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PhiLab

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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le **Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie** (PhiLab), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé « Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes ». Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom d'« Évaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l'enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux ». Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d'information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d'acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou des partenaires.

Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The **Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy** (PhiLab), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called "Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations". From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations' knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

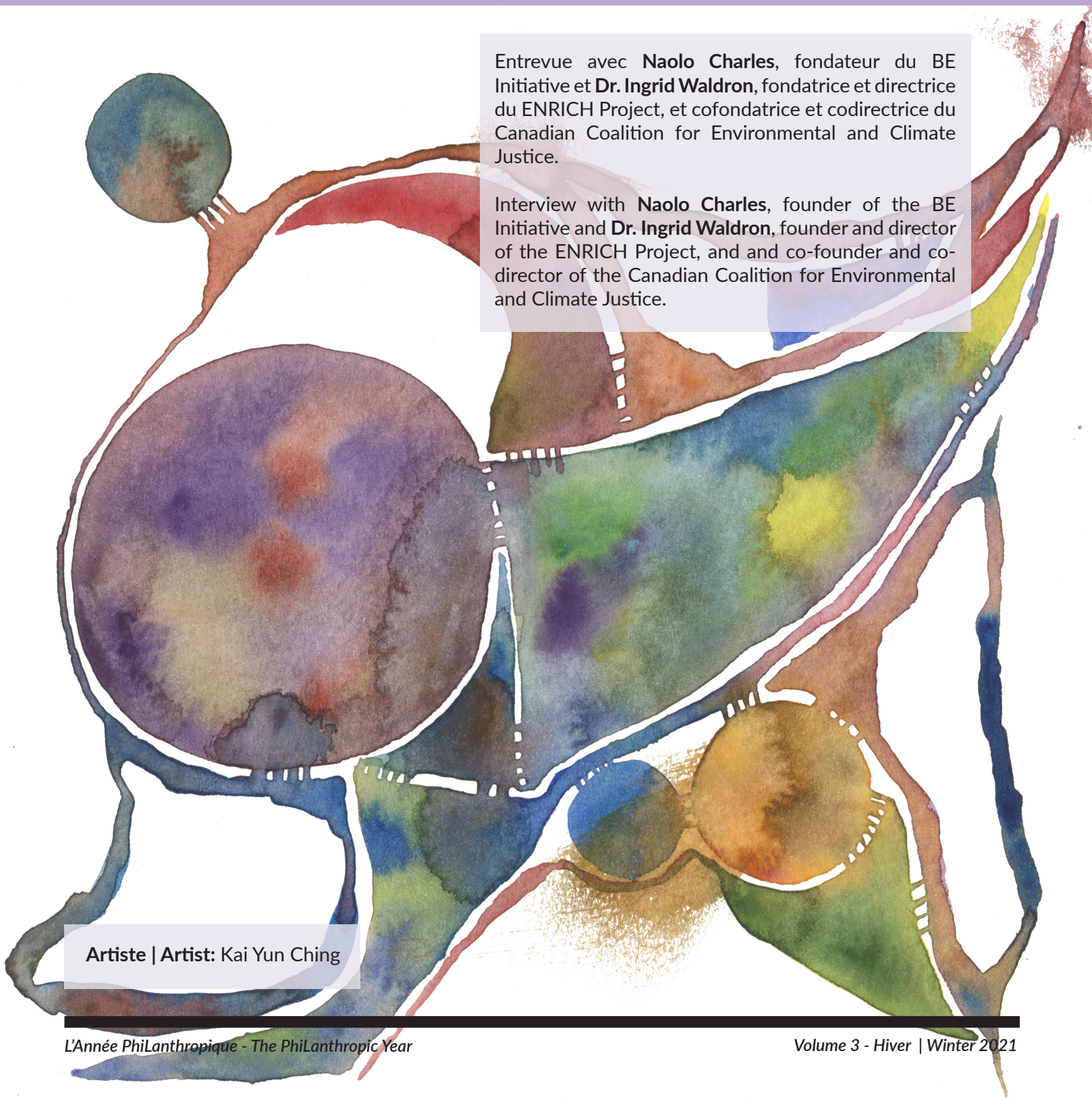
The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
Canada

ENTREVUE | INTERVIEW

Entrevue avec **Naolo Charles**, fondateur du BE Initiative et **Dr. Ingrid Waldron**, fondatrice et directrice du ENRICH Project, et cofondatrice et codirectrice du Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice.

