

WHAT WE KNOW SUMMARY REPORT

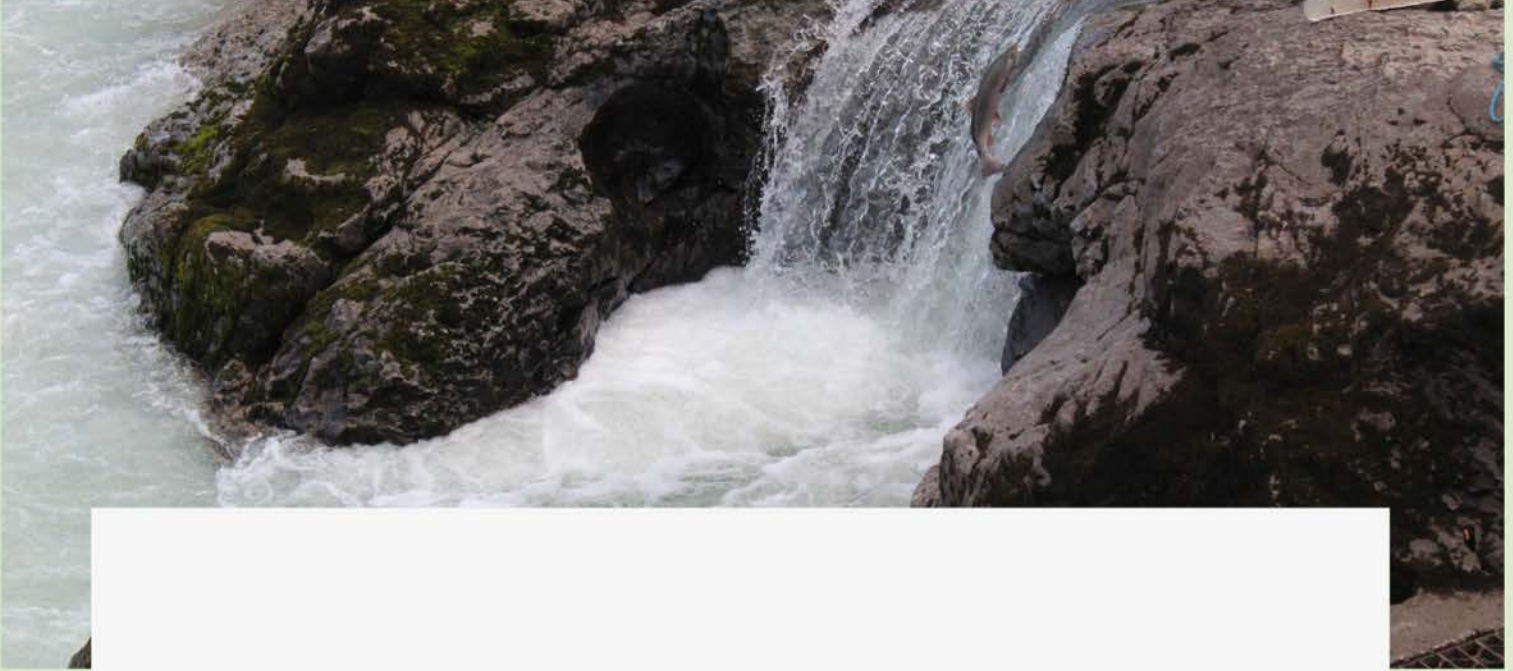
*Guardians Engagement
across the Province of
British Columbia*

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PREPARED BY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 4, 2021, Premier John Horgan announced the Province of British Columbia's mandate to engage with First Nations on the topic of Guardians, or similar programs. The term 'Guardians' is an umbrella term used throughout this report to describe First Nations-led initiatives that undertake a spectrum of stewardship and/or public safety activities on the land base. It is recognized that there are a variety of names for these programs, such as Watchmen, Rangers, Wardens, etc. These activities are not new and have been undertaken by Nations since time immemorial.

While the Province works closely with many Guardian programs on a range of topics and activities, there is presently no official Guardian program within the Provincial government. A formal engagement process was undertaken over the course of the Fall/Winter 2021-2022 to gain a better understanding of Guardian and Guardian-like programs across BC, identify current challenges facing these initiatives, and discuss opportunities and considerations for further partnership and collaboration moving forward.

Through engagement efforts that included the formation of an advisory working group, virtual broad engagement sessions, and an online survey, several key themes emerged. The outcome of this work is captured in this “What We Know” (WWK) report which shares what was discussed.

