



Indigenous Engagement at the Fraser Valley Conservancy

Purpose

The purpose of this Indigenous Engagement Policy is to clearly state why this work matters, when the policy applies, and how it is implemented.

This policy applies whenever Fraser Valley Conservancy (FVC) undertakes ecological enhancement work, land stewardship, community engagement, or conservation planning that intersects with Indigenous rights, title, knowledge, or territorial interests. It will ensure that all such work is undertaken respectfully, collaboratively, and in accordance with Indigenous consent and protocols.

The accompanying Indigenous Engagement Handbook outlines the practical steps, definitions, and processes that guide FVC staff and volunteers in implementing this policy.

Our Commitments

The Fraser Valley Conservancy (FVC) carries out its conservation work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Stó:lō peoples and other Indigenous Nations in the S'ólh Téméxw (Halq'eméylem for "Our Land").

We recognize that Indigenous peoples have cared for the lands and waters of the Fraser Valley since time immemorial, and that ethical conservation here must honour them as the original stewards. We approach this work with humility and sincerity, knowing that building trust and healing relationships after generations of injustice is a long journey.

This policy is guided by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Above all, it affirms FVC's commitment to work in collaborative, respectful, and lasting partnerships with Indigenous communities.

Our commitment is genuine, and we are dedicated to learning, listening, and adapting as we walk this path together with Indigenous peoples.





Guiding Principles

The FVC's current Guiding Principles reflect who we strive to be as an organization and how we aim to conduct ourselves.

Land: We respectfully acknowledge we work on the territory of the Stó:lō peoples in the Fraser Valley. We value what the natural world provides – the air, the water, the fields, and the forests of the Fraser Valley.

Integrity: We incorporate sound science, local ecological knowledge, and the experiences of those who live and work on the land into our work. This is done in a respectful, collaborative, and permitted approach.

Responsibility: We believe every member of our community has a shared responsibility to steward the land.

Community: We recognize the people who stewarded the land before us and continue to work alongside us to care for this valley. We value the beliefs and opinions in our community and the diversity of how we all connect with nature.

Collaboration: We strive to build partnerships with all organizations interested in the protection or stewardship of the Fraser Valley.

Future: We ensure our properties are protected in perpetuity. We undertake our programs with commitment to their long-term success.

Core Values

The following core values have been added to this policy.

Respect

We honour Indigenous rights, title, and sovereignty. This means always treating Indigenous peoples, their knowledge, and their cultural practices with the utmost respect. We recognize that we are guests on Indigenous territories. We seek consent, follow protocols, and defer to Indigenous leadership in matters concerning their land. Respect also means listening to Indigenous perspectives and valuing them in our decision-making.

Relationships

We focus on building strong, trust-based relationships with Indigenous communities, rather than pursuing one-off transactions. We approach each partnership as a long-term relationship of equals, founded on trust, reciprocity, and care for the land. We aim to foster genuine collaboration and working relationships.





Humility

We approach Indigenous engagement with humility – acknowledging that we have much to learn and that Indigenous peoples are the experts of their own lands and culture. We do not assume we have all the answers. Instead, we show up as students as much as teachers.

Accountability

We hold ourselves accountable for our commitments and actions. We will be transparent with our Indigenous partners in all aspects of our relationship, and if circumstances change, we will communicate that openly. To support the implementation of this policy, an Indigenous Engagement Guide outlines the definitions and practices to be followed.

Our Commitments

FVC's Indigenous Engagement Policy sets out clear commitments to guide the work that we do. These commitments were created with guidance from Indigenous partners and reconciliation frameworks including UNDRIP, DRIPA, and TRC.

Respect Indigenous Rights & Consent

We respect that Indigenous Nations have inherent rights and title to their lands. FVC will always seek free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from the appropriate Indigenous communities before starting any project on their territories. If a Nation says “no” or needs time, we will respect that decision. Honouring Indigenous decisions about their land is a baseline for partnership – not just a legal duty, but a moral one.

FPIC means that Indigenous Nations have the right to make decisions about their lands, waters, and cultural interests without pressure, and with full access to clear information before any decisions are requested. FPIC ensures that consent is voluntary, informed, and respected at every stage of a project. By including FPIC in this policy, FVC is committing to uphold this standard in all on-the-ground work and to ensure that Indigenous Nations have the time, information, and agency they need to make decisions that align with their own laws, values, and priorities.

Build Genuine Relationships

We prioritize long-term relationships. This means taking time to get to know each community and building trust gradually. Success for us isn't just measured by acres of land conserved, but by the strength of the partnerships we develop. We commit to being a reliable, consistent presence and a supportive friend to Indigenous partners in caring for the land.

