

October 1, 2024

Letter of Intention of the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) for Participation in the
Confluence Cohort of the First Light Learning Journey

CLF is honored to have the opportunity to submit this letter of intention in support of the participation of four of our staff members in First Light’s upcoming Confluence cohort. Three of our staff members have had the privilege of participating in prior cohorts: Sean Mahoney, VP, Maine, and Phelps Turner, Senior Attorney, participated jointly on CLF’s behalf; and Kate Sinding Daly, SVP, Law and Policy, participated as a then-board member of the Open Space Institute (OSI). All three found the experience to be personally and professionally transformational. And all three have carried what they learned into their everyday work at CLF. As CLF is in the midst of an organizational process to deepen our engagement with Indigenous communities throughout our geographic footprint, we are excited about the prospect of four additional staff members – representing programmatic, geographic, tenure and role diversity – joining the next First Light cohort.

Following Sean and Phelps’ participation in First Light, through our DEI Committee, CLF established an Engaging Indigenous Communities (EIC) task force, which was co-led by Phelps. The EIC task force consisted of 11 staff members, including two of the current applicants to the Confluence cohort, Heather Govern and Melissa Paly. The task force concluded its work with the issuance of a document, “One Year of Engaging Indigenous Communities Task Force,” which laid out four primary recommendations for the organization. These were: (1) dedicating resources and staff time to carry CLF beyond the EIC task force’s work; (2) developing a recommendation on CLF land acknowledgments; (3) providing more training for CLF staff on working with Indigenous communities; and (4) increasing CLF’s partnerships with Indigenous communities. We are pleased that we have begun to make progress on each of these recommendations.

To assist in its review of the report and decision-making about next steps, CLF’s Executive Council retained an expert consultant, Nellis Kennedy-Howard, who is Navajo. She has to date led a two-day retreat with the Executive Council and a one-day retreat with CLF’s Senior Team. Outcomes from the former retreat included a new land acknowledgement policy, and commitments to advance the remaining three recommendations from the task force. We are in the process of scheduling a second one-day retreat for the Senior Team that will build on the foundational work we completed in the first and to specifically focus on the question of what it would mean and require for CLF to prioritize engaging with Indigenous Communities. This is to

be followed by a full-staff training. We are looking for opportunities for Nellis to partner with one or more New England-based Indigenous consultants to conduct the full-staff training(s).

Regarding the fourth of the task force's recommendations, as part of its report, the EIC task force conducted a landscape analysis of CLF's past and existing work with Indigenous communities, which has been recently updated by another of the current applicants, Phoebe DeMeerleer, and another colleague as part of our ongoing work with Nellis. This analysis shows that our work already spans all six of our areas of programmatic focus, as well as all six states within our footprint. Of note, under the leadership of the fourth current applicant, Jennifer Felt, CLF's Oceans program has been doing its own work for over six months with Indigenous consultant, Casey Thornbrugh, who is Wampanoag, to identify and operationalize opportunities for meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities across its work.

As CLF works on a conscientious and responsible process for deepening and, ultimately, establishing a plan to prioritize, our work with Indigenous partners, we know that the more CLF staff members who are able to participate in First Light, the more meaningful that work will be.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of intention in support of our current applicants' participation in the upcoming Confluence cohort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Molyneux". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chair, Board of Trustees
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