Nations know the limitations faced in implementing Guardian programs because they’ve struggled to do so under the current structures. These issues are not theoretical or only applicable in certain contexts; programs struggle to be established and maintained without support. What is expressed throughout this report are some of the known problems, not hearsay – as such, this is a “What We Know” report; not a “What We Heard”.

We learned from individuals currently leading Guardian programs with great success and from representatives keenly interested in embarking upon the establishment of such a program within their Nation. It was made clear that First Nations are living with the land-based impacts and experiencing the effects of development and climate change firsthand. Guardian programs are an important way Nations uphold their responsibility and accountability for the land by stewarding it based on Indigenous law.

Of the many Nations already leading this work across the province, the results from their efforts are clear – Guardian programs benefit the wellbeing of the land, water, natural resources, animals, Indigenous Peoples, and all British Columbians due to proactive and healthy maintenance of the environment that has been practiced since time immemorial.

Further support of Guardian programs is needed so that a shared path forward can be established where Nations and the Province of BC are working in partnership to ensure that the land and all life that it sustains is supported now and into the future. Guardian programs are a solution to an ever-increasing problem – managing the environment in a way that supports survival, growth, and prosperity.

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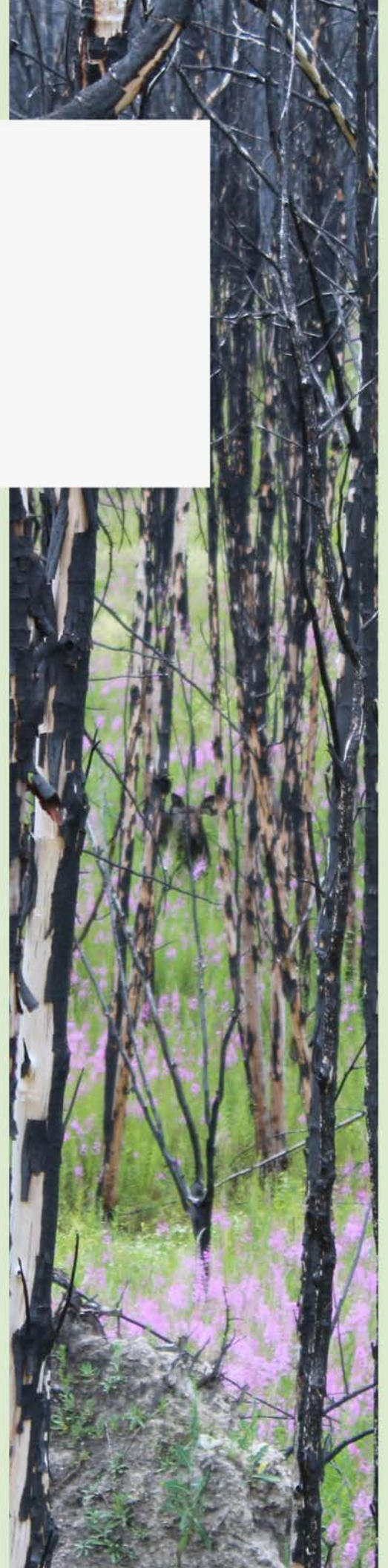
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INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that many First Nations have and continue to seek Provincial partnerships and opportunities related to Guardian programs, on June 4, 2021, Premier John Horgan announced that the Province was committed to initiating an engagement process with First Nations to learn more about existing Guardian programs and their valuable work.

Guardian programs, and similar initiatives, such as watchmen, rangers, wardens, liaisons, etc., are important to the stewardship of territories and advancing reconciliation. Presently, the Province does not have a formal Guardian program nor a mandate to establish one. However, some funding is provided to programs through government-to-government agreements and Forums (e.g., Environmental Stewardship Initiative and Collaborative Stewardship Framework).

There is no question that we must do more than superficial inclusion of Indigenous peoples at all levels of government. The knowledge of how to live sustainably is the basis of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous peoples have a connection to the land that is a completely different way of understanding the world and our relationship to it. They are the only people who have millennia of experience living sustainably with the land.



