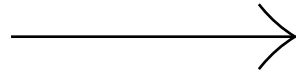
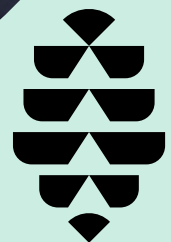


The Indigenous Leadership Initiative



Supporting Indigenous Nationhood and Advancing Indigenous-led Conservation



INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Contents

01 Vision

02 Mission

03 Theory of Change



04 Values

05 How We Work

06 Transforming Conservation

07 Our Impact So Far

09 Where We Are Going

10 The Right Approach Now

11 Our Leaders



Vision



The Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI) works to strengthen Indigenous Nationhood. We believe that strong Indigenous Nations generate transformative benefits for lands and waters, for people and communities, and for the country and the world.

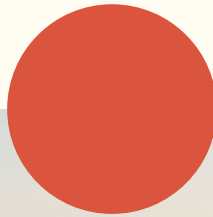
We are building a future where Indigenous Nations lead decision-making on Indigenous lands.

Where protecting and caring for the land becomes a source of community well-being and economic prosperity for Indigenous Nations. Where Nation-to-Nation partnerships are the norm. Where Indigenous Nations and Crown governments work together to fulfill Canada's promise to become a fair, equitable, and prosperous society for all. And where countries of the world seek to learn from the innovative models of Indigenous-led conservation developed in what is now known as Canada.

ILI works with First Nations, Crown governments, funders, and allies to usher in this shared future.

Mission

The Indigenous Leadership Initiative is dedicated to strengthening Indigenous Nationhood as a path to fulfill the responsibility to care for lands and waters.



Theory of Change

W H E N

We support Indigenous Nations in becoming fully empowered and rooted in culture and the land,

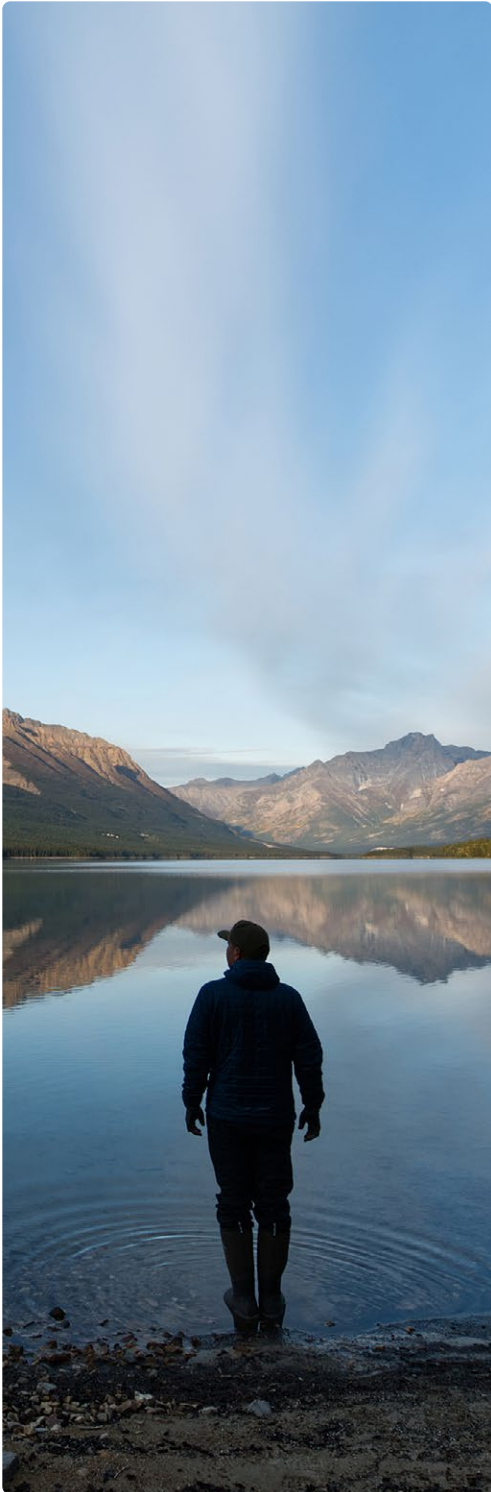
When we foster governance and funding partnerships that honour Indigenous rights and responsibilities, laws, and knowledge systems,

A N D

T H E N

Intact lands are protected on a sweeping scale and offer a global model of how to respect human rights, restore biodiversity, and address climate change.

