



Community Energy  
Association

# CEA & the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

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# Section 1: CEA Background

The Community Energy Association (CEA) supports local governments and Indigenous communities to take bold action to eliminate carbon pollution and improve their resilience to climate change. Incorporated as a non-profit in 2003, CEA now employs dozens of climate and energy specialists who bring a diversity of experiences and share a passion for climate action in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. Our 50+ member organizations represent a diversity of local governments, Indigenous communities, utilities, educators, and private sector organizations that collectively, with the staff, contribute to and amplify the benefits that come from a community of practitioners and communities. CEA is not an advocacy organization – we are a trusted, independent advisor that provides coaching and education for individuals and institutions as well as researching, planning, and implementing climate solutions.

# Section 2: CEA's Reconciliation Statement

CEA commits to the principles of Truth and Reconciliation. As an organization, we support the *Calls to Action* released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and recognize the importance of the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples as articulated in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*.

Through all the work we do to help communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve energy and support community energy resilience, CEA will:

- **Acknowledge** that Indigenous Peoples have suffered under colonialization and that the intergenerational trauma of unjust colonial policies and practices continues to impact Indigenous Peoples and communities.
- **Commit** to learn and understand the history of Indigenous and settler relationships in this place we call Canada and ensure that those learnings inform CEA's actions so that we can build new, stronger relationships with our Indigenous partners.
- **Commit** to seeking meaningful and sustained relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations based on good faith, shared goals, mutual respect, and equitable processes, plans, actions, and partnerships.
- **Invite** Indigenous Communities to become members of CEA and **commit** to recruiting staff who identify as Indigenous.
- **Commit** to ensuring our work in Indigenous territories is respectful of those territories and its peoples. We will respectfully acknowledge the traditions and knowledge that have been passed down since time immemorial.
- **Invite** CEA's members and CEA's project partners in government, industry, education, the non-profit sector, and in the communities where we work, to join us in working to end the systemic inequities faced by Indigenous communities.

# Section 3: CEA & UNDRIP

CEA's commitment to UNDRIP opened the door to internal conversations about what it means, operationally and personally, to implement the Articles of UNDRIP that encompass CEA's relationships with Indigenous peoples. The following sections connect these UNDRIP Articles to CEA's work, creating an operational and ethical framework for our relationships with Indigenous Communities.

## Articles Related to Indigenous Rights

### Article 2:

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

**CEA commits to supporting Indigenous peoples and communities in exercising their rights as free and equal individuals.** *Specifically, we will:*

- Put relationships first in our work with Indigenous communities and commit to building relationships with Indigenous people, communities, and individuals;
- Learn about protocols and culturally appropriate ways to be in each of the communities we work with;
- Train our staff in how to create cultural safety and strive to make our interactions contribute to cultural safety;
- Acknowledge that we may make mistakes as we strive to create ethical spaces and develop a two-eyed seeing approach and we commit to learning from these mistakes; and
- Commit to inviting more Indigenous people to become a part of CEA and to put in place policies and internal practices to ensure that they will not experience discrimination as employees or Board members. CEA will create a diversity, equity and inclusion policy that provides protections and support for Indigenous staff.

**This is a “living” document. CEA will continue to learn and grow in how we work with Indigenous Peoples and communities. This document will continually be revised as we journey forward. CEA welcomes questions, suggestions, and critique of our commitment, below.**

## Articles Related to Indigenous Sovereignty

### Article 3

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

### Article 4

Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

### Article 5

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the State.

### Article 20

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic, and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.
2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

## Article 21

1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities.

## Article 23

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

## Article 39

Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States\* and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.