Stewardship regimes founded in an ideology of sustainability and balance is needed now more than ever. The increasing importance of this is continually shown through climate change reports, with the recently released United Nations climate report calling for drastic action on a huge scale.¹ Within this UN report released February 27th, 2022, a North America fact sheet was shared in an accompaniment offering “adaption option” recommendations, one of which stated:

Supporting Indigenous self-determination, recognizing Indigenous Peoples’ rights, and supporting Indigenous knowledge based-adaptation are critical to reducing climate change risks to achieve adaptation success (very high confidence).²

In January 2022, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI) published a call to action to recognize, support, and implement Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and Indigenous Guardians in British Columbia entitled “Good for the Land, Good for the People, Good for the Economy”. The collective vision for Indigenous Guardians, the discussion around undoing and addressing the harms caused to Nations and recognizing and restoring rights, the articulation of the business case for Indigenous Guardians, and the key recommendations for moving forward together are expertly articulated by the ILI in this report.

The authors of this WWK report, upon receiving and recording feedback from First Nations and through our literature review, believe that the ILI report is foundational to the future of Guardian Programs in the Province of B.C. and lays the path with recommendations and potential next steps. The intention of this report is to supplement the conversation by sharing what we know based on the expertise and experiences of those currently doing the work and the shared insights of those looking to embark upon it. We gathered relevant information available on these topics which supported the development of the engagement process and have been highlighted in the Findings and Discussion sections.

After reading this report, you will have a better understanding of what Guardian programs are, examples of the successful outcomes they are producing, the challenges that they face, and the opportunities where increased support can lead to transformational outcomes.

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

² https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FactSheet_NorthAmerica.pdf

What are Indigenous-led Guardian Programs?

“Stewardship, in its broadest sense, is the recognition of our responsibility to care for and maintain the quality and natural function of our ecosystems.”³

This definition not only describes Guardian programs but is a view and historical role that First Nations have had in their ancestral territories since time immemorial and is an important implementation of inherent Indigenous rights and responsibilities.

There are different names in the English language for this important role, including Guardians, Watchmen, Watchers, Observers, Rangers, Monitors, etc. For the purposes of this paper, we will use the term “Guardian” to capture this important work but recognize that the stewardship responsibilities being described are unique to each Nation and are most accurately portrayed in each Nation’s language itself.

Guardians are trained members of Nations who act to protect, monitor, and study their territories, observing changes in and impacts to the regions they oversee, and act as the “eyes and ears” of their Nations.⁴ They often use a combined approach of both Indigenous knowledge and western science to best steward their territory and support their community/Nation.

Depending on the environmental landscape they are in, and the age and size of their program, their responsibilities can range. However, they all focus on protecting and preserving the lands, waters, and lifeforms for future generations; claiming their rightful connection to their ancestral territories.⁵

Guardian programs have evolved and are continuing to evolve to meet the needs of Nations/communities today by addressing climate change concerns, offering partnerships between First Nations and provincial and federal governments, and educating and informing their own members, alongside the general public, on the rightful stewardship responsibilities they have to their lands.

³ <https://coastalfirstnations.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Valuing-Coastal-Guardian-Watchmen-Programs-A-Business-Case.pdf>

⁴ https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Guardians-valuationreport_v10_Final_TNC%20Canada.pdf

⁵ <https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/chapter/learn-about-indigenous-guardian-programs>

Scope of Guardians Work, Responsibilities, and Jurisdiction

Guardian programs are unique to the needs of each territory and community where the scope and work of programs often varies from Nation to Nation. There are some consistent responsibilities and priorities that follow Guardians in each program, but even then, those consistent themes are often developed for the landscape they are working in.

Guardians monitor their regions, remaining a constant presence with traditional knowledge and commitment to its health and longevity. They play an important role in data collection, tracking changes and impacts to ecosystems, wild and aquatic life, and monitoring the overall health of the regions they steward. They gather critical information and share trusted data with other Nations and governing bodies providing valuable insight for research, education, planning, and ultimately decision-making.⁶

With increased recognition, the value of Guardians' input and support is starting to be considered in advance of projects being completed and how their knowledge can support the developmental stages, such as with the Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development reaching out to First Nations communities on the Trails Strategy for BC.⁷

In regions where resource development in fracking, mining, and logging can be common, Guardians monitor the impacts these resource extraction activities have and gather data in collaboration with researchers and other Nations, looking to sustain their health and future. In this regard, their monitoring and data collection can be included in cumulative impacts assessments led by or supported by Indigenous Nations.

