

Arcadis IBI Group: Statement of Commitment to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples

The Context

The rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada—including 634 recognized First Nations, the communities of Inuit Nunangat, and distinct Metis Nations and communities—are recognized and affirmed in Section 35 of the 1982 Canadian *Constitution Act*.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Indigenous Peoples in Canada were stripped of their rights. Successive governments implemented colonial legislation, including the 1876 Indian Act and subsequent amendments like the 1884 Potlatch Law, which made cultural expression illegal—the impacts of which are still omnipresent today. In 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) characterized colonization in Canada as “the processes by which Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed of their lands and resources, subjected to external control, and targeted for assimilation and, in some cases, extermination.”¹

To move into the future, we must acknowledge the past and take action towards reconciliation. In 2022, Member of Parliament Leah Gazan (Wood Mountain Lakota Nation) tabled a motion calling on the Federal House of Commons to recognize Indian residential schools in Canada as an act of genocide, which passed by unanimous consent.² This motion followed the discovery of over 200 unmarked burial sites at the Kamloops Residential school and prompting investigations at the other 140-federally-run Residential Schools across the country. Canada has taken important steps, such as formally recognizing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and implementing the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to begin a process of healing and recognize the devastation caused by colonization.

Arcadis IBI Group supports reconciliation efforts, and we believe it is an ongoing journey to learn and grow as a community. Our commitment is found in Arcadis’ [Human Rights Policy](#) and is the core of our identity. We recognize that through our work, we share in the opportunity to shape our world.

Our Guiding Principles

At Arcadis IBI Group, our global vision is “Improving Quality of Life by better understanding the human experience and connecting it with our scalable asset knowledge.” In Canada, we are dedicated to building and growing relationships with Indigenous Peoples. For over twenty years, specialists working with Arcadis IBI Group have collaborated with First Nation, Inuit and Metis partners on projects such as environmental remediation and assessment, sustainable energy solutions, broadband access, civil engineering, infrastructure, architecture, and regional planning. We can be counted as a trusted partner that understands the many ways in which projects are undertaken, assessed, and completed.

Our vision for Indigenous Relations and Community Engagement is guided by an Indigenous-led framework called the 4Rs: Respect, Relevance, Responsibility, and Reciprocity.³ We actualize this framework through the following:

- **Respecting** the history, culture, and contemporary contributions of Indigenous Peoples in Canada
- Establishing **relevant** and sustained, long-term relationships that are steered by the self-interest of the firm’s partner Indigenous communities
- Acting **responsibly** by actively working towards removing the structural and systemic barriers that affect Indigenous Peoples in Canada both internally and externally to the company, this includes:

- committing to international frameworks such as UNDRIP and the International Labour Organization’s Convention 169
- adhering to national reconciliation frameworks put forward by the TRC and MMIWG
- Building **reciprocal** bonds by investing in Indigenous communities, establishing procurement metrics to build business capacity, and where possible enabling equity-sharing partnerships.

We commit to this framework by creating an open, diverse, and inclusive workplace for Indigenous Employment, and growing relationships with our Indigenous partner communities, clients, and suppliers for prosperous Business Development. As a business, through our projects and services, we will continue to have a long-lasting positive impact in Indigenous communities and create opportunities for them beyond the conclusion of a single project. For our Indigenous employees, we strive to open a pathway of development that enables growth and achievement within their chosen fields. To this end, in September of 2022, through the actions and leadership of Indigenous staff members, the Indigenous Employee Network (IEN) was created to provide safe, inclusive spaces that foster respect for Indigenous cultures and lived experiences.

