

Action Chelsea for the Respect of the Environment (ACRE)



Values and Ethics Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors on February 5, 2024

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Part 1: Integrity And Accountability

Part 2: Conflict Of Interest

Part 3: Acting With Respect

Part 4: Annual Review

This Values and Ethics Statement guides the Board of Directors in upholding the principles and vision of our not-for-profit volunteer-based land trust and environmental protection organization. It serves as a compass to guide our actions and decisions in pursuit of our mission to protect and conserve our natural heritage for future generations.

Part 1: Integrity and Accountability:

We uphold high standards of integrity, honesty, and ethical behavior in all our actions and decisions. We are accountable to each other, our members, volunteers, financial supporters, and the community. This includes:

1. **Environmental Stewardship:** Our primary commitment is to maintain and protect the environment, conserve nature including wildlife habitat and corridors surrounding the Gatineau Park, and to maintain and protect ecological **integrity**. We strive to make sustainable choices and promote responsible land management practice including those set out in the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices.
2. **Collaboration and Inclusivity:** We value collaboration and recognize that addressing complex environmental challenges requires working together with diverse stakeholders, including volunteers, community groups, residents, government agencies, and other organizations. We foster an inclusive environment that respects and values diverse perspectives and backgrounds.
3. **Transparency and Openness:** We are dedicated to being transparent in our operations, decision-making processes, and financial practices. We communicate openly and honestly with our stakeholders, ensuring that information is accessible and readily available. We actively work to build and strengthen positive relationships within the community.
4. **Volunteer Engagement and Empowerment:** We recognize the vital role of volunteers in achieving our mission. We strive to provide meaningful opportunities for volunteers to contribute their skills, knowledge, and passion for environmental protection. This may include the establishment and support of stewardship committees consisting of local community members where our lands are located. These committees advise and provide information on our lands, assist in communicating with the local communities and assist in stewardship activities.

5. **Evidence Based:** We seek to be evidence-based in problem identification, analysis of issues and in determining solutions and policies.
6. **Education and Awareness:** We believe in education and awareness to inspire positive change. We are committed to promoting environmental education, raising awareness about conservation issues, and fostering a sense of responsibility, stewardship and ownership among individuals and communities.
7. **Ethical Fundraising:** We conduct our fundraising activities with integrity, adhering to ethical principles and legal guidelines. We are committed to using the funds we raise efficiently and effectively to further our mission and provide maximum benefit to the environment. We are committed to expending the funds we raise in accordance with donor expectations.
8. **Continuous Improvement:** We embrace a culture of continuous improvement and learning. We are developing and will regularly review our policies and practices to ensure they align with our mission, values and donor expectations. We strive to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, staying at the forefront of best practices in environmental protection, stewardship and financial administration.
9. **Respect for Indigenous Knowledge and Rights:** We acknowledge and respect the rights, culture, and traditional knowledge of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People. We strive to collaborate with Indigenous peoples, seeking their guidance and partnership in our conservation efforts on the forests we steward, and we strive to contribute to their conservation priorities where possible.
10. **Advocacy and Policy Engagement:** We recognize the importance of advocating for policies and practices that support environmental protection and conservation. We engage in evidence-based advocacy and work to influence decision-makers at local, regional, and national levels to prioritize environmental sustainability.

Part 2: Conflict of Interest Provisions for the Board of Directors

The following conflict of interest provisions are intended to protect the integrity, transparency, and public trust in ACRE as a not-for-profit volunteer-based land trust and environmental protection/conservation organization. They guide Board members in navigating situations where conflicts of interest may arise, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the organization and the communities we serve.

1. **Disclosure:** Board members shall disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to their duties as a member of the board or any other organization with which they are affiliated. Such disclosure shall be made promptly and in writing to the President or designated representative.
2. **Avoidance of Personal Gain:** Board members shall avoid any actions or decisions that could result in personal gain or benefit of the Board member or family members at the expense of the organization or that may compromise ACRE's integrity. They shall not engage in financial or other transactions with ACRE or others that could create a conflict of interest. They shall not use information obtained via their position

as a director of ACRE for their own personal gain.

3. **Impartiality and Objectivity:** Board members shall exercise their duties impartially and in the best interests of ACRE. They shall make decisions based on the merits of the matter at hand, without personal bias or undue influence.
4. **Recusal:** Board members with a conflict of interest shall recuse themselves from discussions, deliberations, and voting on matters where their personal interests may conflict with the interests of the organization. They shall not participate in decisions that may result in a direct or indirect personal financial benefit.
5. **Confidentiality:** Board members shall maintain strict confidentiality regarding any information or discussions that may give rise to a conflict of interest. They shall not use such information for personal gain or disclose it to others without proper authorization.
6. **Mitigation and Management:** If a conflict of interest arises, the Board shall take appropriate steps to address and manage the conflict, which may include seeking external advice, establishing special committees, or implementing safeguards to ensure fairness and objectivity in decision-making processes.
7. **Documentation:** ACRE shall maintain accurate and complete records of all conflict of interest disclosures, recusals, and actions taken to address conflicts. These records shall be accessible for review by authorized individuals and regulatory authorities as required.
8. **Education and Training:** ACRE Board members shall engage in regular discussion on the need for disclosure of conflicts of interest to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in identifying and managing conflicts of interest.
9. **Review and Compliance:** The Board shall periodically review and assess the effectiveness of the conflict-of-interest provisions and make necessary revisions to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and best practices.

Part 3: Acting with Respect

1. **Mutual Respect:** Board members shall treat each other with respect, courtesy, and professionalism. They shall recognize and appreciate the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of their fellow directors, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.
2. **Active Listening:** Board members shall actively listen to and consider the viewpoints and ideas of their fellow directors, members of ACRE, volunteers and the community. They shall encourage open and constructive dialogue, valuing the input and contributions of others.
3. **Constructive Communication:** Board members shall engage in honest, transparent, and respectful communication. They shall express their opinions and concerns in a constructive manner, promoting healthy discussions that lead to informed decision-making.

4. **Conflict Resolution:** In the event of disagreements or conflicts, board members shall seek to resolve them in a fair, unbiased, and respectful manner. They shall promote open dialogue and, if necessary, engage in mediation or other conflict resolution processes to find mutually acceptable solutions.
5. **Collaboration and Cooperation:** Board members shall work collaboratively and cooperatively with each other, members of ACRE, volunteers and the broader community. They shall foster a spirit of teamwork and unity, recognizing that collective efforts are essential to achieving the organization's mission and goals.
6. **Inclusion and Diversity:** Board members shall respect and embrace diversity in all its forms, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. They shall create an inclusive and welcoming environment that values and celebrates the contributions of all individuals.
7. **Engagement with the Community:** Board members shall actively engage with the stewardship committees and members of the community to listen to their concerns and seek their input. Board members act as ambassadors for the organization, representing its values and mission with integrity and respect in all interactions with the public.
8. **Empathy and Compassion:** Board members shall demonstrate empathy and compassion towards others, recognizing the challenges and needs they may face. They shall act in a manner that upholds the dignity and well-being of individuals, treating them with kindness and understanding.
9. **Ethical Conduct:** Board members shall uphold high ethical standards in their interactions with others. They shall act honestly, fairly, and in good faith, ensuring that their words and actions align with the values and principles of the organization.

Part 4: Review

The Values and Ethics Policy will be reviewed every two years and whenever there is a material change in circumstances. Consistent with our commitment to continuous improvement, we will discuss our successes, lessons learned, areas of improvement, what we may need to do differently, and whether board members are intending to continue as directors in the following year.