

Plenty Canada is Shaping a Sustainable Future

Learn more about how Plenty Canada is using its Indigenous values to achieve this



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How Plenty Canada's Indigenous Principles Guide the Organization Forward

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Although Plenty Canada began its legacy 48 years ago as a rural community-based non-governmental international development organization, its first project in 1976 was to help Mayan communities in Guatemala reconstruct hundreds of homes and a dozen schools and clinics following a massive earthquake. Those deep connections with Indigenous peoples not only continue to this day but have been amplified significantly in the Western Hemisphere and Africa.

The organization, chaired by

Dr. Dan Longboat, president of the Board of Directors and Associate Professor in the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies at Trent University, transitioned from those early days of broad-based work to having a primary focus on Indigenous peoples beginning in the early 1990s. At that time, the transition was not viewed positively by those who lacked the foresight achieved by Plenty Canada through its dialogues with Indigenous leaders such as Dr. John Mohawk, William

Commanda, Art Soloman, Peigi Wilson, Katsi Cook, Oren Lyons, Dr. Jose Barreiro, Tim Johnson, and many others.

It was a difficult and challenging, but prescient and ultimately rewarding decision. Over time the voices of resistance became muted by a number of high-profile events, including Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings, the compounding national tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the publicized lack of potable water in First Nations

communities, and growing data on persistent health and income disparities, all of which have vindicated the organization's work with Indigenous peoples internationally, and, at home.

As Plenty Canada approaches 2025 it does so with great pride for having acted upon its own vision and agency, guided by a call to consciousness and resolute quest for justice for Indigenous peoples.

The organization gained distinction for its innovation in the international development field for blending science with the

humanities (Two-Eyed Seeing) to design programs that meet the distinct needs of its partners. It was among the first to use solar voltaic panels to power its remote facilities in the mountains of Lesotho, Africa in 1981. That commitment to "Seventh Generation" Indigenous values continues to be on display as both of the organization's offices, in Lanark, Ontario and Six Nations of the Grand River (the most populous First Nation within Canada), are powered by solar electricity to achieve carbon neutrality.



GUATEMALA REBUILD © COURTESY OF PLENTY CANADA



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SIX NATIONS SOLAR POWERED OFFICE © COURTESY OF PLENTY CANADA



LANARK SOLAR POWERED OFFICE © COURTESY OF PLENTY CANADA

Jump forward to just the past few years as Plenty Canada continues to build upon its Indigenous intellectual foundation; the accomplishments of the organization are game-changing. Here are but a few highlights:

- The lead development organization that nurtured, guided, and established the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network as the official convener of UNESCO's Niagara Escarpment Biosphere, which runs from Niagara to Tobermory. In addition to launching the Network as a co-governance organization with the support of Environment and Climate Change Canada, Plenty Canada successfully completed the required 10-year Periodic Review that will secure the UNESCO designation for another decade.
- With the support of the Greenbelt Foundation, the creation of an online Indigenous ecological resource entitled

the *Greenbelt Indigenous Botanical Survey*. Resulting from three plus years of planning, research, and collaboration by Plenty Canada and the University of Guelph, with the involvement of Brock University, Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network, and Bruce Trail Conservancy, the *Greenbelt Indigenous Botanical Survey* features a listing of Indigenous plants identified at 69 plots within 23 Indigenous historic sites throughout Ontario's Greenbelt.

- Powering forward operational practices that virtually eliminate connections to the grid to make the organization extremely energy efficient and sufficient. For four decades, Plenty Canada's main office has served as an important gathering place for cross-cultural work. With resourcing from the Federal Government Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Employment and Social Development Canada, and consultation with Douglas

Cardinal, over the past two years its remote rural headquarters complex has been transformed into a site that features a significant volume of solar energy generation, environmentally sustainable windows and siding, new sustainable heating and water systems, newly furnished rooms for classes and lodging, accessibility, and much more. Applying technical and cultural knowledge with a commitment to "living its values," few organizations have achieved this level of integrated sustainability.

- In association with the Niagara Parks Commission the publication of the coffee-table general interest book *Landscape of Nations: Beyond the Mist*. Drawing upon the meta narratives of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek cultures, archaeological data, British Indian Department records, Indigenous languages, private correspondence, testimony, proclamations, memoirs, stunningly

beautiful artworks, and photographs and objects from the collections of numerous museums, libraries, and archives, *Landscape of Nations: Beyond the Mist* illuminates how things got to be the way they are concerning the oscillating relations between Canada and the original peoples and nations who helped secure its existence.

- Plenty Canada, in partnership with Ontario Nature, and in collaboration with the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, is leading the Two-Eyed Seeing to Share Knowledge of Ontario's Breeding Birds project, which supports Indigenous communities to lead initiatives that align with their bird-related priorities, including increased protection and recovery of birds at risk and culturally significant birds, youth on the land programming, and much more. The project has so far directly supported 23 Indigenous communities and connected with many more.



KARL DOCKSTADER. PHOTO ©MARKZELINSKI.COM



THE HEALING PLACE IN SHANLY, ONTARIO © COURTESY OF PLENTY CANADA

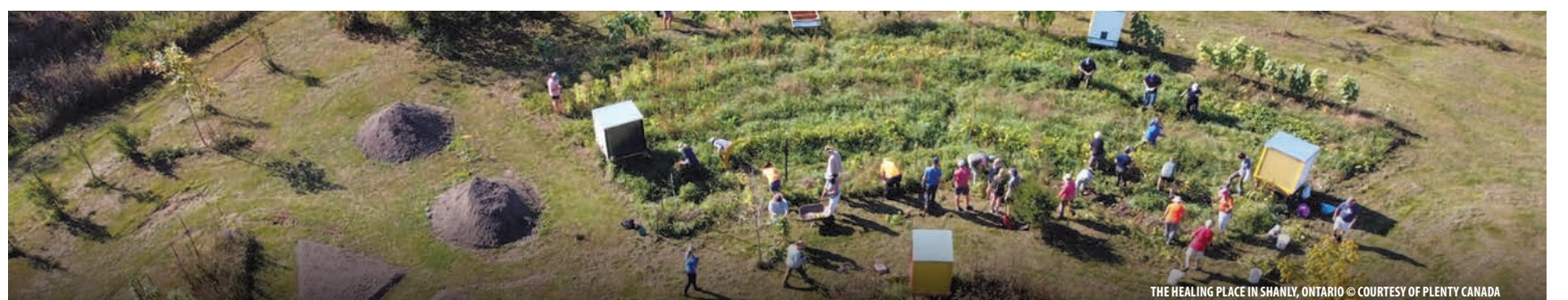
The implications for Indigenous cultural, historical, and environmental preservation in the areas where Plenty Canada works are profound. Based upon a philosophical foundation that includes the Seven Grandfather Teachings of Love, Humility, Courage, Generosity, Respect, Truth, and Wisdom, and with decisions made in the best interest of the Seventh Generation, Plenty Canada continues its focus on environmental stewardship and sustainable activities involving Indigenous peoples.

Long before the international community ratified the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 (with Canada's late adoption coming in 2016), Plenty Canada has been active, remaining

focused on Indigenous issues that were seemingly invisible yesterday, but are obvious today.

And, all these years later the organization continues to work with and support Mayan communities in Guatemala and elsewhere, including rural communities in South Africa. It has also interpreted UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals from Indigenous perspectives and works closely with Indigenous youth on many projects. That's a reflection of honour, commitment, and loyalty; the earnest hallmarks of Indigenous engagement.

Please assist Plenty Canada by supporting its vital work. To learn more and to donate, visit plentycanada.com



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