

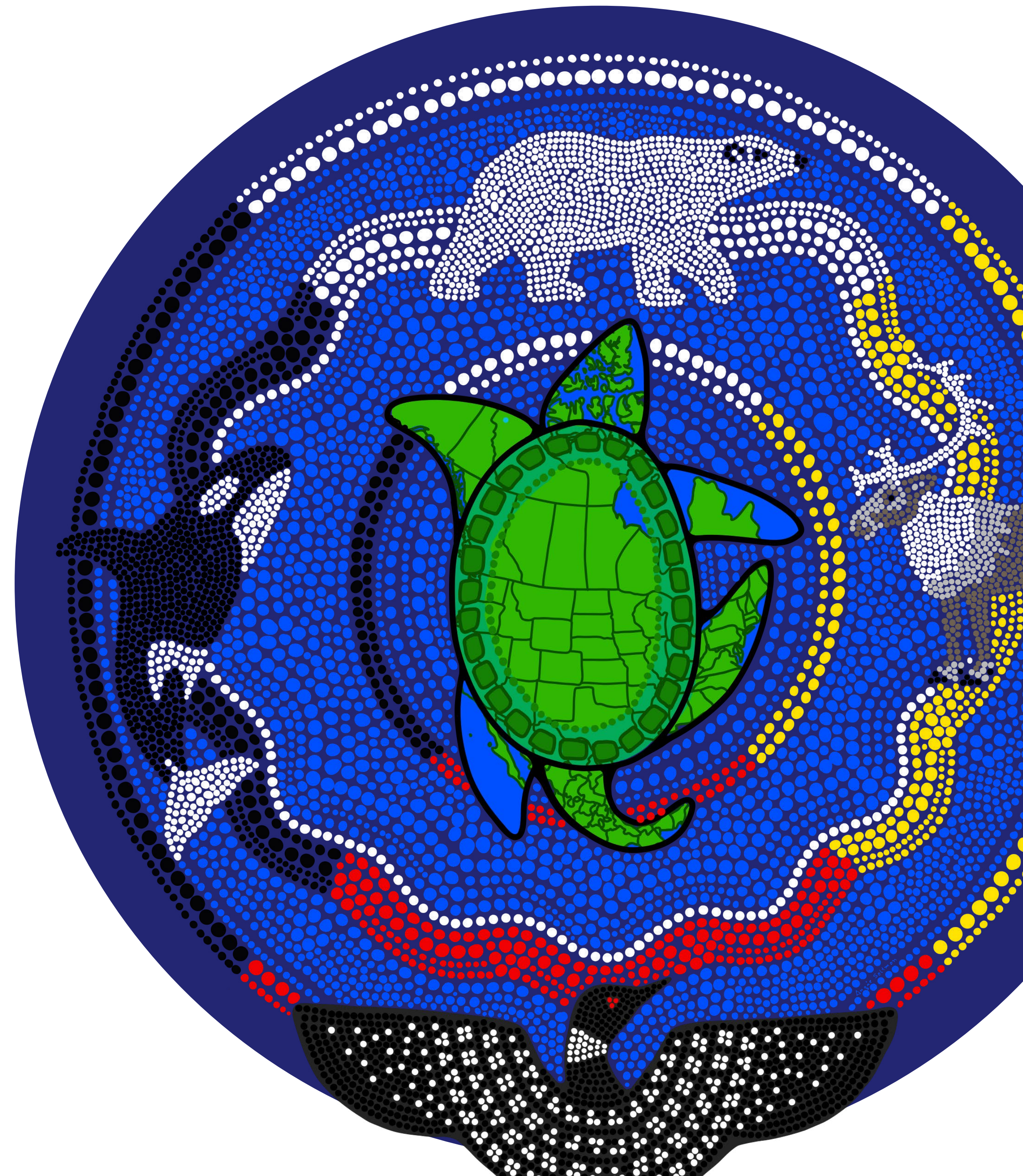
2025

Report of the Executive Director  
to the Council

# Environmental Protection through North American Cooperation



COMMISSION FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
COOPERATION







## CEC Mission Statement

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) facilitates effective cooperation and public participation to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

**Three countries, one environment.**

## Foreword

The year 2024 registered as the warmest year on record. The past decade has not only been the hottest decade recorded, but each of the past 10 years successively became the hottest year in modern history. North America has never faced such climate uncertainty, biodiversity loss and the resulting dire environmental impacts, climate vulnerabilities and environmental challenges as we face today.

Extreme and deadly weather events have tripled in North America since 2020. The frequency of such events in the region has increased from a few times a year to occurrences taking place every few weeks, and in some cases simultaneously. Over the last several decades there have been hundreds of natural disasters, costing North America trillions of dollars in economic damages. Extreme weather causes multiple and cascading impacts on people and on biodiversity, including physical, environmental and human harm, property damage, economic losses, a reduction in or even total loss of crop yields, and forced migration and displacement. Environmental instability creates zones of extreme vulnerability, economic uncertainty, reduced community resilience and increased public health risks and security threats.



*Arctic sea ice photographed in 2011 during NASA's ICESCAPE mission, a multi-year investigative study on how changing conditions in the Arctic and freshwater intrusion into ocean water affect the ocean's chemistry and ecosystems. © NASA/Kathryn Hansen*





*Hurricane Arthur, Rodanthe Pier, Hatteras Island, North Carolina flooding — July 2014.  
© David Weydert, U.S. Coast Guard, Via AP*

The environmental challenges we face today are on track to become even worse tomorrow if effective solutions are not advanced to reduce environmental risks and impacts. Taking action to address environmental instability represents one of the greatest opportunities for social and economic prosperity in multiple generations. Each incremental action that we take to build our resilience, to reduce pollution, to create healthier ecosystems and to conserve biodiversity is an investment in our future, helping ensure the health and well-being of our communities and ecosystems for generations to come.

In the face of our deepening environmental crisis, it is imperative—and it is our responsibility—that we safeguard the natural world and that we find our way back to nature in a healthy and wholesome manner. Only through the holistic well-being of nature and all of its elements, the living and non-living, the human and non-human, we can ensure and secure the vibrancy and sustainability of our planetary ecosystem, which underpins our lives and livelihoods.



Making our ecosystems and people healthier means taking actions, making choices, and embracing lifestyles that are in harmony with nature. It means that we must pollute less, and that we safeguard the quality of our air, that we consume rationally, that we keep our water clean and lands pristine, that we consciously reduce and limit our waste, and above all, that we help communities, especially the most vulnerable, to live in a safe and healthy environment that is conducive to their well-being and allows them to live sustainably.

