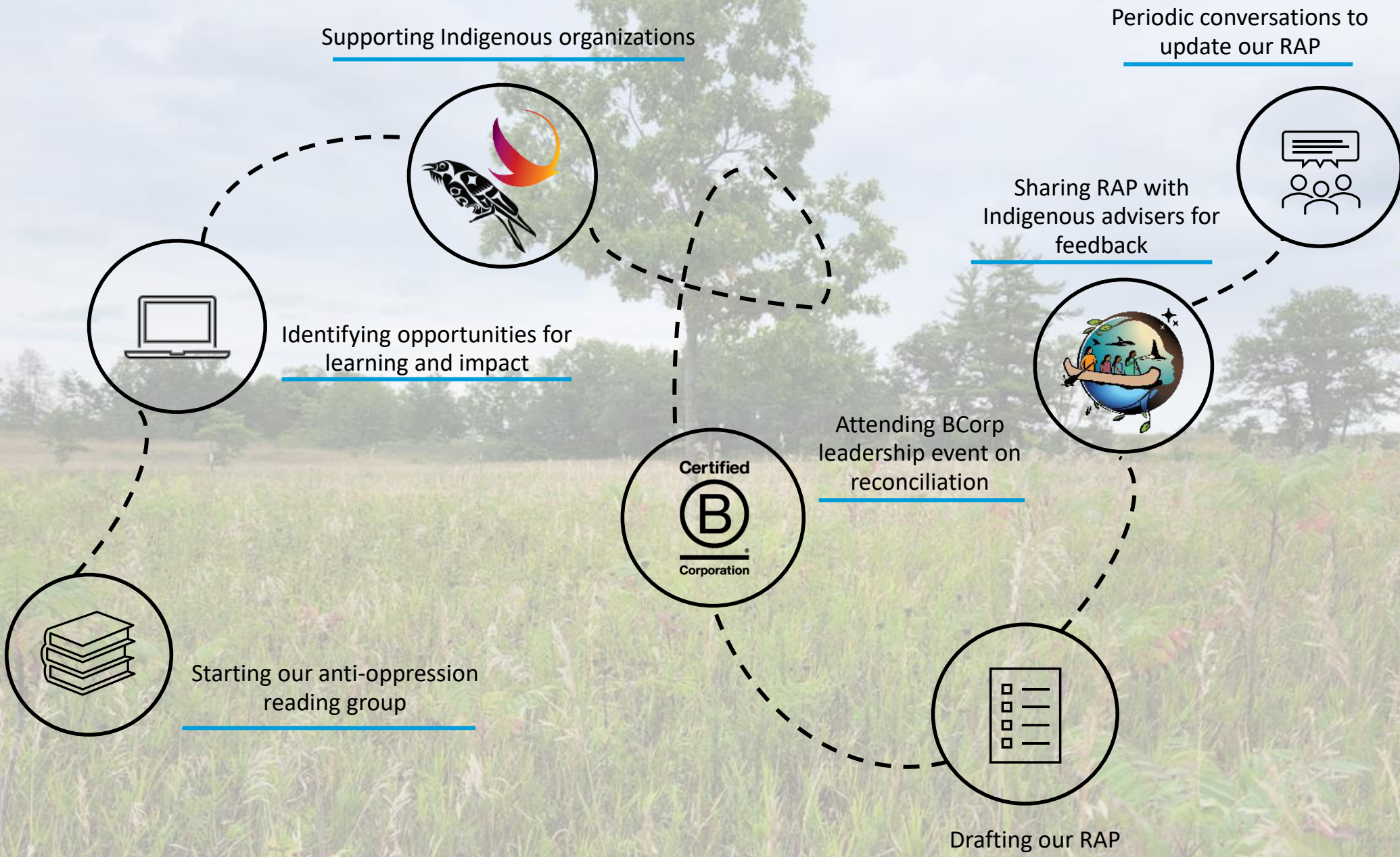
TRC Call to Action #92

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 1. Commit** to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- 2. Ensure** that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Indigenous communities gain long term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- 3. Provide** education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Indigenous rights, Indigenous law, and Indigenous–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in inter-cultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Pg 14

Our journey so far: overview



Our vision for the future

In our ideal future:

- Indigenous peoples' inherent right to self-determination is recognized and respected by individuals and governments. Indigenous communities have control over their land, territories, resources, languages, and culture.
- Settlers and newcomers have more awareness and understanding of the ongoing history of colonialism and its impacts.
- Settlers and newcomers have more awareness of, understanding of and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and caring for Turtle Island.
- Indigenous people have access to education, clean water, high quality and culturally safe healthcare, and other services.
- Settlers have returned Indigenous land to Indigenous nations.
- Indigenous people, settlers, and newcomers are working together toward common goals.

