

A National First Nations Guardians Network

A Model for Implementing Reconciliation, Nation-to-Nation,
UNDRIP, and Ecological Conservation & Stewardship Responsibilities

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Vision & Purpose

- ▶ Momentum for a National First Nations Guardians Network has been growing
- ▶ Guardians programs are created and run by Nations and strengthen Nations' decision-making and self-governance capacity to engage with all land users and stakeholders, including industry and the Crown
- ▶ A Network of strong, financially stable, and well-supported First Nations Guardians programs across the country will play a vital role in the strength and well-being of our Nations, through:
 - ▶ Supporting the health of the lands, waters, and species in our territories;
 - ▶ Maintaining and revitalizing our evolving ancestral knowledges, languages, cultures, laws, and governance systems;
 - ▶ Enabling meaningful economic opportunities and career paths for our people in our homelands; and
 - ▶ Facilitating to Nation-to-Nation relationships among First Nations and between First Nations and Canada as we build a truly inter-national conservation and stewardship model from coast to coast to coast

Methodology & Approach

▶ Foundational Principles:

- ▶ Self-Determination - a right of Peoples (distinct from minorities & subpopulations) in international law and as called for in diverse forms in *UNDRIP*
- ▶ Gift of Multiple Perspectives - i.e., *Etuaptmumk* or Two-Eyed Seeing; other models include the *Gä•sweñta'* or Two-Row Wampum and the Dish with One Spoon treaty between Haudenosaunne & Anishinaabe Nations for living in balance together
- ▶ Nation-to-Nation Relationships amongst First Nations & between Canada and First Nations for inter-national stewardship from coast to coast to coast

▶ Regional Engagement & Interview Process

- ▶ Regional engagement sessions: Miles Richardson, OC (former President of the Council of the Haida Nation) facilitated 9 sessions between October 2020 and January 2021, soliciting feedback from program managers of First Nations Guardians programs funded through the Pilot Program on the need for a Network and what they envisioned for its operations and governance
- ▶ Individual interviews complemented regional engagement sessions

Background: A Growing Movement

- ▶ Guardians are a contemporary expression of First Nations ancestral responsibilities to manage and monitor our lands and waters
- ▶ First Guardians programs in Canada: Haida Gwaii Watchmen, Innu Nation Environmental Guardians, Coastal Guardian Watchmen
- ▶ Working on Country (WoC) Indigenous Rangers program & Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia - AUD \$870 million invested 2007-2021, 900 FTEs
 - ▶ Rangers combine Indigenous knowledge with conservation training to protect & manage their lands, waters, and cultures, including Indigenous Protected Areas
 - ▶ WoC has generated social return on investment (SROI) ranging from 1.5:1 to 3.4:1, with significant benefits seen for Guardians, Nations, and Australian Government
- ▶ Growing number of Guardians programs - now 90 programs across the country
- ▶ Growing chorus of voices in support of Guardians & national Network
 - ▶ Led by First Nations, bolstered by Indigenous organizations (Indigenous Leadership Initiative, Assembly of First Nations) and Parliamentarians

Role of Guardians in Land & Marine Use Planning, including in IPCAs & MPAs

- ▶ Role of Guardians & Land Use Planning in Nationhood & Co-Management
 - ▶ Land use plans aim to balance contemporary and future land and marine uses, yielding the best ecological, economic, intersocietal, and intergenerational outcomes.
 - ▶ First Nation efforts to define own land use plans can position them to negotiate co-management with federal & provincial gov.s (e.g., Haida Nation)
 - ▶ Guardians can help level the playing field (re: resources and specialized expertise) between for First Nations & other gov.s, by providing their Nations with info needed to plan & capacity to ensure plans are implemented, respected, and working.
- ▶ Guardians in Indigenous Protected & Conserved Areas & Marine Protected Areas
 - ▶ IPCAs & MPAs can enable co-management by First Nations & provincial, territorial, & federal gov.s of protected areas, with Guardians playing a critical stewardship role.
 - ▶ Indigenous managed or co-managed areas have the highest levels of biodiversity
- ▶ Growing role for Guardians in marine stewardship
 - ▶ With 3 major coastlines, collaborative MUPs are an emerging path for stewardship in Canada, with Guardians playing an essential role in implementation (e.g., MaPP, PNCIMA)

Core Elements of the Network-Program

- ▶ Expansion of First Nations Guardians Programs from coast to coast to coast
 - ▶ # of programs will grow from 90 to 400 over 5 years of investment
- ▶ Network Council (governance)
 - ▶ Constituted by and accountable to First Nations Guardians programs - Guardians programs are created by their Nations & participate in the Network on their behalf
 - ▶ Allocates funding to existing and new programs across the country
- ▶ Network Secretariat & First Nations-Federal Joint Working Group on Guardians
 - ▶ Secretariat provides administrative and research support to Network Council & support, shared services and expertise, and training to Guardians programs
 - ▶ First Nations-Federal JWG would continue to provide its expertise - building on the foundation of the Pilot Program - in support of of the Network
- ▶ Program start up investments & training and capacity development
 - ▶ Equipment & other resources; university-accredited training for Guardians Program Coordinators; regional and local training for Guardians; learning exchange opportunities
 - ▶ Curriculum framework would offer a level of standardization in ensuring core competencies are developed, while Nations would determine its application based on their needs and unique regional / ecological contexts

Benefits, Value, & Returns on First Nations Guardians Programs

- ▶ Ecological returns, including protection of biodiversity and species at risk, nature-based climate solutions, and reduction of gaps in environmental monitoring.
- ▶ Increased well-being of First Nations Peoples, including through strengthening connections with the land, intergenerational transfer of knowledge, revitalization of language and culture, and new economic and employment opportunities.
 - ▶ SROI ranging from 3:1 (as observed in Australia) to 10:1 (using more holistic measures)
- ▶ Connecting and supporting Guardians, including through the formation of regional collaborations and collective problem-solving.
- ▶ First Nations Nationhood & governance, strengthening our capacity and authority, including with respect to land- and marine-use planning and management.
- ▶ Nation-to-Nation relations among First Nations & between Canada & First Nations
- ▶ Self-determination by First Nations & a framework for operationalizing the *UNDRIP* principle of free, prior, & informed consent (FPIC) within First Nations' territories (Article 32).