This is precisely what we are doing through the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). Since the signing in 1994 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, now the USMCA/CUSMA), and the complementary North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC, now the Environmental Cooperation Agreement—ECA) which formalized the CEC, we have achieved significant environmental advancements through trilateral North American environmental cooperation.

Under NAAEC, the CEC Secretariat was created to work with our three countries to modernize and enhance the effectiveness of environmental cooperation; to facilitate mutually-supportive trade and environmental policies; to work together to conserve, protect and enhance the environment within our region; to address our shared trilateral environmental challenges and priorities through win-win-win solutions; to promote public participation in environmental matters; and to promote the enforcement of our three countries' environmental laws.



The ECA highlights the importance of exchanging information about the health of our ecosystems and the best practices that we have learned across our countries to best steward our natural resources and shared North American environments. Through the programs and initiatives of the CEC, we uphold the importance and value of engaging, Indigenous People, communities, academics, subject matter experts, youth, government officials, civil society and the private sector, in advancing environmental solutions by North America and for North America.

The CEC holds public consultations, trainings, knowledge-sharing opportunities, and public forums, conducting outreach, communicating, and educating. We harness, harmonize and map North American environmental data, including emerging geospatial data about our region's natural resources, and share this information with the public, providing a unique regional perspective to the North American environment. We share and collect environmental standards and best practices, disseminating these through our environmental programs, initiatives and communications.



Youth Panel, 2024 JPAC Forum, Mexico City, Mexico.



Through our trilateral environmental initiatives, we focus on reducing pollution, reducing emissions, protecting biodiversity and natural habitats, fostering the sustainable management and use of natural resources, supporting sustainable trade and promoting climate resilience.



*Emiliano Reyes Galindo, Public Meeting, 2024 Council Session (Day 3), Wilmington.*



*La'Meshia Whittington, Youth Panel, 2024 Council Session (Day 2), Wilmington.*

In our more than 30 years of existence, in collaboration amongst our three Parties, with our advisory body, and with innumerable partners, the CEC has implemented as well as supported hundreds of projects, including through community grants programs for local action to protect and conserve our environment. These projects promote innovation, foster engagement and help create more-resilient and healthier communities. Through our events, publications, projects and initiatives over the years, we have brought together tens of thousands of people, community leaders, youth, policymakers, public officials, industry, academics and experts, to learn, share and work collaboratively in the protection and conservation of the North American environment.



In this collaborative environmental space created and shared by our three governments, the CEC has provided critical technical environmental information and guidance to support environmental decision-making across our countries. We've facilitated dialogue and exchanges on key environmental topics and emerging priorities supporting the implementation of our regional agreements. Through the CEC's programs and initiatives, we are helping create stronger environmental policy, institutions and practices across Canada, Mexico and the United States. The list of relevant achievements of our trilateral environmental work is too long to enumerate in this report, but these are some highlights:

- Forging expert networks on the environmental issues of most importance to the region
- Harmonizing pollution inventories and safeguarding the movement of toxic waste across borders
- Monitoring cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals
- Protecting and restoring forests, wetlands, grasslands and marine environments
- Reducing and cleaning up marine litter
- Promoting community engagement in conservation efforts
- Monitoring and protecting migratory species
- Promoting energy efficiency and innovation
- Learning from and incorporating Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge
- Publishing reports on best practices on waste and materials management
- Producing key natural resource maps, which are consulted by thousands of people
- Promoting programs to clean our air, protect our water and restore our land
- Promoting public health and clean community environments
- Building resilience and alerting communities to severe weather events
- Harnessing and disseminating key regional environmental data





*Island of Janitzio, Lake Pátzcuaro, in Michoacan, Mexico, a popular tourist destination, suffered an intense drought in 2024 due to rising heat and low rainfall.  
@ Direccion Social de Comunicación Social, UNAM*



## Cooperative Work Program and Cross-cutting Initiatives

The CEC's Annual Report fully details the numerous activities, programs and initiatives in which the CEC has been engaged under our current Operational Plan, so I will not go into too much detail in this Executive Director's Report regarding our rich cooperative agenda. But I would like to highlight a few of the key achievements from this past year's activities that exemplify our work to promote regional environmental cooperation through the USMCA/CUSMA.





*CEC's ghost gear reduction initiative works with the National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP) and local organizations in La Paz Bay, Mexico, to clean up ghost gear on the ocean floor. © Leonardo Gonzalez*

## Ecosystems

Biodiversity protection and conservation remains at the heart of our work at the CEC and is central to our trilateral environmental commitments. The CEC is perhaps most recognized for its collaborative action on grasslands conservation and the protection of migratory species, including birds and the iconic monarch butterfly. We help our countries collect and harmonize comparable national data and best practices in biodiversity conservation. We are also working to better understand the human dimensions of conservation, and to advance the protection of North America's pollinators, which are key to the health and vibrancy of the many ecosystems that sustain our economies and communities. We are helping reduce marine litter and are providing tools to support the management of marine protected areas.



We are also developing regional strategies and utilizing geospatial tools to better steward North America's biological resources and identify key pollution sources, and we are leveraging communication tools to drive biodiversity action across communities and institutions. Through the CEC's work, we engage communities in biodiversity protection campaigns for local action, fostering the monitoring and stewardship of migratory species and promoting community-driven science. Another important area of our ecosystems action is advancing ghost-gear reduction and removal and learning from Indigenous leadership in marine ecosystem stewardship.



*Oil and gas sites are a common source of polluting greenhouse gas emissions. The CEC is employing emerging geospatial technology to identify key pollution sources. Photo: Bay Area, Northern California. @fracktracker/claycord.com*





*Through a CEC collaborative initiative in three communities of North America including the Aamjiwnaang First Nation community, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada; Fundación TOSEPAN, Sierra Norte de Puebla, México; and Comité Cívico del Valle, Imperial Valley, California, United States, the CEC is providing local community leaders with technology and tools to monitor air quality and work with public environmental health officials to improve their local environment.*

## Environmental Quality

If our biodiversity work is the heart of the CEC, our environmental quality work helps keep that heart clean, breathing and healthy, focusing our trilateral commitments on improving air quality, reducing pollution and supporting strong, low-emission and resilient economies.