Cathexis can help this vision become reality by:

- Making a commitment to reconciliation through this Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Educating ourselves, our associates, and our clients about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, the ongoing history of colonialism and its impacts, psychological and cultural safety, and Indigenous ways of knowing.
- Educating ourselves and unlearning white supremacy, particularly for entrenched racism.
- Building relationships with Indigenous communities, Elders, and traditional knowledge keepers.
- Integrating culturally responsive principles in our work and encouraging our clients to centre Indigenous interests in their work.
- Advocating for people and organizations we work with to uphold the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP.
- Supporting the restoration and revitalization of Indigenous languages, cultures, and land through financial contributions to Indigenous-led charities and not-for-profit organizations.
- Stepping up when we witness injustice, as allies.
- Sharing our journey and helpful resources with others.

Our goals for reconciliation

Our goals over the next two years take into account that we work as a **small business** and as **professionals in the evaluation field**. We recognize that we have responsibilities and opportunities to demonstrate reconciliation in these two realms.

We have identified **four strategic areas** of focus that will influence the way we conduct ourselves in both these realms:

- expand our team's awareness of Indigenous peoples, cultures, colonialism, and oppression
- nurture good relationships with Indigenous people, businesses, and the land
- apply culturally responsive evaluation and research practices
- demonstrate brave leadership that will support this plan

We recognize that we won't be able to do *everything* we want to do all at once. In the next two years, we are reflecting on the past and the present so we can take what we **learn into the future**.



Our action plan: Education

Expand our team’s awareness of the ongoing history of colonialism and Indigenous culture

TRC Call to Action #92 emphasizes the role of workplaces in providing education to management and staff on the ongoing history of colonialism in Canada and the effects on Indigenous peoples and culture.

Cathexis has periodically supported staff to pursue learning on topics related to truth and reconciliation. Our next step is to clarify that we expect all staff to take part in learning that advances their understanding of Indigenous peoples, cultures, colonialism, and oppression. We will support our team in pursuing learning opportunities.

Action	Implement required training for newly hired staff	Identify ongoing learning opportunities for all staff	Convene a group reading circle
Timeline	By March 2023	Year-round	Summer 2024
Goal	All new hires will have completed training that provides a basic understanding of the history of colonialism and Indigenous peoples in Canada.	All staff will take part in learning throughout the year (e.g., psychological and cultural safety, Indigenous ways of knowing and worldviews)	(Re)Read and discuss one or more foundational books as a group (<i>21 Things You May Not Know; Me and White Supremacy; Highway of Tears</i>)
Resources committed	1 day staff time to develop training expectations and identify learning resources. ½ day for new staff during orientation process.	1 day of staff time to identify opportunities. 1 day per staff member for learning over the course of the year (incl. at our Sep 30 session)	Meeting time; copy of book for each team member.

Our action plan: Relationships

Nurture good relationships with Indigenous people, businesses, and the land

Relationships are at the heart of how we work and live. We want to support generative, reciprocal relationships between our team and Indigenous peoples and businesses.

We hope that these good relationships will contribute to all actions in this plan.

Action	Sponsor an Indigenous person to take part in an evaluation-related conference or event	Work with Indigenous consultants and businesses	Support a local Indigenous-led service organization	Support the land back movement
Timeline	Annually, starting June 2023	Year-round	Annually when financial statements are finalized	Confirm annually on September 30
Goal	The evaluation field needs to incorporate and centre Indigenous worldviews. Our financial contribution supports an Indigenous person to attend a conference and share knowledge.	We work with at least 1 new Indigenous consultant or business a year and have a growing list of preferred Indigenous businesses with whom we share and refer opportunities. Pursue relationships with networks of Indigenous evaluators.	1% of our annual profit before tax is committed to the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto for the next 5 years.	Support the land back movement through monthly donations to RAVEN Trust.
Resources committed	\$1,075	Staff time as required to develop relationships	1% of profits	\$900

Our action plan: Professional practice

Apply culturally responsive evaluation & research practices

We know that evaluation and research have historically done harm to Indigenous peoples and communities. We want to improve our professional evaluation and research practice by taking steps to apply culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) and research practices.