Values



Indigenous Peoples have lived on this continent for millennia. We have relationships with these lands and waters and a deep understanding of how to sustain them.



Indigenous Nations are drawing on this knowledge to transform what conservation looks like in Canada. More than lines on a map, Indigenous-led approaches to conservation are rooted in reciprocity.

If we take care of the land, the land takes care of us.

As place-based peoples, we know lands are healthier when people are on the ground to tend them—to monitor caribou, conduct controlled burns, track changing ice patterns, or restore salmon runs.

This ongoing stewardship is good for people as well as the land. It supports language and cultural revitalization and connects youth and Elders. It improves health and well-being and creates sustainable economic growth. Its benefits ripple out from individuals to families, communities, regions, and beyond.

It is not often that we have an opportunity to accomplish so much at once.

How We Work

ILI is the only Indigenous-led national conservation organization in Canada. We support Indigenous Nation building and advance the growing movement for Indigenous decision-making authority on lands and waters.

That includes offering:

Partnership

We work by invitation from Indigenous Nations. We have partnered with dozens of First Nations, providing technical expertise on land use planning, Guardians programs, IPCAs, and more.

Leadership

ILI's Senior Leaders draw on decades of experience on the land and in Indigenous governance, territorial and provincial government, Parliament and federal cabinet, and the international arena.

Capacity

Our core team offers partners a wealth of knowledge in on-the-ground programming, policy, Indigenous and Canadian law, international law and policy, and communications.

Advocacy

ILI works at the federal, provincial, territorial levels to secure recognition of and long term funding for Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship.

Networks

On behalf of our partners, ILI fosters and can tap into a broad array of connections in on-the-land programs, Indigenous governments, philanthropy, science, and conservation.

Transforming Conservation

For many years, ILI was a partner in the International Boreal Conservation Campaign, a coalition of organizations, Indigenous Nations, and funders. Starting in 2023, ILI assumed leadership of the campaign and absorbed many of its assets, staff, and institutional relationships.



We're entering a new phase in the conservation movement—one where Indigenous Peoples have the resources and space to lead in our territories.




This marks a milestone in North America: ILI is the first Indigenous group to take over a successful international conservation campaign. With this transition, the campaign is helping to decolonize conservation and usher in a new era—one that ensures Indigenous Peoples are recognized and supported as the appropriate leaders of conservation of their own homelands.

Our Impact So Far

Since forming in 2013, ILI has worked with First Nations and other partners to help:

-  Convene Indigenous, federal, and territorial governments and private funders to explore a Project Finance for Permanence model for the Northwest Territories—**one of four eligible for Canada's \$800 million investment in this innovative Indigenous-led model** announced in 2022 at COP15.

-  Lay the groundwork for the **launch of the First Nations National Guardians Network** in 2022, creating a first-of-its-kind model for allocating funds that is led, designed, and managed by First Nations—a model that is already being applied to other federal files.

-  Ensure Canada places **partnerships with Indigenous Nations at the centre of its strategy** to protect 30 per cent of lands and waters by 2030.

-  Expand the number of **Guardians programs from about 30 in 2016 to more than 120 in 2023** resulting in 20 per cent of First Nations having Guardians programs as of 2023.

-  Encourage Canada to invest in IPCAs and Guardians, beginning with the initial \$25 million for a pilot National Indigenous Guardians program in 2017, followed by \$200 million **in 2021 that went directly to Indigenous Nations to support IPCAs and Guardians.**

-  **Secure match funding from philanthropic sources** for dozens of IPCA projects supported by the Canada Nature Fund in 2019.