Interview with **Naolo Charles**, founder of the BE Initiative and **Dr. Ingrid Waldron**, founder and director of the ENRICH Project, and and co-founder and co-director of the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice.



Artiste | Artist: Kai Yun Ching

ENTREVUE | INTERVIEW

Dr. Ingrid Waldron & Naolo Charles

By Isidora G. Sidorovska, Ph.D. candidate at the School of Planning at Waterloo University

Isidora Sidorovska is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Planning at Waterloo University, where she is examining planning process outcomes as competencies for coping with environmental turbulence in nonprofits. Isidora has over 10 years of professional experience in community development in Southeastern Europe, with an emphasis on good governance, institutional reform, and public participation. Isidora's research interests include strategic planning, nonprofit management, nonprofit accountability, and the funder-grantee relationship.

Dr. Ingrid Waldron *is Professor and HOPE Chair in Peace and Health in the Global Peace and Social Justice Program at McMaster University. She is the founder and Director of the Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities and Community Health Project, and the co-founder and co-Director of the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice. Her research inspired the Netflix documentary "There's Something in the Water", which is based on her book of the same name, as well as a federal environmental racism bill.*

Naolo Charles *is the founder of the Black Environmental Initiative (BE Initiative), an organization dedicated to the environmental engagement and protection of Black and Brown communities. BE Initiative not only works for diversifying the environmental sector, but it also aims to create a green job and green entrepreneurship revolution that benefits black communities. Naolo co-founded the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice (CCCEJ) with Dr. Ingrid Waldron, a coalition meant to support racialized communities affected by environmental injustices. Holder of a master's degree in environment, Naolo is also a trainer for the Toronto Community Benefits Network's Next Gen Builders program and for Nature Canada's Work to Grow program where he delivers an anti-racism training course.*

What is the ENRICH project?

Ingrid: ENRICH is the acronym for Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities and Community Health Project. It began in the spring of 2012 as a community-based research initiative that looks at the social, economic, political and health effects of environmental racism in Indigenous and Black communities across Canada. At the time that I founded it, it was just restricted to Nova Scotia, but through our collaboration with MakeWay it expanded its scope to include Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities across Canada. The project uses a multidisciplinary, multimedia approach to address pollution and contamination in local communities. In practice this means working on legislation, policy and education through advocacy,

community mobilization, documentaries, research, and publications in partnership with scientists and other people and organizations. Essentially, I am open to engaging in a diverse set of activities to address community concerns around contamination and pollution, because there is a legacy of environmental racism across Canada in these communities. So, we are looking to address cases that people know about, but to also identify new cases. And it is really a partnership-oriented project where I try to find professionals in different disciplines to address environmental racism from different perspectives and professional expertise. And since it's a community-based project, it is really about developing relationships with local communities and being responsive to their needs.

What is the BE Initiative?

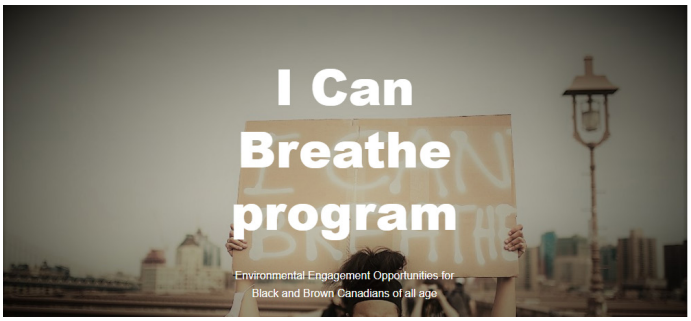
Naolo: The BE Initiative started in 2019, and there are two reasons why I started it. The first reason is that there is lack of diversity in the environmental sector. This is not just my opinion, the sector itself recently recognized its own lack of diversity and many reports confirmed this issue here in Canada, in America and in many countries in the western world[1]. For example, a recent assessment on diversity in clean energy suggests that even green jobs are distributed according to race and that a transition to a green economy is likely to replicate existing social inequalities, if it is not based on inclusion and diversity.

The second reason is that we have a lot of data and evidence that racialized communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental issues, from exposure to chronic air and water pollution to the uneven placement of toxic industries in close proximity to where these communities reside[2]. So when we put the two together, we really see a gap there.

We are trying to fill that gap in part by working in collaboration with other organizations that are a lot more established—and trying to get them to change some practices, but also by starting our own programs of engagement. For example, our *I can breathe program* takes a multi-generational approach to engaging racialized people in environmental issues, coupled with social justice and anti-racism work.

