

## **ŚW,ØENENITEL Indigenous Foods System Initiative - “Doing Good Work Together”**

ŚW,ØENENITEL Initiative is a living entity, and is meant to embody its name through all aspects of ‘doing good work together.’ ŚW,ØENENITEL implies that it is an action or a continuous motion, that represents constant transformation and growth.

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### **Purpose:**

ŚW,ØENENITEL supports Indigenous-led, community and place based initiatives through grants, programs, and resources within the territories of the WŚÁNEĆ, Lekwungen, Tsuk, and Pacheedaht. We assert ourselves as Indigenous leaders by partnering with peoples, communities, and families to fulfill our collective responsibility to care for the land.

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### **Mandate:**

The Initiative will lead by example to demonstrate that:

- Processes of working and relating need to be directly accountable to the lands we’re on;
  - Accountability to Indigenous food systems is interwoven in all partnerships, projects, and processes;
  - Values of sustenance and restoration need to be enacted through partnership to the land; and
  - Communication and collaboration need to reflect the spirit of ŚW,ØENENITEL.
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### **Goal:**

Our aim is to foster and increase our communities’ collective work with local Indigenous food and knowledge systems.

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**Objective:**

- The work will affirm and support accountability processes that center Indigenous worldviews, experiences, and ways of being - based in the place we are working (i.e. “place based Indigenous protocol” which is an inherent responsibility of Indigenous law);
- The Initiative will facilitate permanent changes to granting models, programming and reporting, etc. by prioritizing land-based leadership;
- This priority embodies the ethos of local governance that is represented by teachings, experiences, and practices of sustenance and reciprocity;
- The foundation of practicing the values of responsibility to place are rooted in the Long House which reflect our value and economic systems, where wealth is in the form of abundance and the ability to give; and
- By building and maintaining relationships with communities and leaders, we intend to have a long-term impact by sharing skills, creating local resources, and building and upholding leadership amongst ourselves as local peoples.

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**Guiding Principles:**

The ‘good work’ of the Initiative is based on **servicing the land** (territories) and building relationships, following the SKÁLS (roughly translated, “sacred laws of the land”) and SNA’WY’ULTH (roughly translated, “ancestral teachings”). The ŚW,ŒENENITEL Initiative is guided by the 13 Moons Lunar Cycle that depicts four seasons that are culturally important to the local peoples in whose territories we serve.

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**Scope:**

The ŚW,ŒENENITEL Initiative is led by local Indigenous peoples, informed by place based Indigenous worldviews and frameworks.

The work of the ŚW,ŒENENITEL Initiative is **centred on building up relationships** with the peoples in Indigenous communities and families in order to work together for the land.

ŚW,ØENENITEL actively serves the local peoples and communities ancestral to the four local territories, living both on and off-reserve, and actively supports Indigenous peoples from other territories to practice place based protocols to the land.

The **decision-making process** of the ŚW,ØENENITEL Initiative is carried out by the ŚW,ØENENITEL Leadership Team, informed by and in collaboration with the ŚW,ØENENITEL Guiding Group and Indigenous community leaders from the territories the Initiative serves.

The **foundation** of the ŚW,ØENENITEL Initiative lives with the practice of place based Indigenous laws and leadership. This determines the conduct of the Initiative, and the basis of all our relationships. This foundation is the lens through which we write policies and agreements on behalf of ŚW,ØENENITEL.

The work of the Initiative is documented in the appropriate form, relevant to the type of relationship to ŚW,ØENENITEL. The **process and procedures** are integral for maintaining the integrity of the foundation of ŚW,ØENENITEL and Indigenous leadership.

**The ŚW,ØENENITEL Leadership Team is responsible for the Initiative structure, operations, administration, strategic and program planning, reporting, resource gathering and development, and information sharing.**

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### **Accountability:**

**The leadership of ŚW,ØENENITEL is accountable to our ancestral responsibilities and knowledges, which is shown in *how we work together*.** Any partner or collaborator with the Initiative is liable to the decentralization of Western thought. The Initiative, in our entirety, is accountable to the generations that will follow, and for honouring the generations of ancestors before us.

The Initiative launched in the Spring of 2019 and has **grown through relationships** developed while learning how to be in service to the local communities and lands. The ŚW,ØENENITEL Initiative is partnered with Indigenous peoples and communities where the Initiative operates. The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative Roundtable (CRFAIR) is the administrative partner of the Initiative. The Horner Foundation and Victoria Foundation are funding partners of

the Initiative, with additional foundations and charities involved as necessary. Each partner of the ŚW,ØENENITEL Initiative has a specific role to carry out, in our respective areas related to Indigenous foods systems, locally. The settler-colonial organizations and institutions do not set the direction of the work, however, they are directly accountable to place based granting and their colonial legacies.

ŚW,ØENENITEL **supports projects and/or partnerships** that conduct work within Lekwungen, WŚÁNEĆ, Tsuk, and Pacheedaht territories - which is where the Initiative currently operates. There are 9 Band Nations that occupy these territories: Songhees, Esquimalt, Tsartlip/WJOLELP, Tseycum/WSIKEM, Tsawout/SŦÁUTW, Pauquachin/BOŦEĆEN, T'Sou-ke, Scia'new (Beecher Bay) and Pacheedaht. ŚW,ØENENITEL does not define our relationships by colonial borders, and recognizes all the dynamic relationships we have with our relatives, territories, languages, cultures, and food systems.

**The Initiative seeks to center local protocols and Indigenous laws of the land.** In alignment with this commitment, the Initiative prioritizes work and communities that are ancestral to the local Indigenous lands listed above. Our next priority is given to other Indigenous peoples partnered with local peoples and/or communities, fulfilling their obligation to local protocols and lands. For ŚW,ØENENITEL, Indigeneity is not dependent or limited to Band membership and Indian Status, or definitions given by Canada or any colonial entity.

Colonial intrusion of Indigenous lands has dehumanized Indigenous cultures and sustenance economies, where definitions of wealth, currency, and value are undermined. Colonialism has introduced a foreign economy and currency to Indigenous lands and communities that has forced poverty into our lives. Money is a deliberate barrier imposed on Indigenous peoples as a tool of colonization. **Our understanding of wealth, as Indigenous peoples, reflects the land itself, where our economies are based in abundance rather than exploitation and scarcity.**

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