This action will mean taking responsibility for ensuring those we work with feel safe, respected, and empowered. It also means opening up our practice to other ways of creating and sharing knowledge.

Action	Identify CRE principles to incorporate into our guidelines	Train all evaluation staff in core principles of CRE	Support Indigenous-led evaluation	Engage place-based champions
Timeline	By January 2023	By November 2024	Year-round	Year-round
Goal	CRE principles are incorporated in all relevant practice guidelines, including data sovereignty and consideration for the environmental impact of our work.	All evaluation staff will be familiar with the core principles of CRE and research and Cathexis expectations. They will have opportunities to share experiences with each other.	We are proactive in identifying ways to support Indigenous-led evaluation. We take a supportive role on projects that are best led by Indigenous evaluators/communities, with our team offering support such as mentorship or administrative resources.	When Cathexis leads an evaluation in Indigenous communities, we engage place-based champions to liaise with the communities, provide contact, and reduce harm.
Resources committed	2 days of staff time	Time to find an appropriate course or facilitator; training fee; periodic team meetings	Relationships with Indigenous evaluators	Adequate project budgets to allow for this

Our action plan: Governance

Demonstrate brave leadership that will support this plan

Ensuring we follow through with this plan requires us to take responsibility for its implementation, demonstrate brave leadership, and hold each other accountable.

Action	Introduce the RAP to the team	Obtain feedback from an Indigenous equity consultant	Allocate resources	Review our progress, share our learning, and revise the plan annually	Explore Progressive Aboriginal Relations certification
Timeline	By November 2022	By August 2023	Annually, in October/November as part of annual budget process	September 30 of each year	By November 2025
Goal	Team understands and is committed to the RAP.	We obtain an Indigenous perspective on our business and our reconciliation efforts.	Have the financial and human resources we need to carry out the plan.	Hold ourselves accountable for implementing the plan. Evaluate whether it is doing what we hoped it would do and make adjustments if it's not. Inspire others to take action.	Decide whether we want to pursue PAR certification.
Resources committed	1 hour team meeting	\$500-\$1,000 for consulting fee	N/A	Periodic team meetings; staff time to create blogs, attend conferences, etc.	1 day staff time

[21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act by Bob Joseph](#)

[Alderville Black Oak Savanna](#)

[Awakenings](#)

[B Corporation/B Lab network](#)

[Briteweb's Reconciliation Action Plan](#)

[CBRE Global Workplace Solutions Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-2023](#)

[Indigenous Ally Toolkit](#)

[Indspire](#)

[Me and White Supremacy by Layla F. Saad](#)

[National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 231 Calls for Justice](#)

[Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto](#)

[National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

[Nisitohtamowin eLearning module](#)

[RAVEN Trust](#)

[Reciprocal Consulting](#)

[The Circle Way Guidelines](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action](#)

[Truth & Reconciliation for Evaluators \(Canadian Evaluation Society course\)](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)





Anti-oppression reading group

Cathexis' journey towards developing a Reconciliation Action Plan began in Summer 2020 when we launched an anti-oppression reading group. Our team read and discussed ***Me and White Supremacy*** by Layla F. Saad over a period of several weeks, using The Circle Way guidelines to guide brave, caring discussions that opened our minds to other learning opportunities.

"We are taking this from 'learn about this for your own personal interest' to 'we are dedicated to addressing it in the workplace, as a business'." - Cathexis team member



Identifying opportunities for learning and impact

In early 2021, we decided to learn more about the current and historical oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Cathexis team members did the course ***Nisitohtamowin*** offered by **First Nations University of Canada** and read ***21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act*** by Bob Joseph. We also read and discussed other key documents, including the ***UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*** and ***Bill C45***.

Our learning emboldened us to have more discussions about how to centre Indigenous perspectives in our evaluation work. We had many ideas about integrating Reconciliation into our work that left us wondering how to organize and act upon our intentions.

As we deepened our learning, we decided to look more closely at the environmental impact of our consulting work. We began tracking a key performance indicator related to our environmental impact.

"It's important for a settler organization to be aware of Reconciliation and be doing our best to make progress on Reconciliation."