The North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Registry (PRTR) initiative is the CEC’s flagship and longest-standing environmental quality initiative, and one of our most valued and utilized resources. The CEC’s PRTR initiative is a trilateral registry that helps our three countries compare and align pollution data across the region and provides the public, governments and industry with key comparable information to track pollutants and support decision-making in pollution reduction and prevention.





*Aerial view of tailings ponds operations next to the Athabasca River, Alberta, Canada. iStock.com/Dan\_Pratt*

We are also helping communities adapt to and improve early warning systems for extreme weather events, supporting capacity-building to face an evermore changing climate and identifying best practices and nature-based solutions designed to manage and lower environmental risks while building climate resilience. This work includes a key focus on extreme drought. Another long-standing priority of the CEC is the sound management of chemicals, wherein we are fostering supply chain transparency and cleaner-chemical substitution in products.

In our efforts to tackle the most potent atmospheric super pollutants like methane, black carbon, HFCs and tropospheric ozone, which is absolutely essential to meet emissions reduction targets and help slow global warming trends in the short term, we are building collaborative partnerships with communities affected by air pollution, to measure and mitigate emissions and exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> and black carbon. We are also taking advantage of emerging GIS technologies and tools to identify especially potent methane emissions from landfills, and exploring mitigation strategies to reduce those emissions while also improving local air quality.



## Sustainable Living and Economies

The CEC advances sustainability by focusing on how we live and identifying the drivers that condition the lifestyle choices that we make and their impacts on the environment. We help inform the public on how, through those choices, we can foster more-sustainable living, effectively integrating positive environmental, social and economic dimensions into our lives and economies. Through this approach, the CEC undertakes efforts to address sustainability in numerous economic sectors, promoting sustainable consumption and stimulating behavioral and systemic change while fostering improvements to governance and institutional frameworks to support sustainability.



*Growing vegetables and vermicomposting; activities from CEC's Food Matters Action Kit. Ciclománías. Alberta, Canada.*





*Food waste audit at a school in Cincinnati, USA.*

Our recent work has looked closely at identifying solutions for environmental challenges in urban areas, including how nature-based solutions and traditional ecological knowledge can help cities advance environmental action. Two new CEC initiatives build upon the success of past CEC work addressing food loss and waste (FLW): one focusing on generating tools to assist local practitioners in the design and implementation of actions and policies to stimulate behavioral changes that will reduce FLW, and the other on the reduction of FLW at large-scale events (such as sporting events, concerts and cultural celebrations), including for North America's upcoming regional hosting of the FIFA World Cup.

A core element of the CEC's sustainable living and economies work is materials management, re-use and recycling. We are advancing an initiative promoting recycling and better solid waste management practices across North America, which assesses, through milestone studies for three waste streams (paper, plastics and bioplastics), the state of current recycling capacity and supports the identification of technologies and pilot projects to showcase best practice alternatives for more-sustainable living.



*Sharing best practices on sustainable forest plantations. Oaxaca, Mexico.*





*Ellen MacArthur Foundation and CEC Secretariat team members at the Canadian Circular Economy Summit in April 2025.*

Furthermore, to advance the uptake of the concepts of circular economy, the CEC is launching a new initiative focused on circularity in the electronics sector and especially on upstream opportunities for sustainable practices to address electronic waste.

Finally, we are advancing a community-led program on environmental education that is grounded in knowledge dialogues and diverse knowledge systems and Indigenous engagement and that is centered on community co-design and youth leadership.





*Esteban Escamilla Prado, JPAC Chair for 2024, Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director of the CEC and Oscar Carrillo, U.S. EPA. 2024 JPAC Public Forum, Wilmington, NC, USA.*

## Cross-cutting Initiatives

### Advisory Groups and Public Participation

One of the areas of the CEC Secretariat's work that I have been most proud of during my tenure as Executive Director is our push to expand greater public participation in all of the CEC's work. This engagement is achieved by working closely with our most trusted advisors and key partners. Through Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)–led roundtables, workshops and consultations, and through in-person, virtual and hybrid events and forums, we are facilitating public participation and promoting engagement. This participation is fundamental to all that we do at the CEC, whether it's with Indigenous partners, community leaders, youth, academics, the private sector, or the many thousands of individuals and organizations with which we work across Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Participation in CEC events has increased consistently as a result of the more cohesive and targeted communications, outreach and engagement strategies that we have implemented these past years, as we have expanded our reach to new audiences, including community and Indigenous leaders, youth and private-sector actors. We have also seen strong engagement through our Traditional Ecological Knowledge Experts Group (TEKEG)–led initiatives.



## Youth

Of particular note this past year, and as has been the case throughout my tenure at the CEC, we have prioritized and expanded youth engagement. Meaningful youth engagement brings innovative leadership to our team and initiatives, providing the CEC with inspirational energy and drive. Building on nearly a decade of targeted youth engagement, in 2024 we launched the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program (GELP), promoting capacity building and leadership skills training for youth. We also launched our second annual edition of Youth Engagement Week, during which we interact with youth leaders in the region, not only to get youth insights and input into CEC work, but also to have youth at the table, side by side, contributing to the programs, initiatives and activities of the CEC. This past year, the CEC developed its first Youth Engagement Strategy, helping identify both challenges and opportunities for meaningful youth engagement, knowledge sharing and capacity building across the spectrum of CEC programs and initiatives.



2024 GELP cohort presentation, 2024 Council Session (Day 3), Wilmington.



Youth Panel "Bridging the Gap: a Conversation of the Generational Fight for Environmental Justice", 2024 Council Session (Day 2), Wilmington.



## The Private Sector and Responsible Business Conduct

The CEC is advancing the rollout of its Private Sector Engagement Strategy, to promote one of the essential objectives of the USMCA/CUSMA and our trilateral environmental cooperation agreement: advancing corporate social responsibility and responsible business conduct. Throughout 2024, we've engaged key actors in the private sector from across North America to discuss the vital role of the private sector in advancing solutions addressing our greatest environmental challenges, including climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. These actors include large, medium-sized and small enterprises from the financial, commercial and manufacturing sectors; standard-setters; regulatory bodies; and business associations. Through the CEC's function as a trilateral forum for exchange, we are helping share knowledge and promote strategies to help the private sector take action on reducing pollution, promoting nature-based solutions, building climate resilience, promoting ecosystems conservation and reversing biodiversity loss. This past year we held private-sector roundtables on issues such as ecosystems conservation; promoting environmental action through small and medium-sized enterprises; and defining the private sector's role as a positive force for environmental action and responsible conduct.



