

Ethical Conservation Alliance

Bylaws

Ethical nature conservation worldwide

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Article 1. Name

The name of the organization will be the Ethical Conservation Alliance, hereinafter also referred to as the Alliance.

Article 2. Mission

Strengthening biodiversity conservation through Indigenous leadership and justice for people and nature.

Article 3. Membership

Section 3.1 Membership types

Member: Vetted, active members who have demonstrated commitment to ECA's values and mission. These may include conservation professionals, Indigenous leaders, rights advocates and local community leaders. Full members are nominated by existing active members, and their Membership vetted by the Steering Committee.

Observer Member: Individuals or organizations whose practices and views are in alignment with ECA's principles but may not yet meet the full membership criteria.

Membership is decided by the Steering Committee based on the norms outlined in Appendix 1

Section 3.2: Duties of Members

- **Active Participation:** Members actively engage in ECA initiatives, bring ideas and initiatives to ECA, and participate in working groups, training programs, and advocacy campaigns.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Share best practices, resources, and Indigenous wisdom and create opportunities for inclusive collaboration with other Members to generate outputs to support the development of ethical conservation frameworks.
- **Leadership in Conservation:** Lead and support community-led conservation initiatives and represent ECA's values in their own regions or fields of practice.
- **Advocacy:** Mobilize for policy change and promote ethical conservation practices within their networks.
- **Resource Generation:** Raise funding to part-support the collaborative initiatives undertaken through the Alliance.

Section 3.3: Termination of membership

Membership can be terminated by the Steering Committee for failure to act professionally or acting in a manner contradictory to the goals of the Alliance.

Section 3.4: Rights of Members

- **Access:** Access to all resources and toolkits generated by ECA and preference in workshops, training programs and other collaborative efforts of ECA members.

- New initiatives: Ability to involve ECA and its members in developing joint resources, toolkits, and training programs in ethical nature conservation.

Section 3.5 Decisions pertaining to General Membership

- Decisions within the General Membership will be decided through respectful discussions and consensus, following a spirit of trust and accommodation. Where consensus is difficult to achieve, Council of Elders may be approached by the Steering Committee to help make informed decisions.

Section 3.6. Membership application and decision-making

- The Steering Committee of the ECA is responsible for assessing all Membership requests from individuals or organizations, and for making final decisions about Membership.
- Organizations that don't have a track record of ethical conservation will not be offered membership at this stage, but may be offered trainings in ethical conservation. Membership may be denied to individuals or organizations who, the Steering Committee, deems:
 - Do not have a track record of ethical conservation
 - Have been engaged in top-down conservation at the cost of indigenous peoples and local communities.
 - For requests from unknown entities, the Steering Committee can reach out to others in their network to get the needed information.
- One of the following two types of Membership may be offered based on the Steering Committee's assessment:
 - **Member:** An integral part of the Alliance, involved in jointly developing resources, offering trainings, having voting rights in the future, and to have access to all resources developed by the ECA. May represent the ECA. Bios to be displayed on ECA website.
 - **Observer member:** To have access to all resources developed by the ECA, but not considered representing the ECA.
- Membership renewal or termination:
 - All membership will be reviewed and renewed based on the Steering Committee's assessment and mutual consent, every 4 years.
 - Observer members may be offered full-membership based on the Steering Committee's assessment at any time.

- **Membership termination:** Membership may be terminated by the Steering Committee at any time for failure to act professionally or acting in a manner contradictory to the goals of the ECA.

Article 4. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is a decision-making body responsible for overseeing the implementation of ECA's strategic plan and guiding the Alliance's vision. The SC is intentionally diverse and representative, ensuring it reflects the perspectives and representation of conservation practitioners and Indigenous leaders. Because ensuring such multi-dimensional diversity will not be possible through elections, new Steering Committee Members will be invited through nominations, and the existing Steering Committee will make the final decisions. The members of the first 'Interim' Steering Committee, which was created after the formation of ECA, may join the first Steering Committee based on their commitment and track-record to serve in this position.

Section 4.1 Composition of the Steering Committee

- **Diverse Representation:** The Steering Committee will initially comprise 10 members (to be expanded later) with a diversity of experience and disciplines (e.g., terrestrial and marine environments), and include Indigenous leaders and conservation practitioners from various parts of the world. The Secretary General, as head of the Secretariat (see below), will serve as the 11th ex-officio member of the Steering Committee.
- **Gender and Geographic Balance:** The SC ensures gender-balanced representation from diverse geographies from the Global South and/or First Nation representatives from the North and leading conservation practitioners, to reflect the core values of inclusivity and justice.
- **Co-chairs:** Two co-chairs (preferably ensuring gender representation)—at least one of whom should preferably be an Indigenous leader—will serve to guide the committee and ensure that both conservation and Indigenous perspectives are represented in all decisions.

Section 4.2 Roles & Responsibilities of the Steering Committee

- **Governance and Oversight:** Approve and monitor the implementation of ECA's strategic initiatives, ensuring that the organization adheres to its values and mission; make decisions on Membership.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Lead efforts to secure funding and resources for ECA's activities.

- **Policy Advocacy:** Work to influence global conservation policies, ensuring they align with the principles of ethical nature conservation.
- **Strategic Direction:** In a consultative manner with the Members, help set the overall direction and priorities for ECA, aligning with the long-term vision of decolonized, IPLC-led nature conservation.