Why a National FN Guardians Network?

- ▶ Would support Guardians on the ground, reducing need for capacity-constrained programs to struggle alone or reinvent any wheels
 - ▶ Shared services (e.g., technical & administrative support, training curricula & accreditation)
 - ▶ Facilitating collaboration among Guardians, Guardians programs, and First Nations
 - ▶ Streamlining bureaucratic processes (e.g., funding applications & reporting) & improving the consistency and timing of funding flows
- ▶ Would act as a catalyst, accelerating development of Guardians programs across the country, through central and regional knowledgeable staff assisting First Nations ready to start programs
- ▶ Would have system-wide benefits, enabling capacity of First Nations to engage in consultation processes under s. 35 & enabling conditions for FPIC
 - ▶ Would enable resources that First Nations & the Crown direct toward current resource-related conflicts & grievances (financial, human & otherwise) to flow toward other more important priorities, investing in our well-being
- ▶ Would facilitate Nation-to-Nation relations among First Nations & between First Nations & Canada through bringing Nations together in this Network form
- ▶ The Secretariat could assist programs in accessing data & info held by other parties (e.g., Crown departments, universities, & other researchers & organizations), & can help ensure research agendas, strategies, & collaborations with other partners align with FN interests & priorities & and meet FN ethical expectations (e.g., OCAP®)

Structure & Governance of the Network

▶ Network Council

- ▶ Governance body constituted by & accountable to First Nations - programs owned & created by Nations & participate in the Network on behalf of their Nations - bottom up, not top down
- ▶ Would make funding allocation decisions to new & existing Guardians programs
- ▶ Should ensure Youth & Elder representation, gender balance, & regional representation but need not follow colonial provincial / territorial lines

▶ Network Secretariat & First Nations-Federal Joint Working Group on Guardians

▶ Operational arm of the Network, would provide:

▶ Support, shared services & expertise, & training to Guardians & programs

- ▶ FN-owned database(s)/info systems, enabling FNs to share insights, identify patterns, & develop collaborative strategies - enabling inter-national stewardship knowledge & action that would not otherwise be possible
- ▶ Shared regional and national support staff providing direct program development, administrative (including funding proposal development support) and technical, specialist scientific, and complex data analysis support
- ▶ Professional development, including standardized First Nations Guardians training and accreditation
- ▶ Networking and collaboration opportunities | Communications and outreach support

▶ Administrative, coordinating, & research support to the Network Council

▶ JWG would provide its expertise & advice in support of the Network

Contribution to Canada's Strategic Agenda

▶ Environmental

- ▶ As Canada works to halt biodiversity loss & climate change (e.g, protecting 30% of land & waters by 2030) & meet its international & domestic obligations & objectives, the Network presents the opportunity to build a truly inter-national model of conservation & stewardship from coast to coast to coast

▶ Economic

- ▶ Will create thousands of good jobs & training opportunities, as well as local economic development opportunities within a conservation economy, for First Nations across the country.
- ▶ Will be key to the success of the new impact assessment system, which aims to create greater certainty for proposed developments by building deeper and more proactive First Nations participation into the process

▶ Nation-to-Nation Relations & Implementing UNDRIP

- ▶ Will support capacity for First Nations self-determination (e.g., managing our lands, waters, & resources) & Nation-to-Nation relationships among First Nations & between First Nations & Canada

Budget & Funding Request

- ▶ We are seeking \$831.5 million over 5 years, to grow a network of 400 Guardians programs
- ▶ The greatest challenge facing programs is lack of core funding
- ▶ Investments will focus primarily on core employment & training costs
- ▶ Expenditures will ramp up over 5 years, starting with an investment of ~\$46 million in Year 1
- ▶ In Year 1, the Network will focus on supporting existing programs while it establishes itself & begins training the next cohort of Guardians who will go on to start new programs in Year 2
- ▶ Expenditures increase as new Guardians programs come on stream across the country
- ▶ This investment will support the creation of a truly inter-national model of conservation & stewardship from coast to coast to coast.

Evaluating the Network-Program's Success

- ▶ Success of the investment will be evaluated with respect to the principles of self-determination, Nation-to-Nation relationships, & the Gift of Multiple Perspectives
- ▶ Evaluation will draw on the evaluation models of the Pilot Program, First Nations health governance structure in BC, BC First Nations Data Governance Initiative, & SROI, looking at:
 - ▶ Effectiveness of the program theory - namely that investing in the Network-program will significantly improve conservation outcomes; close the socio-economic gap between First Nations and other Canadians; reduce federal, First Nations, and Canadian economic costs of the status quo; and improve relationships between First Nations and Canada.
 - ▶ Integration with other land stewardship efforts.
 - ▶ Continuous feedback and improvement processes.
 - ▶ Suitability of funding application and assessment processes.
 - ▶ Relationships with partners (e.g., quality of communication, sharing of resources, strategic alignment, and shared decision-making, etc.).
- ▶ It would focus on its usefulness to its primary users: Guardians, programs, & Nations
- ▶ Should be conducted every 5 years, for a cycle of continual learning & transformation
 - ▶ The Network Secretariat should actively monitor & assess its success in meeting the needs of programs & the Network Council

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