



## THE CIRCLE

# Moving Through Fear into Abundance

November 15 - National Philanthropy Day. A prompt to pause - look back at the stumbles, triumphs and opportunities of the sector over the past year. As Canada marked 2017 as a sesquicentennial milestone, philanthropy added a crucial voice to this dialogue. Whether organizations chose to celebrate, unsettle or stand in unity, there was an urgency to build an equitable future for all. Today is an invitation for us to look forward, as a sector dedicated to the distribution of goodwill or human welfare, are today's practices and systems aligned with our goals?

As news headlines, trending topics and racist rhetoric continues breaking our hearts; the desire to do good is no longer enough. In conversations with signatories of The Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action, the resounding reason behind this hesitancy is fear. Perhaps this is fear of not moving forward in a good way. On a deeper level this fear may be toward the unknown - in order for philanthropic organizations to contribute to the collective path of reconciliation, culture must shift on an organizational and systemic level. Change is uncomfortable - but it's time for philanthropy to be uncomfortable. It's time to rethink why we do what we do, and adapt how we do it.

Perhaps philanthropy can look to Covey's Mindsets of Scarcity and Abundance to recognize where we are and illustrate the way forward.

Scarcity Mentality is rooted in only having so much. Perhaps for philanthropy this is the understanding that if dollars and practices shifted one way, it would mean less for everybody else. Reconciliation calls on philanthropy to evaluate its willingness to share grant dollars as well as recognition and power distribution.

The way forward can be found in adopting Abundance Mindsets, this involves the identification that there is enough out there to go around. It calls for sharing on all levels: recognition, funding, capacity, decision-making and prestige. This abundance fosters space for creativity and innovation to flourish it is in this space philanthropy can contribute fruitfully alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

After a summer of transition and refresh, The Circle invited philanthropic leaders into a space of abundance. After a few hours of storytelling and deep listening in this space there was a clear sense of calm connection. Although we weren't being hosted in an Indigenous community, sitting in ceremony or listening to elders, we were connected to the necessary work ahead. We sat together sharing how we were working to breathe life into The Declaration of Action.

### We focused on five insights:

-  Individual level actions & behaviours
-  Organizational level actions & behaviours
-  Indigenous engagement
-  Aha Moments
-  If I could do it again, I would...

Bruce Lawson, *President of The Counselling Foundation of Canada*, shared his reflections after spending a day of abundance and collective dialogue with us,

*“True reconciliation is going to take time, won't always be easy and often will be messy. It will only be as a result of deep listening, opening lines of communications and building trusting relationships. Philanthropy has a role to play in this process. The fact that many foundations' endowments were generated through activities, like natural resource exploitation, means it is incumbent upon the philanthropic sector to walk this path. Our ability to bring people together, convene and foster dialogue gives us a unique position to help be bridge builders.”*

Today, on National Philanthropy Day, we invite philanthropy to move through fear into abundance. Focus action on the long term, because something is not falling in place right now, does not mean it won't fit in later. Understand that reconstructing philanthropy does not take away from its legacy of goodwill; it gives it room to evolve. Invite flexibility when thinking about how you disburse your annual grant dollars; increase opportunity for trust based approaches to guide you and choose to invest in Indigenous-led and developed solutions.

There is enough to go around, let us recognize abundance together.