The vision of the BE initiative is to one day get to a point where when we talk about the environment, we are not thinking that it is just a white thing. When we look at the history of the environmental movement in the western world, since its inception, the movement has always been exclusively based on one race and one gender, and the contributions of people of colour have historically been marginalized.

So, getting to a place where when you look at the environmental sector, it is really representative of the diversity of Canadians, and where the environmental issues that racialized communities are experiencing are not seen as secondary - issues that we only tackle once we have dealt with other more pressing issues like police brutality and poverty. And this is why our programs take on a multidimensional approach where we use environmental progress to address some of the other issues present in racialized communities, such as fostering green jobs to tackle unemployment or promoting green investments in Black and Brown communities.



Source: Black Environmental Initiative

You mentioned the National Network to End Environmental Racism in Canada grew from the collaboration between your two initiatives. Can you explain a bit more about how it started and what its priorities and objectives are?

Naolo: The rationale behind starting the Network was to be able to address systemic issues. When it comes to environmental racism, I don't think one organization alone can address that. So the idea was to go out there, build collaborations and partnerships with multiple organizations, and work together on building an environmental justice agenda for Canada.

But what does environmental justice mean in Canada and how can we make it a reality? The level of engagement and mobilization when it comes to environmental justice in Canada is not comparable to what they have in the US, and we are trying to empower this movement here and raise it. One of the first things we want to do with the Network is to act as watchdogs on environmental racism in Canada. The key step is therefore to identify communities that are threatened by environmental racism. Some of them already know their issues, but for others there may be a need for raising awareness on current issues or threats that may happen in the future. And what we try to do is build mechanisms for supporting these communities through training, advocacy, visibility, and access to resources so they can be resilient in the face of environmental racism. This means that the communities affected by environmental racism are not isolated, but they know that there is a group of organizations out there that will listen to them, help them gather resources and support them. That objective implies a lot of research, but also communication and engagement.

Ingrid: One specific strategy to achieve this is a map that we are developing as part of the work with the Network, where we document cases of environmental racism and climate change inequalities across Canada. Most of these cases are known, but there are also those cases of environmental and climate change inequities that a lot of people are unaware of. And most of these cases are in small communities that don't get a lot of attention from media outlets. The map is a data collection tool, but also an educational tool that can be used by community members, activists, and educators to talk about the disproportional impacts of environmental racism in racialized communities. The ENRICH Project already created a map for Nova Scotia that shows an overlap between toxic facility sitting (incinerators, pulp and paper mills) and locations where Black and Indigenous communities reside. The map for the Network will be similar, but will also be more comprehensive and include audio, video, and text. It will also be interactive, modifiable, and owned by the community so it can be used effectively as an education and advocacy tool.

When it comes to longer-term objectives, our goal is to develop a national strategy on environmental racism and climate change impact, one that can be used by governments as well. We want to be the *go-to* organization for the government when they want information, or partnerships and collaborations. We also want to mobilize policymakers and government officials from all key political parties around environmental racism, with the goal of hopefully developing legislation that is passed in the future.

Apart from these objectives we also hope to be able to provide funding to our member organizations and working groups, particularly to those who want to launch campaigns around legislation, awareness raising, and, of course, research. We talked about the fact that we want our organization to be a watchdog, and this means providing support and funding to communities who are impacted directly by these issues so they could do their work. Of course, this means we have more to do in terms of building partnerships with donors and foundations and raising money.

> When it comes to longer-term objectives, our goal is to develop a national strategy on environmental racism and climate change impact, one that can be used by governments as well.

Are the members of the Network strictly formal organizations? Or does the Network include communities and informal groups as well?

Ingrid: Our initial goal was to engage NGOs and formal organizations, but we later agreed that it was important to engage individuals who are doing interesting grassroots work. They are not connected to any organization but have rather formed a group and are doing grassroots mobilizing and organizing that is interesting, sometimes even more interesting [than the work of formal organizations]. So we ended up including big, well-established organizations, but also informal, grassroot initiatives, because they need help the most, and I think we can be very useful to their efforts.

The theme of this issue of the Philanthropic Year is "practices that shift power in philanthropy." How do you see the projects and approaches that you have been developing address power disbalances for the communities you represent? Can you see any impact in these areas and what are some learnings you can share for challenging the status quo?