### **In support of these Articles, CEA commits to:**

- **Sharing our knowledge and resources around energy conservation, greenhouse gas emission reductions and the development of low carbon resiliency through projects, engagement, capacity development and partnerships in accordance with our principles as a non-profit organization;**
- **Ensuring that the work we do to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in Indigenous communities will be designed and delivered in a way that supports these communities in achieving their goals energy sovereignty and resiliency; and**
- **Shifting our thinking to increasingly work in an ethical space that implements two-eyed seeing - recognizing the difference between colonial and indigenous belief systems - and consider how these different belief systems affect our approach to our work.**

*Specifically, through our proposal development and grant application processes, CEA will:*

- When working directly with Indigenous communities on grant application processes, ask or seek out guiding values and principles, cultural world view, and specific community goals and reflect these in the application;
- When responding to an RFP from an Indigenous community, offer to include cultural protocols and decision-making processes in our proposal, ensuring that an appropriate amount of time and effort is included to respectfully receive and work with cultural knowledge; and
- Continue to seek out Indigenous communities or organizations as partners in all potential programs or projects; specifically looking for Indigenous led firms that we can support as project leads or that may wish to be partners in our projects.

*Specifically, through the delivery of projects, CEA will:*

- Through all our projects involving Indigenous partners and/or clients, practice cultural sensitivity (by allowing time and space for thoughtful responses, a genuine check in at the beginning of meetings, and proper introductions, for example);
- Ask about protocols or preferred approaches at the beginning of partnerships and projects and change our practices to support these preferences in as many ways as possible;
- In cases where standard colonial practices (timelines, funding applications) are required by a project funder, we will do our best to practice two-eyed seeing and if, as a result of these constraints, project viability is being negatively affected we will 1) provide feedback to our funder on the negative impacts of the restrictions they are imposing and 2) support any Indigenous partners in stepping away from the process if they need to do so. In some cases of severe misalignment where the outcomes are not significantly strong enough to offset the difficulties experienced, we may decline the opportunity;
- Remain cognizant that differing world views may result in different outcomes, especially in assessing economic, social, and cultural development linked to climate change actions;
- When working on projects with local governments, learn about the Indigenous territories we are working on and seek opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous communities where there is a benefit to the Indigenous community that aligns with the project and our client agrees with our approach;
- Endeavor to collaborate, not consult, and embed each community's cultural values and cultural ways of knowing into the project;



- For projects where we are working with a local government on unceded territories, support the requirements of Free, Prior and Informed Consent<sup>1</sup> with our client. In relatively rare occurrences, CEA’s work can involve the development of infrastructure or the development of policy affecting land use. Infrastructure or land use related projects with Indigenous communities (such as supporting installation of EV charging infrastructure) require free, prior and informed consent;
- Seek to increase local capacity in line with the community’s goals for the project in project specific work plans; and
- Consult with Indigenous clients at the end of each project to identify what went well and where we could have done better, share what we have learned with our Indigenous client and all staff and make changes internally to improve on subsequent projects.

*Specifically, through our community engagement opportunities, CEA will:*

- Make early and ongoing community engagement a cornerstone of our work;
- Be inclusive of the position of Indigenous communities that we work with/within to ensure that their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions are respected and involved where and how the community deems appropriate;
- Continue to work with Indigenous communities to make our work inclusive of all Nation members who wish to participate; and
- Through our commitment to early engagement, strive to mitigate adverse impacts on the communities we partner with.
- Remain neutral in our work if there are community conflicts.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, [Principles respecting the Government of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#) (accessed 2023-11-29)

*Specifically, through our capacity building projects, CEA will:*

- Commit to both transferring and receiving knowledge through capacity building and mentorship;
- Make capacity building a focal point, where relevant, in all projects;
- Be cognizant of a community's existing capacity building strategies;
- Consult on including capacity building opportunities into all relevant projects; and
- Share opportunities for capacity building and project funding that are organized by other organization through our networks, social media accounts and relationships.

*Specifically, through our celebratory and outreach activities, CEA will:*

- With permission, amplify the voices of Indigenous communities across Canada and visibly celebrate their successes through our annual awards program, through our e-news (where appropriate) and our various social media accounts.