-  Support Indigenous Nations in creating **dozens of land use plans** that have identified many potential IPCA proposals and led to the establishment of Thaidene Nënë, Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta, and Edézhzhíe.



Indigenous Peoples are proven to be the best stewards of biodiversity. Respecting our leadership on the land is essential for the future of the planet.



Where We Are Going



ILI has an ambitious set of priorities to achieve in the coming years. We will build on recent successes and the momentum growing up from the land to help ensure that:


-
- Indigenous Nations have the support and recognition to exercise their responsibilities to their lands and waters.
 - Every Indigenous Nation that wants to create an IPCA has the support needed to do so.
 - More Crown government conservation efforts shift from “program delivery” to an equal partnership between Indigenous Nations and Crown counterparts.
-
- Conventional conservation initiatives embrace decolonized models that *Indigenize* leadership and decision making on Indigenous homelands.
 - The vast majority of funding for Indigenous-led conservation goes directly to Indigenous Nations and organizations.
 - Every Indigenous Nation that wants to operate a Guardians stewardship program has the support needed to do so.
 - Knowledge exchanges with Indigenous Peoples in other countries build recognition that Indigenous-led conservation is essential to protecting 30 per cent of lands and waters by 2030.
-

The Right Approach Now

The world is at a turning point. The impacts of colonialism have caused intergenerational trauma and fueled biodiversity loss and climate change.

Yet 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity is on lands cared for and loved by Indigenous Peoples. This is the seed of transformation.



The world needs 
Indigenous Peoples, and
we are leading the way.



ILI advances this leadership and supports Indigenous Nations as they honour the responsibility to care for lands and waters. This work is generating a model for how to sustain lands, respect human rights, and nurture language, culture, and well-being.

This is the path out of the climate and biodiversity crises. This is the path toward a brighter future for all.

Our Leaders

ILI is an Indigenous-led organization. Our Senior Leaders have decades of experience on the land, in governance, and in national and international arenas.



Valérie Courtois,
Executive Director



Valérie Courtois has led the Indigenous Leadership Initiative since 2013. She served as a forestry advisor for the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador and forestry planner for the Innu Nation.

Dahti Tsetso,
Deputy Director



Dahti Tsetso played a leading role in the launch of the Dehcho K'éhodi Stewardship and Guardians Program and the establishment of the Edézhíe Dehcho Protected Area and National Wildlife Area.

The Honourable Ethel
Blondin Andrew, P.C., O.C.



Ethel Blondin Andrew is the first Indigenous woman elected to Parliament and the first to serve as a member of the Privy Council and Cabinet. She recently acted as the Chair of the Sahtu Secretariat.

Heiltsuk Hereditary Chief
Frank Brown



Frank Brown was Director of Stewardship for the Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative. He launched an Indigenous eco-tourism training program and is an Adjunct Professor at Simon Fraser University.

David Flood



David Flood serves as the General Manager for Wahkohtowin Development GP Inc., a social enterprise held by three First Nations to fulfill land stewardship responsibilities and enhance community well-being.

Norma Kassi



Norma Kassi served in Yukon's Legislative Assembly. She co-founded the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research and was Co-Research Director of the Canadian Mountain Network.

Robert (Bob) Overvold



Robert Overvold has worked in territorial and federal government and was Chief Negotiator for Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta Indigenous and Territorial Protected Area. He serves on the K'ahsho Development Foundation.

Miles Richardson, O.C.



Miles Richardson was President of the Council of the Haida Nation and now directs the National Consortium for Indigenous Economic Development at the University of Victoria.

Bev Sellars



Bev Sellars is a former chief of the Xat'sull First Nation and advisor for the BC Treaty Commission. A renowned historian, she is the author of the award-winning book, *They Called Me Number One*.

ILINATIONHOOD.CA