Ingrid: For me, the most obvious thing is the fact that the founders of these initiatives are Black. And that is key in terms of shifting power. This doesn't necessarily mean that just because you're Black, you know how to do that, because we've all been inculcated with a colonial mentality, and sometimes we don't know it and we might be repeating the mistakes of the colonizer. I am sure I do it, because that's how many of us have been brainwashed, but we're trying to break that cycle. We are Black, we are the founders, and we are trying to ensure that we have a particular vision or view of the issue, but also be inclusive of Black, Indigenous and other marginalized communities.

When I started the ENRICH project, when people thought of environmental racism, they immediately thought of Indigenous people. Because the Indigenous peoples are so closely connected to the land. But, then I started noticing that there were historical Black communities in Nova Scotia who are also dealing with environmental issues, which a lot of people were unaware of. Now I want to use my positioning, which is a Black woman, to correct some of that. In Nova Scotia, I was really the only researcher looking at the Black community and including them in the conversation.

Naolo talked earlier how with racialized people, you are not always aware of how you are excluding other people, particularly if you are more privileged. We have to break that cycle by enabling these communities to lead and not impose upon them what we think is best. It is the same for researchers in academia. We are taught to do what we want, develop our research objectives, and rarely ask the community about what they want. This is how I used to do research, because this is how I was trained. With the ENRICH project I was forced to see it as part of the colonial structure, and that we must start from the communities to address the root cause of environmental racism. We don't want to impose upon the communities what we think they should be doing; it needs to start from them. This means going to Indigenous and Black communities and asking them what they need help with and finding a way to be more responsive. With Indigenous communities, I have had to change the way I look at research. What research in Indigenous communities often looks like is not traditional research of collecting and analyzing data. Research may involve sending out petitions or Go-Fund Me Pages and other activities that many researchers would not categorize as research in the traditional sense of the word. Once again, for me, it is about being responsive to community needs.

Source: Black Environmental Initiative

Naolo: I believe just the fact that we are Black leaders is a big change in the way work is being done. But I can also see other changes. For example, I think earlier there weren't that many Black faces when people were discussing the agenda for the sector, so there were not that many Black perspectives. I think now we remind people of these issues by just being there. So we're bringing the topic to the table. It is also important to note that we are not the only ones in this landscape. This work helped us meet many other like-minded Black, Brown, Indigenous and White environmental justice advocates and our intention with the coalition is to gather these bright minds and form a powerful group that can help raise environmental justice standards in society. And I can say that when I started the BE initiative, Ingrid was probably the only player in Canada with a platform that explained environmental racism, and now we have multiple organizations working on this and more people talking about it.

The existence of the coalition and getting all these organizations to come together is also a form of shifting power, as small organizations can now get bigger influence. And there is also a power shift at the level of individual employees, which sometimes may get limited by the structures in their own organizations but find opportunities to explore new ideas within the coalition.

And having our own space and our authentic practices, even for simple things like hiring people, can also shift power as that leads to other people questioning their own behaviour. So there's the power shifting at the individual level and of people realizing the privilege they have and how they need to do things a little differently, such as being more mindful of not just hiring in our networks but also opening opportunities to people who do not have the privilege of being in our circles.

Eventually, as we speak about environmental racism in society, we must note that there are parts of the country where the reality of systemic racism is still being debated . So every opportunity we get to discuss it in the media becomes even more important. And this is another form of shifting power as it puts a pressure on the public to decide where they stand on these issues, since very few Canadians are actually okay with publicly defending the unfair exposure of some communities to environmental pollution.

You mentioned earlier some exclusionary practices you have encountered in the sector. Can you speak more to these challenges and how can grantmaking foundations better support social and environmental justice initiatives like yours?

Ingrid: There was a study[4] done last year showing that Black-led organizations get less funding in Canada. So that's a fact. While we have raised some funds for our Network—and it is very new, it has been less than a year since we started—we think the work we do warrants more funding. We have contacted several larger funders, and they do reply because they think they want to fund us, and then we don't hear from them again. So, yes, I believe grantmaking foundations are funding white-led organizations and organizations they already have relationships with, and I think they do not typically fund Black-led organizations. And that's just blatant racism.

Naolo: I agree with Ingrid, when she says that it's not very different from the type of racism we have seen and the type of barriers we see in society in general. But I also think that there's something that is specific to the sector.

The nonprofit sector operates in a highly exclusive manner. And when you look at the history of how the sector was created, it is mostly colonial history[5]. The people that worked in the sector have always been privileged people. It has always been those that have been well off that have been involved in helping the poor, not the poor themselves.