Guardians play a critical role in the monitoring and compliance of harvesting in their territories, including tracking numbers of wildlife in their areas of influence, assessing the state of habitats, evaluating protections needed to ensure populations remain stable for species repopulation, and evaluating the state of wildlife for food security. These conservation and preservation measures over wildlife and habitat are central to making informed, evidence-based decisions for both Indigenous governing bodies,

⁶ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/together-for-wildlife/together-for-wildlife-strategy.pdf>

⁷ Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. (2020). What we heard: A summary of Indigenous engagement for the review of the trails strategy for British Columbia.

and the BC Government as decision making models are enhanced to respect Indigenous jurisdiction.

Guardians act as both a welcoming presence to their land, providing insight to the cultural connection to the region and educating their communities and the public on the safe and appropriate ways to enjoy the resources. They track the impact of business and industry on habitats and wildlife and work to both protect resources and find sustainable opportunities to grow the economy in their regions.⁸

With Guardians' enforcement of land and water protections, especially where agencies are underfunded in being tasked to care for them, Guardians provide benefit not only to their communities but to industry and government invested in these territories and members of the public who enjoy accessing the lands and waters.

The larger scope of Guardians work and priorities is a long list, depending on their region and the age and size of their program. Some programs that are just being established will have limited capacity for their Guardians to accomplish as much as they would desire across an expansive region whereas larger programs that have been in existence for a while are able to have the increased ability to accomplish more. The scope of programs is significantly impacted by available resources which limits the overall budgets of programs, the reliance on year-to-year versus multi-year funding, and constraints on staffing.

As an example, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Program Business Case clearly broke down the roles and responsibilities of the Watchmen in their programs, offering excellent insight into everything that can be accomplished in such a program. While some of these responsibilities are specific to the Coastal Region, they give an idea of expected Guardian and Watchmen duties in program planning:

1. SCIENTIFIC / TECHNICAL

Monitoring, inventorying, and researching the health and status of the wildlife, marine life, ecosystems, and habitats in their regions. This work can take place both solely within their Nation's guardian program or through collaboration with other academic and government partnerships.

2. CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Gathering knowledge and preserving information on the archaeology, stories, language, and traditions of their Nation.

⁸ <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/guardians>

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

Acting as a prominent member in their community through leading community development and improvement opportunities, being a present figure in their community both in being vocal and informative about their work and educating neighbouring communities and interested parties on the work of their Guardian program.

4. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Playing an important role in supporting their Nation's youth in learning and training opportunities, encouraging positive connections, and acting as strong role models for their future generations.

5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

Guardians engage with the public, media, researchers, politicians, and celebrities, take media interviews, and participate in events both locally and outside BC.

6. PLANNING MANAGEMENT

Coordinating the planning and management of harvesting, permits to do so and the entry of data regarding this work.

7. RESTORATION WORK

Restoring and tending to the land and water resources in their Nation, including trail restoration, tsunami cleanup, attending to contamination and stream restoration.

8. COLLABORATING WITH OTHER NATIONS

Helping the collaboration with other Nations through sharing information, data, and resources, coordinating in planning and specific actions and taking part in activities together.

9. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Taking part in training and certification, participating in workshops and conferences, and sharing gained knowledge within the community and amongst other Nations.

10. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Joint patrols, work and communications with other agencies and collaborative efforts with organizations and government.

11. EMERGENCY RESPONSE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Guardians play a significant role in marine rescue, bear and wildlife safety and spill response needs.⁹

Recognition of Guardian Programs

The benefits of Guardians have been recognized by the Canadian government, starting with the investment of \$25 million between 2017 - 2018 as start-up funding to promote the growth of Guardian programs across Canada. This pledge supported the commitments the country has made in protecting natural resources in the face of changing landscapes, climate change, and further impacts to natural resources and recognized the benefit Guardian programs offer in supporting these efforts.

It was announced that the *“Canadian Government has pledged to protect 25 percent of the country’s land and waters by 2025, and 30 percent by 2030”*¹⁰. This pledge can be supported by the valuable role Indigenous Nation’s provide in helping guide this work and in establishing an important connection to the concept of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPCA’s).