Leading private-sector actors from across North America participated in a roundtable co-hosted by the CEC, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Sustainability Standards Board, in Montreal, to discuss the role of the private sector in addressing the biodiversity agenda.





*A collaborative meeting with a network of actors from across North America working to reverse environmental harms in climate-vulnerable communities. This meeting was hosted by the CEC in Mexico City in December 2024 to discuss the use of GIS tools and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) for studying vulnerabilities.*

During the last JPAC Public Forum, in Mexico City in December 2024, we explored the private sector’s role in addressing climate-related challenges, pollution and biodiversity loss. Our interactions with both public and private-sector representatives highlighted the need for stronger collaboration between businesses, governments, and local and Indigenous communities, and demonstrated the value of the CEC’s unique role as a facilitating convener of more fruitful public and private-sector engagement to collaboratively tackle the region’s most pressing environmental challenges. These challenges include finding ways for the private sector to advance environmental justice, the consideration of Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in environmental initiatives, and the promotion of biodiversity conservation.

The CEC has also launched an ongoing discussion with our TEKEG members and other Indigenous partners, on opportunities for revitalizing Indigenous trade and trade networks across North America through practices rooted in traditional ecological knowledge. The discussion embraces concepts of Indigenous worldviews on nature, economies, culture and relationality.



## Promoting Environmental Justice, Reducing Pollution and Building Environmental Resilience in Vulnerable Communities

As the CEC works cooperatively across our three countries to foster trilateral action to address our most pressing environmental challenges, we are continuously reminded of the importance of supporting our countries in their efforts to uplift the most historically disadvantaged and environmentally vulnerable communities.

A core objective of our trilateral work is to help ensure that environmental protection is strong in communities across North America, that environmental laws are effectively enforced, that communities affected by pollution are able to access information related to their local environment, and that people can meaningfully participate in decision-making that affects them.

As a region, we are learning from each other and building on the CEC's historical leadership in environmental action, knowledge and best practices. In the past year, we solidified a network of actors working to reverse environmental harms in climate-vulnerable communities. In 2024, we continued to support community-based organizations across North America that are taking local action to empower the most environmentally vulnerable communities to become more climate resilient.



Announced at our last Council Session, we launched the North American Environmental Justice Action Center (NAEJAC). The NAEJAC is designed to support our three countries in the identification of the most environmentally impacted and vulnerable communities in North America, and to share best practices for tackling environmental justice challenges. It is also a means to share the latest environmental tools, policies, and educational resources to tackle pollution and inequities, as well as promote equitable distribution of environmental benefits for all. The NAEJAC will also help identify community-lead solutions that can be implemented with low cost and high returns to improve environmental health and resilience.

The CEC continues to showcase how we can advance practical environmental solutions that promote environmental protection and restoration while helping address deeper and persistent environmental vulnerabilities.



*The Communities for Environmental Justice Network (CEJN) is a trinational working group that shares environmental justice stories, strategies, and lessons learned between representatives from organizations and communities from across North America. Pictured are CEJN members meeting during a workshop in Oaxaca, Mexico.*



## Indigenous Engagement and Traditional Ecological Knowledge



*Free range bison roam in fields of South Dakota. The CEC is exploring ways to understand ecosystems through the important way species like bison help keep ecosystems healthy and sustainable. © CEC*

One area of great importance of our work is engagement with Indigenous communities, particularly through the work of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG). Created in 2014, the TEKEG brings together Indigenous leaders from our three countries, providing the CEC Council and the Secretariat advice and recommendations on how to thoughtfully include traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), how to better address issues important to Indigenous communities, and how to more effectively promote Indigenous engagement in the CEC's operations, initiatives and programs.





TEKEG members María del Pilar García Hernández, Amelia Reyna Monteros Guijón, Gail Small, Sarah James. Youth Panel, 2024 Council Session (Day 2), Wilmington.

In addition to ongoing work on freshwater management and traditional Indigenous food systems, we have recently embarked on several important initiatives, including exploring the role of TEK in emerging artificial intelligence (AI) technology, and on how TEK can provide solutions in wildfire management and fire stewardship. As well, discussions have begun on Indigenous perspectives on trade, economics, relationality and sustainability, and on exploring opportunities for the revitalization of historic North American Indigenous trade networks.

The CEC is proud to highlight the recent development (by the TEKEG) and adoption of the North American Guiding Principles in Relation to the Incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. These TEK principles mark a significant contribution toward common standards for respectful Indigenous engagement and application of Indigenous knowledge across North America.



Indigenous Peoples have an essential role and responsibility to play in environmental management, conservation, sustainable development, protection and restoration of ecosystems and the conservation of biodiversity. Their unique knowledge of land and environment originates from centuries of living on their traditional lands and territories. The CEC recognizes the value of embracing the wisdom and experience of Indigenous Peoples and TEK which flows from such wisdom and experience. TEKEG recommended to the Council the adoption of the following North American Guiding Principles in relation to the Incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the work of the CEC.

(adopted by the Council in January of 2025):

- **Guiding Principle 1:** The CEC recognizes and respects the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples, as recognized and affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and as applicable, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (Convention No. 169), including in relation to the management of their lands, territories and associated natural resources.
- **Guiding Principle 2:** The CEC recognizes and respects the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, and recognizes the importance of free, prior and informed consent when accessing and integrating Indigenous knowledge in CEC activities and decisions.
- **Guiding Principle 3:** The CEC recognizes and respects the forms of government and social organization, as well as the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples as leaders in decision-making processes related to the incorporation and consideration of their knowledge and in the management of their territories and associated natural resources.
- **Guiding Principle 4:** The CEC recognizes and respects the development of meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities based on mutual understanding, cooperative dialogue and collaborative partnerships.





*Right whale mother and calf. © jdtailant*

## Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws

Evolved from NAFTA, the USMCA/CUSMA promotes the effective enforcement of our countries' environmental laws, through the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) mechanism—a unique procedure at the core of the trade agreement that has been inspirational to and replicated in other trade agreements. For more than thirty years, the SEM process has enabled individuals to raise concerns that a Party is failing to effectively enforce its environmental laws. The CEC in turn analyzes submissions filed to the SEM and, where appropriate and when instructed by the Council, produces Factual Records related to the allegations in the submissions.