Section 4.3 Term and Membership Rules of the Steering Committee

- **Term Length:** The term for the Steering Committee members will be four years, with a maximum of two continuous terms. After two terms, a break period (one term duration) is required before reappointment. A Steering Committee member may resign at any time by providing a 3-month notice to the Steering Committee.
- **Staggered Terms:** To ensure continuity, Steering Committee members will be replaced in a staggered manner.
- **Active Participation:** Steering Committee members must commit to attending at least 60% of the meetings and be actively engaged in ECA's activities. Failure to meet this annual requirement two times over two years in a given term will result in automatic removal from the committee unless caused by force majeure.
- **Meeting frequency:** The Steering Committee will have regular meetings 4-times a year, which may be online, hybrid, or in-person.

Section 4.4 Decisions pertaining to Steering Committee

Decisions within the Steering Committee will be decided through respectful discussions and consensus, following a spirit of trust and accommodation. Where consensus is difficult to achieve, Council of Elders (see below) may be approached by the Steering Committee to help make informed decisions.

The bylaws may be amended by consensus or a majority vote of the Steering Committee.

Article 5. Secretariat

The Secretariat will be the operational arm of ECA, responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the strategic plan. The Secretariat will support the Steering Committee and ensure that ECA's mission is effectively carried out across all activities and initiatives, and communicated to the target audiences. At this time, and until decided by the Steering Committee otherwise, the ECA and the Secretariat (i) will exist as a network and will not have a registered office or status; (ii) The International Snow Leopard Trust will provide office and administrative support as required. This may be changed by the Steering Committee at a later date. Over time, some essential paid-

positions may be created within the Secretariat. Until then, the Secretariat positions/functions will be fulfilled through full or part-time secondment of staff by interested Member organizations and/or through voluntary efforts of Members.

Section 5.1 Role & Responsibilities of the Secretariat

- **Strategic Plan Implementation:** Manage the implementation of the strategic initiatives and projects outlined by the Steering Committee.
- **Administrative Support:** Provide logistical, administrative, and operational support to the Steering Committee and other bodies.
- **Coordination of Programs and Activities:** Coordinate training programs, advocacy campaigns, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and working-group tasks, ensuring that ECA's activities are aligned with its core values.
- **Communication and Outreach:** Oversee internal and external communications, including maintaining the website, producing reports, newsletters, and ensuring effective communication with members, donors, and external partners.
- **Fundraising and Resource Mobilization:** Assist in fundraising efforts and support the development of financial strategies to sustain ECA's operations.

Section 5.2 Key Positions within the Secretariat

- **Secretary General:** The Secretary General is the executive head of the Secretariat and will serve as an ex officio 11th member of the Steering Committee. The Secretary General will be responsible for overseeing all operational activities, coordinating communication across the steering committee and the entire organization, and ensuring alignment with the strategic vision.
- **Senior Managers:** Managers work closely with the Secretary General to support all aspects of ECA operations, and for coordinating specific areas of ECA's work, such as training and capacity building, policy advocacy, member engagement, or resource development.
- **Program Coordinators:** Work closely with other Secretariat staff to support all aspects of ECA Operations, including communications and logistics.

Article 6. Council of Elders of the ECA (advisory board)

The Council of Elders, or Advisory Board of ECA, will comprise of ECA members including Indigenous leaders and conservation practitioners, and provide guidance, wisdom, cultural insight and continuity to the Steering Committee. This body of up to

nine will comprise respected leaders and others deeply embedded in supporting the ECA and its values.

Section 6.1 Composition of Council of Elders

The Council of Elders of up to 9 people will include:

- **Indigenous Leaders, Conservation Practitioners and Others:** Respected Indigenous elders and leaders, alongside conservation experts and supporters, with a strong belief in ethical conservation practices.
- **Cultural Representation:** The gender-balanced Advisory Board should ensure broad cultural and geographic representation.

Section 6.2 Role & Responsibilities of the Council of Elders

- **Guidance and Wisdom:** Offer guidance on cultural, ethical, and spiritual aspects of conservation, ensuring that ECA's work aligns with Indigenous values and practices.
- **Strategic Advice:** Provide advice on key organizational decisions, particularly those related to policy, membership, and international engagement.
- **Cultural Oversight:** Ensure that ECA's initiatives respect the diversity of Indigenous cultures and practices in conservation and do not perpetuate harm or appropriation.
- **Visibility:** Serve as ambassadors, supporters, and evangelists of the ECA and its mission.

Section 6.3: Functionality of the Council of Elders

- **Regular Consultations:** The Advisory Board will meet at least once a year with the Steering Committee and Secretariat to provide input and ensure alignment with ECA's values. SC or the Secretariat may request guidance from the Council of Elders on an ad-hoc basis as needed.
- **Non-Executive Role:** While the Advisory Board does not have formal decision-making authority, their guidance is invaluable for maintaining the ethical integrity and cultural alignment of ECA's work.

Section 6.4: Council Convenors

To facilitate the efficient coordination of its activities and engagements, the Steering Committee shall appoint two members of the Council of Elders to serve as Council Convenors. These Convenors will be responsible for organizing Council meetings, liaising with the Steering Committee and Secretariat to address requests for guidance,

and generally overseeing the smooth functioning of the Council's advisory role. This role is intended to be facilitative and administrative, consistent with the Council's non-executive function as an advisory body.

Article 7. Ombudspersons

Two Ombudspersons appointed by the Steering Committee will serve in impartial and independent roles to help ensure ethical standards, resolve conflicts, address complaints, and help maintain a safe and respectful space for all members.

Article 8. Inclusion Committee

A two-person inclusion committee will focus on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion across ECA's operations, leadership, and activities, ensuring that all members, especially those from marginalized and oppressed groups, are supported, respected, and empowered. The committee will advise on ECA policies, offer trainings, and advocate for systemic change within both ECA and the broader conservation community.

Article 9. Working Groups

The Steering Committee will appoint need and task based and time-bound Working Groups that will fulfil responsibilities and provide their report to the Steering Committee. Each Working Group will include at least one SC member for coordination and smooth functioning.