Learn from Indigenous Knowledge

We recognize and respect Indigenous peoples' inherent knowledge of local lands and ecosystems. FVC commits to listening to Indigenous knowledge holders and incorporating their wisdom alongside Western science in our conservation work. By valuing Traditional





Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous leadership, we can co-create better, more inclusive ways to protect nature.

Open, Honest Communication

We will communicate openly, clearly, and respectfully at all times. This means being upfront about our goals, plans, and any potential impacts or constraints. We use plain language and adapt to each community's communication preferences.

Inclusivity & Fairness

We strive to include all impacted Nations in our work. We will do our due diligence to identify any Indigenous communities connected to a project area and reach out early so everyone has a chance to be heard. In areas where territories overlap, we make sure that all Nations have the same information and opportunity to participate. Our activities will respect cultural protocols and create a welcoming environment for Indigenous participants. We are also committed to countering any discrimination or bias within our organization, as outlined in our FVC Personnel Policy Manual.

How We Work Together

Listening First: Our approach to engagement begins with listening and learning. When we reach out to an Indigenous community, our first step is simply to introduce ourselves and hear about the Nation's interests, concerns, and suggestions – before we talk about any project ideas. We want to understand each community's priorities and protocols. Initial meetings may just be about getting to know one another as people, sharing a meal or a walk on the land, rather than diving into business. We take our cues from the community on how to proceed.

Early Outreach: Whenever FVC is considering a new conservation project or land acquisition, we will identify which Indigenous Nations might have an interest or might be affected. Then we will reach out early, at the idea stage, not after decisions are made. By involving Indigenous communities from the very beginning, we will ensure their knowledge and concerns shape the project from the start. This early notification is an expression of respect and helps avoid misunderstandings down the road.

Respecting Protocols and Pace: We recognize that each Nation has its own governance and ways of doing things. FVC will respect each community's protocols, decision-making processes, and timelines. We are prepared to go at the pace that each community is comfortable with. Some Nations may jump into discussing a joint project, while others may prefer a slower pace or have more immediate issues to address first – and that's okay. If a community is not ready or able to engage right away, we will keep the door open and stay in touch with friendly updates or check-ins over time. We won't treat a lack of immediate





response as a refusal; instead, we remain available and supportive for the long term. Relationship-building cannot be rushed, and FVC is in it for the long haul.

Working With Communities: When opportunities arise, we look for ways to work together with Indigenous communities on projects that matter to them. Rather than only pursuing our own agenda, early in the project development process we will engage with our Indigenous partners to determine their conservation or cultural priorities and how they align with project outcomes.

For example, if a First Nation is interested in habitat restoration, species monitoring, youth environmental education, or establishing an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area, FVC can offer support – whether it's technical expertise, helping hands, or assistance finding funding. Even small actions, like participating in a community river clean-up or cultural event, are valuable. By showing up and helping with community-led initiatives (when invited), we demonstrate that we're here as partners, not just to obtain support for FVC's own projects.

Throughout all our interactions, we remain flexible and patient. We seek guidance on cultural protocols whenever needed. We know we will make mistakes along the way but commit to acknowledging and learning from them. Our goal is to walk alongside Indigenous Nations in caring for the land, in a spirit of mutual respect and support.

Accountability & Learning

We know that having a policy is only the first step – what truly matters is putting these words into action. To ensure we live up to our commitments, FVC is establishing clear ways to guide and implement our Indigenous engagement efforts. We will keep our members, supporters, and Indigenous partners informed about what we have accomplished so that we remain transparent.

We view this policy and our approach as a living, learning process. We will regularly review what is working and what isn't, and we will invite feedback from Indigenous partners on how we can improve. All feedback will be taken seriously. Our practices and policies will be reviewed and amended accordingly. FVC is committed to continuous learning – through training, self-reflection, and listening to Indigenous voices – so that our engagement becomes stronger and more respectful over time. The FVC board will review and update this Indigenous Engagement Policy every five years, or earlier as needed to ensure it remains relevant and true to our guiding principles.





An Invitation to Walk Together

We welcome this opportunity to expand and strengthen all our Indigenous relationships. We invite community members, knowledge keepers and leaders to guide us in how we can improve by engaging in open dialogue throughout our journey of reconciliation.

By working and learning together, we believe we can build a better future – one grounded in respect, humility, accountability, and genuine relationship. Let's continue the conversation and together walk the path of caring for the land.

**This draft policy was approved by the FVC Board of Directors
November 26th, 2025**