On a variety of North American environmental priorities, the independent SEM mechanism continues to foster public engagement in and raise awareness of key issues and considerations regarding the effective enforcement of environmental laws. Transparency, public participation and accountability are at the heart of the SEM process. Having to work through SEM submissions has pushed our three countries towards improving access to information on environmental matters, fostering greater awareness of key environmental issues and stronger public participation.

Through the processing of 115 SEM submissions and the production of 27 Factual Records since 1994, we can strongly assert that we have advanced our common commitment and action on the effective enforcement of our environmental laws and made progress on issues that are central to our trilateral environmental priorities and regional agreements.



*Local fishers and experts display a self-designed shrimp fishing net with a fast release for marine mammals.*



*Officials from the Mexican Navy display facilities in San Felipe that recycle confiscated illegal fishing nets.*



*A ship dropping a large cement block device with hooks, to impede the use of illegal fishing nets in the vaquita porpoise sanctuary.*

*Images from a CEC visit to gather information for a submission regarding the vaquita porpoise in the Northern Gulf of California. SEM staff and the CEC's Executive Director visited with public officials responsible for fisheries and marine mammal protection, members of the Mexican Navy, civil society groups, scientists and local fishers in San Felipe, Baja California, to discuss the protection of the world's smallest marine mammal, the vaquita porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*).*





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## The SEM Process in North America and Relevant Agreements

USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC

Agreement on Environmental Cooperation



In 2024, the CEC Secretariat received three new SEM submissions and is currently engaged in ten active submissions, covering issues from marine mammals and shipping to agriculture and forestry. We have also been exploring with the Parties how we can offer the good offices of the CEC Executive Director to address some of the issues of concern brought up by petitioners in the SEM submissions.



## CEC Grant Programs

Established in 2010, CEC's North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) Grant Program has provided nearly 100 grants to communities across North America, including to Indigenous Peoples and other community partners. The CEC's EJ4Climate Grant Program, established in 2021, has helped more than 40 climate-vulnerable communities build resilience and develop solutions to address environmental and health vulnerabilities due to weather-related impacts and pollution. These grants are built on and promote shared responsibility and community stewardship of environmental resources and resilience, engaging Tribal Nations, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations and communities across Canada, Mexico and the United States.



*Through a CEC grant, the Environmental Foundation of the Yaqui Valley in Sonora, Mexico, with support from multiple partners at a community garden, work with students from four high schools in Tobarito and with a university program conducting workshops on the basic concepts of regenerative agriculture, healthy eating, and agroecology and ecosystem services. Students collaborate in planting corn, cauliflower, broccoli, parsley, eggplant, tomatoes and peppers.*





Videos from partners celebrating CEC's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary (social media campaign).

## A North American network: our communities, collaborators and partners

The CEC continues to expand its engagement and communications with the North American public, exploring innovative approaches to tailor communications to reach every corner of our region. Through adapting content to language spoken, through using audiovisual materials such as videos or interviews to engage across diverse social media platforms to increase CEC's visibility, and through sharing news about our work, this year the CEC reached out to an ever-increasing number of people and partners, providing information about the CEC's events, programs and initiatives.



We've increased outreach efforts, with a strong focus on engaging with a more diverse and inclusive network of partners. Through attendance at regional and international events, finding networking opportunities to discuss regional environmental priorities or promoting awareness campaigns, the CEC expanded its network significantly, increasing attendance at CEC events, expanding engagement, receiving feedback and promoting more dynamic and inclusive dialogue at all of our events.



*CEC Side Event (COP16) – Inclusive Strategies for Biodiversity Conservation: from Community Leadership to Governmental Policymaking (24 October 2024).*

In 2024, the CEC celebrated 30 years since our founding, and we took this opportunity to raise the voices of our collaborators and partners, highlighting their important work and thanking them for helping us tackle the region's most important environmental challenges, including impactful actions to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Together, we found synergies, leveraged our networks and made our impact stronger, our discussions more engaging, our tools more effective and our efforts to raise awareness on key environmental issues more fruitful. Alongside collaborators and partners from all sectors we co-hosted events, shared campaigns, and more meaningfully engaged and helped raise the voices of communities across North America.





*Interpreters: Rosa María Boadella, Patricia Delezé, Luz del Carmen Chavarria, 2024 Council Session (Day 1), Wilmington.*