Source: Netflix documentary *There's Something in the Water*

In this sector grantmaking foundations hold the most power, as they control the resources. And unfortunately, these organizations operate under a lot of influence of colonial practices and a lot of them do not even realize that, as they have too much power to even ask those questions.

And I think that's a big part of the problem. What we are seeing now is even if they start a foundation, let's say specifically for Black communities, they don't check themselves and examine their own colonial practices, because even Black and Brown people have to self-examine to avoid replicating colonial behaviours that perpetuate the exclusion of the most vulnerable among us. And many of us end up replicating those same systems that exclude us. So yes, representation is important, but it is not enough. Yes, you need to give money to Black foundations, but also ensure that these foundations operate in a non-colonial way. And what is the colonial way to me? It is a very simple principle, it is when you give resources to those who already have resources, because that's what the system of capitalism is about—keeping power in the hands of those who already have power.

In order to break this cycle, foundations need to stop giving resources to those who already have them. Rather, they need to give resources to those who lack them, but have the potential, ideas, and vision. And I have worked in foundations myself, and I know that very often before we are going to give money to an organization, we want to make sure that someone else has given them money before. And I know that part of this is about managing risks, but it once again sends resources to those who have them and excludes those that do not.

So it is time that foundations stop operating as capitalist organizations, instead of socially oriented ones. In order to really support social and environmental justice efforts, they have to decolonize, and they have to decolonize their practices.

Ingrid: I have been doing the ENRICH project for nine years, with amazing outcomes, so I am wondering, "how much longer will I need to prove myself?". What else do I need to do to demonstrate that I deserve the kind of funding that other organizations receive.

So right now, just to be blatant, I think funding in the sector is unfair, racist, and less willing to fund Black-led organizations. And that's just the same kind of racism you would find anywhere.

Naolo: My last point will be to say, a big part of racism is how it impacts trust. When people look at you, and see you as *the Other*, as different, whether they like it or not they don't trust you the same way that they will trust someone who looks like them. When it comes to giving money, you need to trust whoever you're giving that money to. So I believe trust is a big part of why it's hard for us to get funding. For whatever reason they don't trust us as much and it is going to be easier for them to trust white-led organizations. A lot of people now talk about trust-based funding, but it is going to be hard for this to happen for Black communities. We are simply not in an equal position to build that trust.

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This conversation with Dr. Ingrid Waldron and Naolo Charles raises a series of important questions on how philanthropic organizations can better support practices that address the disbalance of power. As experience shows, regulatory bodies can often be permissive in conducting oversight as result of competing demands when making political decisions[6]. In such circumstances, watchdog organizations ensure the public's interest through critical monitoring of the actions of governments and industries, pointing out inconsistencies and advocating on behalf of communities. So when it comes to shifting power, watchdog organizations such as the National Network to End Environmental Racism in Canada remain essential in giving citizens and communities a voice and drawing attention to injustice.

On the other hand, there has been a lot of discussion on how pursuing a watchdog orientation may restrict access to funding[7] for these organizations. Additionally, acting as a watchdog on issues related to Black and Indigenous communities can add an additional layer of complexity, as it becomes evident that these are groups that have been systematically underfunded in the philanthropic community[8].

While these issues warrant further research, a targeted philanthropic support toward watchdog and advocacy organizations can be a first step on behalf of the philanthropic community to address power imbalances and support structurally marginalized groups and communities.

Notes

1 For more information see: Green 2.0, Diversity and Inclusion in Environmentalism, Help Wanted: Diversity in Clean Energy

2 For more information see: Canada's Big Chances to Address Environmental Racism

3 Premier Francois Legault fails to recognize the existence od systemic racism in Quebec, despite Quebec's Human Rights Commission differing stance on the issue

4 Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy.

5 This refers not only to Indigenous communities in a settler-colonial context, but also slavery and Black people's colonial history. For example, see Oyeniran, C. (2020). Black history in Canada: 1960 to present. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

6 Collard, R. C., Dempsey, J., & Holmberg, M. (2020). Extirpation despite regulation? Environmental assessment and Caribou. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 2(4).

7 See: Neumayr M, Schneider U, Meyer M. Public Funding and Its Impact on Nonprofit Advocacy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 2015;44(2):297-318.

Silverman, R.M. and Patterson, K.L. (2011), "The effects of perceived funding trends on non-profit advocacy: A national survey of non-profit advocacy organizations in the United States", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 24 No. 5, pp. 435-451.

8 Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy

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