With an improved official presence on the land, Guardians have a better ability to protect their territories and educate those who visit these areas. “People enjoying outdoor recreation often don’t realize they are on unceded territory” according to the Coastal Guardian Watchmen. Guardians can educate and inform, build more awareness and appreciation for both the Indigenous rights to the land and the protection of the land itself.¹¹

Through recognizing their respectful awareness and guardianship of their lands, First Nations are asserting their rightful claim to stewarding the lands and waters their

⁹ https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Guardians-valuationreport_v10_Final_TNC%20Canada.pdf

¹⁰ <https://thenarwhal.ca/canada-indigenous-guardians-investment-covid/>

¹¹ Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. (2020). What we heard: A summary of Indigenous engagement for the review of the trails strategy for British Columbia.

ancestors stewarded before them. Recognizing the importance of Guardians is a form of support to communities/Nations that are reconnecting with their traditional territories and cultural practices through program growth and development.

Guardian Programs and Game Changers in BC

Across BC, there are Guardian programs and innovative initiatives/organizations setting the precedent for stewardship of First Nations in their ancestral territories. The landscape across what is now predominantly known as BC has diverse regions, changing wildlife, ecosystems, landscapes, and coastal life. Each program has a unique set of principles and priorities that guide their work. The following examples provides just a snapshot of the stewardship and progress taking place in the province.

The Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative

Coastal First Nations along BC's North and Central Coast have been growing and establishing Guardian Programs in their Nations for decades. The Great Bear Initiative was created to establish First Nations in leadership positions in conservation decisions and the protection of their coastal territories. The Coastal First Nations provide a great example for reviewing the value and benefits of Guardian Programs and the effect they can have on individual and grouped Nations as a whole as all the Coastal First Nations have Guardians in their communities.

The Guardians in this prosperous program aim to enforce their traditional territorial rights and First Nations coastal laws, protect their natural resources, and uphold their land and marine use agreements. They have a strong system for gathering knowledge and conducting research regarding their lands, waters, habitats, wild and aquatic life, and monitoring for impacts and changes, sharing this information with other regions. Though their program offers a regional overview, each of their eight participating Nations in this program have unique landscapes and programs to meet their respective territories and cultural stewardship activities.¹²

Haida Gwaii Watchmen Program

The Haida Gwaii Watchmen Program started in 1973 and was formalized in 1981 with First Nations Watchmen monitoring and protecting the Pacific Coast off Haida Gwaii. Today, Haida's program has an independent management structure and is supported

¹² <https://coastalfirstnations.ca/our-environment/programs/coastal-guardian-watchmen-support/>

by funding provide through Parks Canada. They use Indigenous laws to watch over their territories and work in collaboration with their neighboring Nations.¹³ Haida has created the Haida pledge that visitors can take before they arrive, offering their commitment to respect the traditional ways of the Haida and act in good faith while visiting their traditional territories.¹⁴

Haida's program ranges from monitoring fisheries and water use to protecting their traditional sites and teaching those who visit their territories about their rightful ancestral connection and values to the land and waters. Haida's program remains a strong presence in their territory, with clear enforcement in collaboration with government on the use of the resources in their region and education and outreach on their safeguarding. "Guardians and Watchmen now work in fisheries, forestry, heritage and parks programs to support the Council of Haida Nations' priority to protect the Aboriginal rights and title of Haida people."¹⁵

The Central Coast Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP)

MaPP is a government-to-government marine planning partnership for the North Coast between the BC Government and 17 First Nation Governments, overseeing marine plans for the north pacific coastal waters. Programs like MaPP are working to ensure the ecosystems of the Coast and economies and cultures of the First Nations communities in these territories flourish and grow stronger into the future.

First Nations Watchmen and Guardians are integral to implementing the MaPP Plan and bring local insight and awareness with them. Once trained, they return to their communities with knowledge and preparation to protect their coastal health for future generations and play a role in a new type of marine management in BC, co-led by First Nations and the BC Government: "17 new Guardian Watchmen from 10 coastal Nations – including all central coast Nations – have now received training in enforcement, fisheries management, electro-fishing, cultural awareness, small motor operation and maintenance and more."¹⁶

MaPP now includes 16 First Nations groups across Haida Gwaii, the North Coast, Central Coast, and North Vancouver Island. Marine use planning and monitoring of the coastal marine environment are supported through modern science and local

¹³ <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/culture/gardiens-watchmen>

¹⁴ <https://haidagwaiipledge.ca/>

¹⁵ <https://wahkohtowin.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Aboriginal-Guardian-and-Watchmen-Programs-in-Canada-2013-with-recommendations.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.ccira.ca/2016/07/guardian-watchmen-essential-for-mapp/>

traditional knowledge, creating sub-regional plans for each area. Advice and input were given by advisory committees, including scientific consultants and ongoing consultation with stakeholders.¹⁷