*CEC Secretariat team during an Earth Day event showcasing CEC's work.*

## Strengthening the CEC

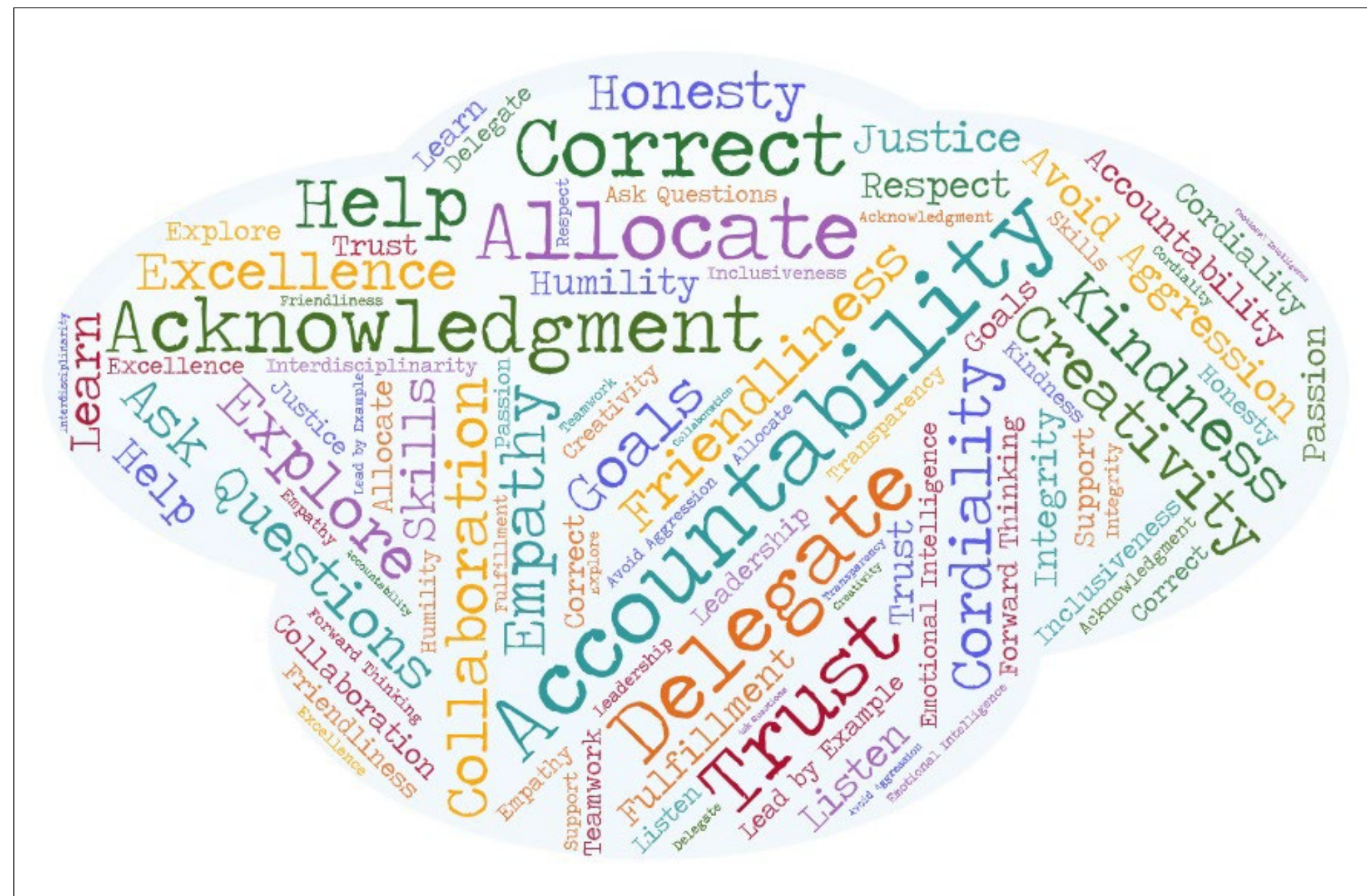
### The CEC Secretariat team

The CEC's success depends on the caliber and dynamic of our Secretariat staff. During 2024, we continued to attract and engage a skilled and culturally diverse professional team from across North America. In the past year we expanded internship and fellowship opportunities on a variety of topics, including artificial intelligence, communications, environmental justice, Indigenous trade and traditional ecological knowledge, youth engagement, environmental law enforcement, private-sector engagement, and corporate social responsibility.



## Policies, Protocols and Procedures

The CEC Secretariat's administration keeps our wheels turning and is dynamic and adaptive, promoting the highest workplace values, providing a positive work-life balance, and offering mentorship and unique growth opportunities for our team members, while striving to maximize efficiency and productivity. We have also expanded training (including leadership and technical skills training) as well as education, supporting employees in their professional growth. With mounting cyber risks that surface daily, we have initiated a cybersecurity training program for all employees and are continuing to improve information technology infrastructure resilience. We maintain rigor in our accounting practices and are continuously searching for ways to gain efficiencies in the use of our fiscal and human resources. We are also exploring ways to leverage our resources through partnerships that can help complement the financing of our activities. In 2024, the CEC updated its Procurement Manual to streamline processes and expedite contracting. Finally, we are also experimenting with hybrid and virtual events, to more efficiently utilize our fiscal and human resources and expand our public engagement.



Wordcloud on team values produced by the CEC Secretariat Staff.

