

# Webinar Guide:

## Colonialism and the History of Conservation

**We strongly recommend assigning the first hour of this webinar when onboarding new staff and Board members to support foundational DEI understandings at your organization.** If you'd like to facilitate a large group discussion about these issues, TREC has developed a timeline activity with discussion prompts for your use. You can access TREC's timeline activity [here](#) or by visiting our [DEI Toolkit 1: Foundations](#).

In this webinar, we will begin with a foundational exploration of how colonialism is one form of oppression that pervades conservation history. We will discuss the history of colonialism and settler colonialism and its impacts on indigenous peoples of North America, Africans brought as slaves and their descendants, and Mexican citizens who lived in regions of Mexico currently in the southwestern U.S. prior to its colonization and ultimate annexation by the U.S. We will weave social history into conservation history to build greater awareness of the nuances of conservation and a more holistic understanding of the genesis of conservation in North America. We will discuss how colonialism still exists today, and is not just a relic of history. We will end with stories highlighting the efforts of people to decolonize this work today so that participating conservation organizations have an understanding of some ways in which they can work to decolonize their work.

**VIEW WEBINAR:** <https://www.trec.org/webinars/colonialism-and-the-history-of-conservation/>

### Discussion Questions:

1. What are you conserving and why?
  - a. What values shape your work?
  - b. What are your assumptions about the relationship of people to the spaces you conserve?
  - c. Who benefits from your work and who is left out?
  - d. Who drives the decisions on the projects you work on?
2. Look over the language your organization uses to describe its mission, work, and region.
  - a. Does this center a settler perspective?
  - b. How respectful and inclusive of Indigenous histories, communities, and perspectives is this language?
3. So much of what we do is shaped by the social and political situation around us. What is currently impacting your organization's work and choices?
  - a. What historical events can you think of that have shaped these conditions?
  - b. Are there specific places or events in the past that are especially relevant or intersect with your organization's work?

4. What are the original names of the places you live and work?
  - a. What are the stories of the people of the territory and their relationship to the land and the water?
  - b. What are some considerations you might hold when considering whether or not your organization shares the original stories of the lands and waters?
5. What steps is your organization taking to support full engagement by Indigenous, Black and other people of color in the areas where you work?

**For Self-reflection:**

What were your first impressions of, or first moments of connection, to the natural world? Who or what helped you feel connected to the environment around you?

What inspired you to get involved in conservation and environmental work? What values drive you to stay in this field?

How well do you know the lands you live on and enjoy (recreationally, for travel, etc.)? How might you educate yourself about the human experiences of these lands, including Indigenous experiences & perspectives, the history of settlement, ongoing development, etc?

What feelings show up for you as you consider conservation's relationship to colonization? Now that you are aware of those feelings, what do you want to do or keep in mind moving forward?