

**RAIR Collective: Relational Accountability for Indigenous Rematriation**  
*Project Vision*  
*Working Document*

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**Our vision:**

The purpose of this research project is to support grassroots Indigenous rematriation<sup>1</sup> and (re)connection to land. We seek to support the convergence of food sovereign peoples in ways that advance dialogue and action for Indigenous land rematriation. This work centres Indigenous women and two-spirit presence, experiences and relationships to land and traditional territories. In turn, our work is grounded in emergent feminist, decolonial, and activist methodologies.

The **goals** of our project are to:

1. Develop resources for Indigenous women, two spirit people, and their communities and relations to reconnect with and return to their traditional territories. To do so, the project has allocated its economic and social resources directly for Indigenous women and their communities. As well, Indigenous women and feminist modalities will remain at the centre of the decision-making process. The priority of the research collective is to use the resources that we have been given to serve this community.
2. Build relationships for food sovereignty that centre Indigenous land and food systems. This project will bring together both Indigenous and settler peoples in dialogue about land and rematriation in ways that are guided by our purpose to centre Indigenous relations to land. The goal of these dialogues is to advance understanding of and mobilize action around new ways of thinking about and relating to land. This includes not only legal ‘owners’ of land, but those who are on the land in various ways (e.g. renters, hunters, gatherers, and those involved in ceremonies and rituals etc.).
3. Decolonize relationships to one another and to land. This project is grounded in practices of relational accountability. We aim to remain accountable to one another and to share power. This work challenges hierarchies and affirms alternative ways of working together. Our work is based on a recognition that we each come from different places and experiences, and that our experiences are shaped by unjust power divisions. We continue to ask: how do we work together in a good way, in relation to each other and to the land? In this sense, we see our process itself as a method of research. We strive to build intentional and accountable relationships with each other and those within the broader movement for food sovereignty.

## Objectives:

- We will engage in outreach, writing and knowledge creation practices that extend beyond academic forums and that benefit the communities to which we are accountable. We prioritize community-based knowledge dissemination and aim to publish popular resources as well as audio and visual mediums, including podcasts and/or videos.
- We strive to come together and share space as much as possible. We aim to prioritize in-person meetings rather than phone and webinar communication.
- Popular education models. We strive to work collectively and build community with each other. We will explore the methodology of ‘encounters’ as a way of building authentic relationships based on shared struggle. The methodology of the encounter prioritizes participants own experiences and worldviews, and allows them to shape the agenda (i.e. deciding what to prioritize and discuss, and what research looks like). It also encourages learning and solidarity through collective work, skill-sharing, art-builds and opportunities to share knowledge. Through the encounter process, we will mobilize knowledge and share what we’ve been doing. We are also interested in working with other groups who have been doing encounters in different parts of the world.
- We prioritize hiring Indigenous community-based research assistants and coordinators who have connections with the communities we serve.
- We aim to work collectively to explore protocol(s) before forming the Indigenous Advisory Committee. The Committee will be made up of Indigenous folks who are connected to the communities we serve. We will provide honoraria for their work, guidance and support. Together, we will take direction from the committee to explore the language, ways, means, places and timelines through which to conduct the encounter process.

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<sup>i</sup> The term repatriation has been described as actions “to restore a living culture to its rightful place on Mother Earth,” or conditions where lands, waters and our relationships to them are intentionally returned to their natural or spiritual context (Newcomb, 1995). Bernedette Muthien has described repatriation as “reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources, instead of the more patriarchally associated repatriation. It simply means back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, to life and co-creation, rather than patriarchal destruction and colonisation, a reclamation of germination.” If, as Fanon describes, colonization has violently structured how we come to know and relate to the world. We understand the concept of repatriation as an act of restructuring how we relate to the land, one another, and ourselves. It encompasses the collection of thoughts, feelings and behaviours (both internal and interpersonal) that intentionally allow us to (re)connect, (re)interpret and (re)learn in ways that prioritize and restore an embodied and spiritual relationship to land.