*Specifically, through the development of partnerships, CEA will:*

- Encourage partnerships that can move through *the Definitional Matrix, as provided by the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (2022)* ([www.the-circle.ca](http://www.the-circle.ca)) such that we aim for Indigenous-led projects wherever possible;
- Look for opportunities to assist on Indigenous-led projects ([the-circle.ca](http://the-circle.ca));
- Work in partnership with Indigenous communities to encourage their leadership in project development and implementation;
- Strive to make CEA's work with Indigenous communities in a collaborative way when projects cannot be Indigenous led;
- Seek external funding, so that CEA can provide free information, advice, and support to Indigenous communities and organizations with respect to our charitable mission to reduce climate change risks and impacts.

## Articles Related to Indigenous Use of Lands, Territories and Resources

### Article 29

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior, and informed consent.
3. States shall also take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health of indigenous peoples, as developed, and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented.

### Article 32

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water, or other resources.
3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural, or spiritual impact.

**CEA will actively seek out funding opportunities that will assist Indigenous communities and Nations with the conservation and protection of their lands and resources within the scope of CEA's services for energy conservation, GHG emission reductions and low carbon resiliency. Although, from an environmental perspective, CEA's work is specific to greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, we support the function of natural systems as carbon sinks and safeguards from climate impacts, and consider how embodied carbon may be reduced through the use of specific resources.**

*Specifically, CEA will:*

- Support adoption of regenerative infrastructure policies and programs included in our report [Closing the Loop](#) where and when appropriate;
- Offer opportunities to combine climate mitigation and adaptation through low carbon resiliency planning and implementation;
- When opportunities arise and Indigenous communities are willing, use local knowledge to inform reports that include knowledge-keepers' observations of climate impacts on the land and practice ethical space or two-eyed seeing;
- Offer services that include energy inventories and climate-related guiding principles for unceded territories;
- Evolve our work on embodied emissions and clarify what that means for resource extraction and territorial impacts; and
- Support conservation efforts through the services that we provide.

## Articles Related to Indigenous Culture

### Article 11

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

### Article 12

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

### Article 13

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places, and persons.

### Article 24

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals, and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.
2. Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.

## Article 25

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

## Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

**In support of these articles, CEA will listen and learn, so that distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural Indigenous institutions are reflected in the work that we do, as guided by the communities we work with.**

*Specifically, CEA will:*

- In our work related to new and existing buildings, take every opportunity to promote and support the construction of buildings that support a community's culture and customs;
- Treat with respect and humility, the traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom of the Indigenous people, communities, and Nations that we work with and defer to the rights of Indigenous peoples regarding their cultural and spiritual practices;
- Actively seek out these ways of knowing and, with the Community's permission and approval, let it guide our work, where relevant;
- Always respect and give acknowledgement to the intellectual property and ways of knowing of the Indigenous communities and people we work with;

- Within the scope of the work, CEA will ensure that the knowledge of any ceremonial practices, protocols, or ways of governance that are witnessed will not be shared unless permission is provided by the Indigenous community;
- Provide culturally appropriate training to all CEA staff and Board members;
- Seek out and adhere to community-specific research protocols;
- With permission, support, and collaboration, facilitate opportunities for cultural elements to have a role in any scope of work, including the production of social and multi-media productions;
- Consider customs, traditions, and ceremonies when engaging with communities and where appropriate, encourage the sharing of relevant traditional knowledge, by agreement with knowledge holders, where it will enable us to conduct ourselves in culturally appropriate ways;
- Where a community is willing, be inclusive of the practices that the Indigenous community deems important to share within the project for the betterment of the community and/or CEA employees;
- Invite the inclusion of stories, oral traditions, writing systems and literatures of an Indigenous community, with the permission of the community, to guide and inform a project. Under the direction of the community liaisons, CEA will integrate this knowledge into the proposal, project, and reports to be produced;
- In our reports and events, utilize the names chosen by Indigenous persons or communities in addition to colonial names and spellings. In funding reports, we will provide the chosen name of the community or person in addition to colonial names;
- CEA will ensure that our projects do not reduce access by Indigenous persons to medicinal plants, animals, and minerals on their lands without express permission; and
- Be inclusive, collaborative, and create space for people's narratives to be heard as we go about our work.