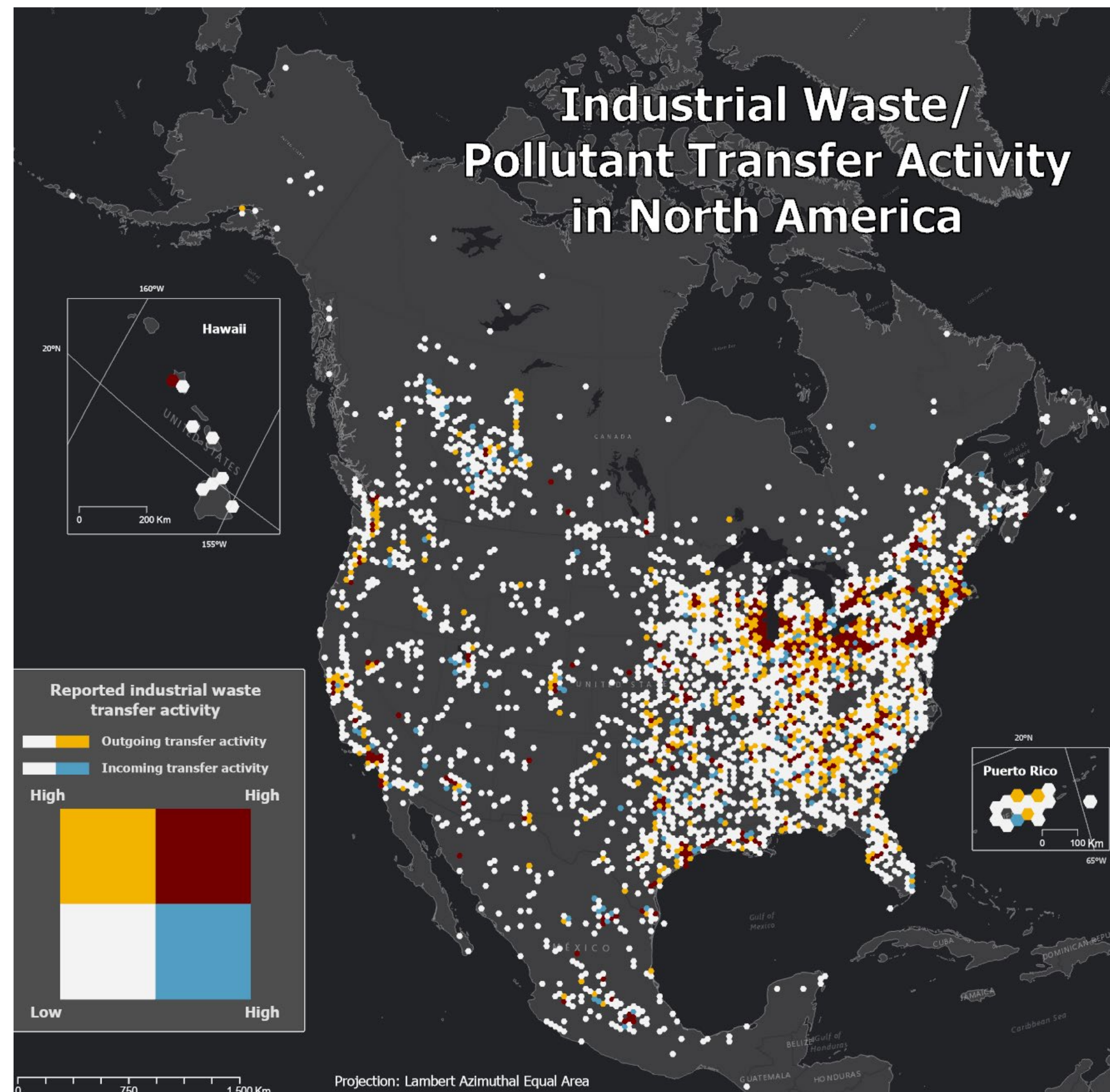


## Team Learning

The CEC team and our network of partners are a diverse and extremely qualified resource for Secretariat and partner training. Taking advantage of this rich capacity, we have expanded our internal and external training on a number of issues, including: the evolution of environmental justice in North America, the CEC's evolving North American Environmental Atlas, artificial intelligence in the workplace, the growing importance of community science, strengthening the role of Indigenous Peoples and TEK in environmental decision making, and TEK and AI.







## Challenges and Next Steps

As the CEC transitions into a fourth decade of trilateral environmental cooperation, several important priorities emerge for the CEC. One is the development of the CEC's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, which will serve our three countries in forging a new and continuously evolving pathway to tackle our most important environmental priorities. It will identify areas where we can harmonize environmental cooperation and collaboration, and will define how the CEC can be most strategic in helping advance North American environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, pollution reduction and climate resilience.

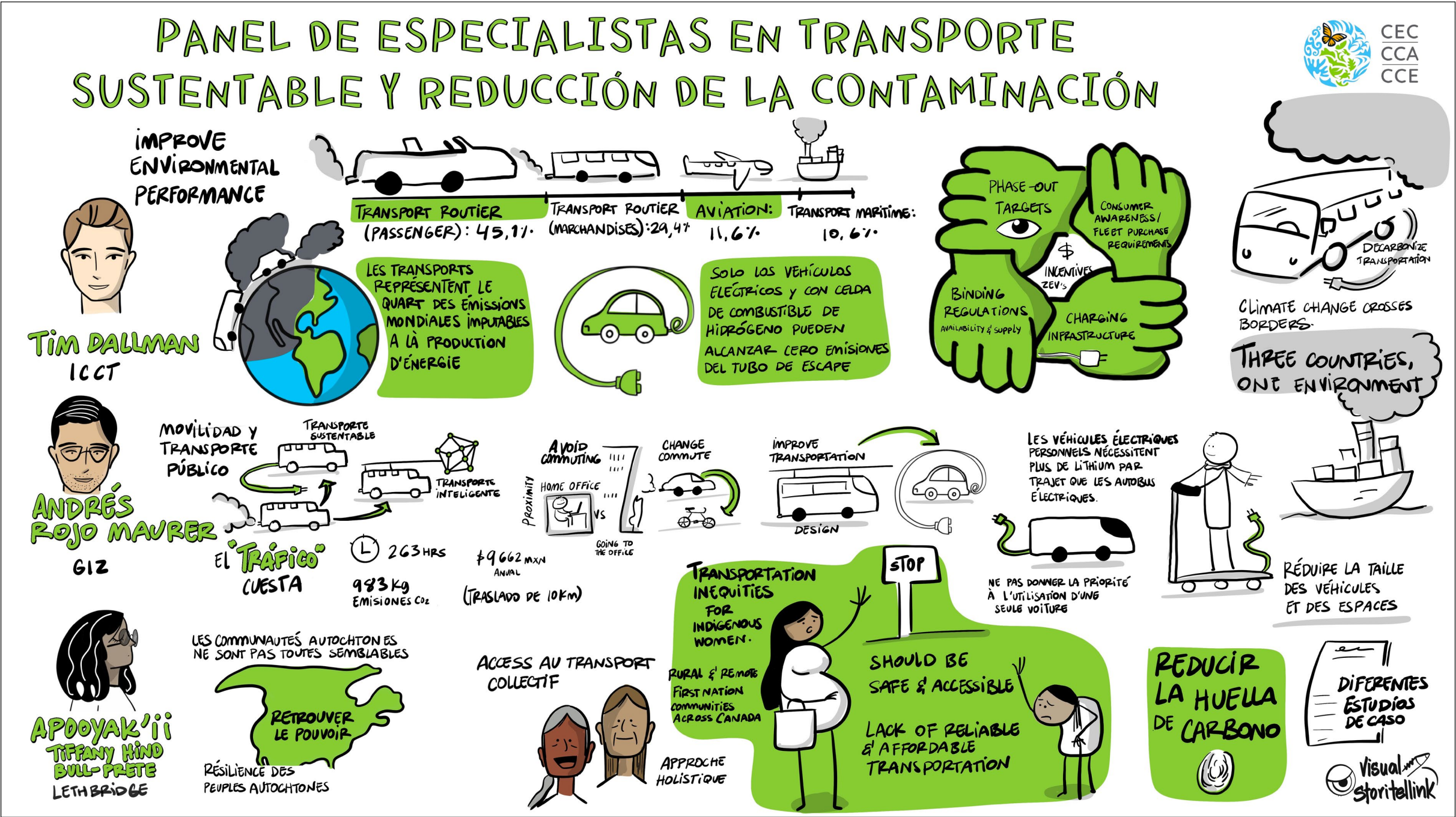
To develop this new strategic plan, we have already initiated a preliminary scoping exercise, through an initiative we call Horizon 2030. It involves a public consultation with hundreds of community leaders, topic experts and key government officials, to identify the region's key environmental challenges and actions to tackle them.



Horizon 2030 will conduct an overarching regional environmental assessment. We have already identified a series of focus areas for this scoping exercise, including how emerging Earth observation technologies and other GIS tools can help us map and inventory natural resources pollution and related environmental data, and how we can better understand and more effectively address pollution: including particularly potent climate super pollutants such as methane and black carbon, at their sources. We will also consider land cover changes and events such as extreme heat, drought, floods, forest fires, algae blooms and other environmental risks and their related impacts on the region.

We will also be exploring opportunities to promote sustainable transportation, identifying pathways for pollution reduction in the transport sector, particularly along land routes and water bodies.

Finally, Horizon 2030 will also work to identify opportunities and strategies to support the provision of sustainable ecosystem services and the sustainable use and management of biodiversity in North America, to help our communities build environmental resilience.