Our Commitment

Our commitment emphasizes the notion that trust is the foundation of Indigenous Relations. Through collaboration and partnership, we contribute to a sustainable, respectful, and prosperous future. All actors within society have a role to play in reconciliation, including the private sector. Professional organizations in Canada have undertaken important work in this regard.⁴ Following their lead, we commit to adopting the principles and standards set out by the TRC, such as Call to Action #92, which asks that companies:

- **Commit to meaningful consultation** by building respectful relationships, abiding by federal legislative frameworks such as the Impact Assessment Act, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before proceeding with projects.
- **Ensure that Indigenous employees have equitable access** to jobs, training, and education opportunities, and that Indigenous communities gain long-term sustainable benefits.
- **Provide education for management and staff** on the history and legacy of residential schools, UNDRIP, Treaties and rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations through training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Furthermore, Arcadis IBI Group commits to upholding the TRC’s following Principles of Reconciliation:

- **Principle Number Four:** Take constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous Peoples’ education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
- **Principle Number Five:** Contribute to the creation of a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.
- **Principle Number Eight:** Enable Indigenous Peoples’ cultural revitalization and the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land.
- **Principle Number Nine:** Support reconciliation through political advocacy, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.

Using the above as a benchmark, Arcadis IBI Group’s actions, including those of our leadership, will include setting achievable targets and measurable goals. Using our influence throughout our supply chain networks, we will advocate for the adoption of these principles outside the company. Each year, we intend to report on our progress. In alignment with our corporate values, we pledge to develop mutually beneficial, sustainable partnerships that bring life to our vision in relation with Indigenous Peoples. As a committed member to the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business’ Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) certification program, we

embed specific drivers of organizational change into our company structure to enable progressive and positive relations.

To bolster this Statement of Commitment, we will uphold and implement the following:

1. Embrace diversity and inclusion as vital components of a successful, engaging, and productive workplace through the Global Diversity, Belonging and Human Rights (DBHR) initiatives, policies, commitments, and the Affinity Group Community, including the IEN⁵
2. Offer respect and transparency in our discussions and external interactions with Indigenous Peoples, their businesses, and communities
3. Place respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity at the centre of these relationships
4. Develop an action plan in collaboration with Indigenous groups to promote fairness and equity
5. Act with good will and intent in all our initiatives (i.e., projects, training, and policies)
6. Ensure that any contracting with Indigenous rights holders or communities is influenced and characterized by fairness, reasonableness, is absent of bias and harassment, and has free, prior and informed consent
7. Establish and implement procurement metrics that ensure Indigenous-led businesses are prioritized on key projects

The content of this commitment statement applies to all employees, divisions, and business units within Arcadis IBI Group in Canada, and we aim to work with business partners and subcontractors that embrace similar values. We are guided by our relationships and recognize Indigenous Peoples as the original caretakers of the lands in which we live and work.



Michael Paczkowski

President, Arcadis Canada

¹ *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Canada, 2019, pp. 231-1

² The October 27, 2022, motion reads: "That, in the opinion of the House that the government must recognize what happened in Canada's Indian residential schools as genocide, as acknowledged by Pope Francis and in accordance with article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide."

³ See Kirkness, V.J., and R. Barnhardt. "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's – Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility". *Journal of American Indian Education*. Vol. 30, No. 3, May 1991, pp. 1–15.

⁴ For example, Engineers Canada and the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada (RAIC), have undertaken important work in this regard. Engineers Canada Operation Imperative 9 on Diversity and Inclusion, proposes a set of [recommendations](#) to the Federal Government of Canada to increase Indigenous Peoples' access to post-secondary engineering education. These are outlined in the reports, "[Indigenous Engineering in Canada](#)," and "[Indigenous Inclusion in Engineering](#)." In 2016, the RAIC created a task force to "foster and address Indigenous Design" each year holds an international symposium on Indigenous Architecture and Design. Furthermore, the RAIC has adopted UNDRIP and is currently pursuing a framework based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

⁵ Arcadis IBI Group follows four Global DBHR Interventions while the Global Ethnicity & Heritage Affinity Group has established Commitments in six focus areas: (1) advocacy, education, and awareness; (2) employee well-being and safety; (3) recruitment and retention; (4) leadership and professional development; (5) client & project delivery; and (6) validation and best practice.