- Cathexis team member

"Being committed to Reconciliation is about learning and challenging. Thinking back to our learning related to *21 Things*, it was important to recognize all the systems of oppression that work against these communities, and how our work supports or relates to those systems."

- Cathexis team member



Supporting Indigenous organizations

Our team decided in 2021 to make sustained financial contributions to Indigenous organizations. We made commitments to **Raven**, whose mission is to contribute legal defense funds to Indigenous peoples fighting for their rights and titles in their traditional territories; **Indspire**, which raises funds to remove barriers to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners, and to **Alderville First Nation's Black Oak Savanna**. These donations tied us closer to the land back movement, to building environmental resilience in a nearby First Nation, and to supporting access to education for Indigenous peoples.

"For many years I didn't think that work around the Calls to Action applied to us, because we weren't doing a lot of Indigenous evaluation. I see now how it applies to us, every day." - Cathexis team member

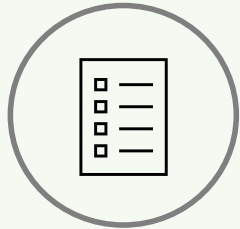


BCorp leadership event on Reconciliation

In spring 2022 our team attended a **BCorp Canada** event on the topic of Reconciliation. At this event we heard business leaders speak about what Reconciliation looks like for their businesses. A design agency called **Briteweb** shared their Reconciliation Action Plan and we were instantly inspired. We saw the opportunity to build a RAP for Cathexis that would organize our ideas, track our efforts, and hold us accountable.

"We had been doing a lot of talking and thinking about these things and what they mean, and growing our intention and deeper understanding, but when Briteweb shared their RAP with the BCorp community, it was really inspiring, and we realized we could do that. The more people that have these concrete plans and commitments, the more likely things will happen."

- Cathexis team member



Drafting our RAP

A lot happened in summer 2022!

- Two of our senior evaluators attended a CES course, ***Truth and Reconciliation for Evaluators***. This course provided them with a touchstone as they began developing an outline for our team's RAP.
- Our team visited the **Alderville Black Oak Savanna** where a land steward guided us around the vital ecosystem of the endangered black oak savanna and introduced us to the restoration and stewardship work of the Alderville First Nation. This trip inspired us to think about our responsibility to protect delicate and disappearing ecosystems as an act of Reconciliation.
- We set a plan for the **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**, held annually on September 30. On that day, our team engaged in self-guided Reconciliation learning and activities, then came together to discuss what they had learned. We also reviewed our draft RAP outline and discussed Cathexis's role in Reconciliation.

"Right now, the RAP feels a little aspirational and we are still taking steps. I'm proud to be part of it. My natural inclination is to be scared. There is so much more work to do, but I'm glad we're moving ahead and want to try things."

- Cathexis team member



Sharing our RAP with Indigenous advisers

Building on the team's input, senior staff developed an initial draft of our RAP by late October 2022. After a second round of input, we completed a revised draft by the end of 2022. We shared this draft with **Reciprocal Consulting**, an Indigenous-led evaluation firm, for their feedback. They encouraged us to delve deeper into some of our actions, such as by thinking about the importance of restoring and upholding Indigenous languages as an act of reconciliation. They also pointed out alternate ways of wording some of our ideas to avoid perpetuating oppression and harm through our choice of language.

"Having the external review from Reciprocal was really important. It drove home the idea that we shouldn't avoid evaluations with Indigenous folks because that is not our lived experience. We are not perfect and can make mistakes, but it's important not to avoid evaluating Indigenous programs because it might be uncomfortable for us. It was important to engage Reciprocal without assuming what their experiences or feedback would be."

- Cathexis team member



Periodic conversations to update our RAP

Cathexis has set up semi-annual meetings to reflect on our RAP progress, identify and discuss gaps, and discuss changing, modifying, or adding RAP actions. We also continue to integrate feedback we've received from our advisers and others who continue to inspire us.

"It's a great joy to me that I'm working for an employer that takes Reconciliation to heart. It's one of my personal values, and being in a workplace that values Reconciliation is of value to me. I think at Cathexis, as evaluators, we're uniquely positioned to really make a difference in making steps toward Reconciliation." - Cathexis team member



Cathexis Consulting, Inc.

121 Bloor Street East, Suite 425

Toronto, Ontario M4W 3M5

www.cathexisconsulting.ca

info@cathexisconsulting.ca

Linkedin: [linkedin.com/in/cathexis](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cathexis)