Expert Panel on Sustainable Transportation and Pollution Reduction, JPAC Public Forum, Mexico City, Mexico.





*The Matanuska Glacier in Alaska is thinning significantly due to accelerated global warming. © jdtailant*

For three decades the CEC has helped catalyze environmental cooperation and collaboration across our three countries to protect, conserve and restore our North American environment. With the heightened concerns we face today over a deepening climate crisis, with persistent pollution that inequitably impacts some of our most environmentally vulnerable communities, and with growing biodiversity loss happening around the globe, the North American environmental cooperation work of the CEC has never been

more important. Through regional trade and environmental protection, we have forged a strong North American identity, a regional framework, and partnerships that better position our governments, our businesses, civil society, communities and our people to strengthen our environmental resilience, better steward our environmental resources, and tackle our most pressing environmental challenges.

**Jorge Daniel Taillant**

Executive Director, Commission for Environmental Cooperation



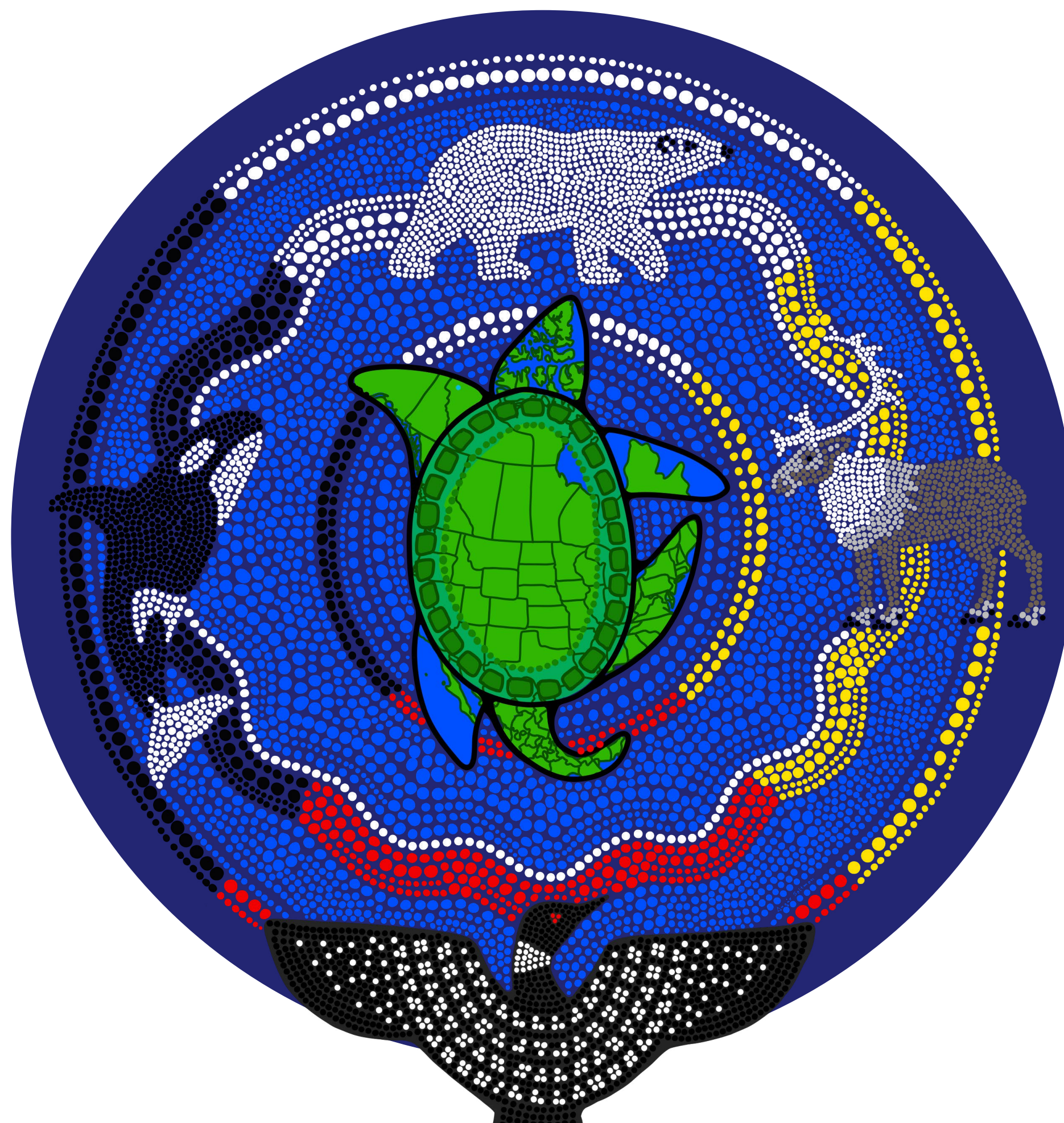


Image by Angie Saltman (Red River Métis) representing the essence of Indigenous trade on Turtle Island (North America) among Canada, Mexico and the United States. The foundation of the design is the Loon—one of the original clans in Anishinaabe governance. The Loon represents the diplomat who travels to build working relationships. Similarly, modern entrepreneurs often travel when exporting their goods and services. The Loon stands ready to go in any of the four directions of the Indigenous economy. The Killer Whale (Orca) symbolizes family, community, protection, and power and often represents the Pacific Northwest. It is a reminder of the importance of kinship and the history of Indigenous People, as they move across the land and seas. On the right of the design, the Caribou represents the Eastern areas of Turtle Island. Caribou travel large distances while remaining together as a group for community, safety, and raising their young. This community reflects the importance of people-to-people connections in Indigenous trade. The Polar Bear at the top represents intelligence, strength, and resilience, especially in harsh environments. Polar bears are admired and valued by the Inuit and have been a vital means of survival for the northernmost people on Turtle Island for thousands of years. The Medicine Wheel central to the design shows the interconnectedness of all our relations. It emphasizes balance, harmony, and respecting all living things while understanding our place in the universe. In this design, black represents water, red is for the land, yellow is for fire, and white (pointing North) is for air. There's an Anishinaabe saying that when all nations of the world drum together, we'll connect as one race and find peace. The artist believes that as Indigenous economies expand through trade and growth, we'll shift business philosophies globally to the sustainability-first mindset and realize we must live in reciprocity with Mother Earth to sustain a safe place for our children and future generations to enjoy.



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