West Coast Trail Guardians

A Stewardship Program supporting Huu-ay-aht, Ditidat, and Pacheedaht Guardians in their work with Parks Canada, protecting their ancestral territories and those who visit it. The Guardians have created a cultural experience for visitors, both teaching the history of the territory, preparing them for their hike and re-instilling their connection and pride to the land.¹⁸

Broken Group Islands Beach Keepers

This Guardian Program covers territories made up of over 100 islands, islets, and land around the traditional territories of the Tseshaht First Nation and the Hupacasath First Nation, in addition recognizing the treaty rights of the Toquaht Nation and Uchucklesaht Tribe.¹⁹

The Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI)

ESI was established in 2014 through the collaboration of the Province of BC and First Nations, creating projects to monitor, research and restore ecosystems in their allotted territories and produce stewardship education and training. Currently there are four regional environmental stewardship projects with representatives from 30 First Nations, including the participation of industry and government. The four regions include the Skeena, Omineca, Northeast and North Coast, providing opportunities to develop projects to prioritize and protect these areas and their natural resources.²⁰

Great Bear Rainforest

This program encapsulates 26 First Nations monitoring and managing the Great Bear Land Use Plan, protecting 85% of the forests while creating opportunities for First Nations communities in this region to benefit economically and support job growth. They operate under Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM), looking at how many elements of the environment are all linked and impacted by human activity. "This

¹⁷ <http://mappocean.org/>

¹⁸ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/west-coast-trail-guardians-blaze-a-path-to-reconciliation/article25050920/>

¹⁹ <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/autochtones-indigenous/gardiens-guardians>

²⁰ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/collaborative-stewardship-bc/environmental-stewardship-initiative>

approach considers the needs and wants of people while managing multiple environmental values at the same time. The approach is also adaptive.” This approach to the great Bear Rainforest agreement allows science and traditional knowledge to be acknowledged together when gathering data on their territories.²¹

The Collaborative Stewardship Framework (CSF)

Initiated in 2018, CSF built off the success of the ESI-model and approach using traditional Indigenous and western knowledge together to make decisions regarding land use and stewardship in BC, with more than 30 First Nations distributed amongst five Forums. The five forums include the 3Nations, Tahltan, Kaska and Taku River Tlingit, Ktunaxa, the Nicola 5 forum with the Nlaka’pamux and Sylix people, the Southern Dakelh Nation Alliance, and the S’ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance.²²

Parks Canada

Parks Canada is involved in Guardian programs across Canada, supporting the development efforts of new programming and funding long time programs such as the example in Haida Gwaii. A plan was set in place in 2008 to engage Indigenous peoples in the management and overseeing of National Parks, conservation areas, and locations of historical significance. This collaboration has helped to create new parks such as Torngat Mountains National Park of Canada, Marine Conservation areas including Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve and Haida Site of Canada, protecting cultural heritage and important natural resources. Parks Canada has acknowledged the beneficial information and protection Guardians offer when managing their traditional territories, providing valuable data for research, and monitoring purposes on the changes and developments in these regions.²³

The BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

The Ministry has developed a First Nations BC Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum to obtain the perspectives from First Nations across BC in wildlife stewardship; supporting the development of Wildlife Act amendments to advance reconciliation efforts. This forum encapsulated the feedback of over 40 BC First Nations participants

²¹ <https://greatbearrainforesttrust.org/biodiversity-2/>

²² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/collaborative-stewardship-bc/collaborative-stewardship-framework>

²³ <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/autochtones-indigenous/gardiens-guardians>

to help build the “Together for Wildlife” strategy, with suggested amendments. Specifically, Action 21 of this strategy calls for the evaluation and support of guardians:

We will evaluate, in collaboration with participating Indigenous governments, existing guardian and compliance projects with a focus on wildlife and habitat stewardship. Starting in 2021, and building on successes identified in the evaluation, we will support guardian and compliance programs (e.g., through developing approaches) that will be implemented locally with Indigenous governments at their request.²⁴

After April 1st, 2022, this Forum will be moving over to the newly formed Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship.

Guardian Programs Across Canada

Across Canada, there are Guardian programs and innovative initiatives/organizations setting the precedent for stewardship and rightful reclamation of Indigenous Peoples in their ancestral territories. Below is a small example of some of these stewardship initiatives.

Land Needs Guardians

The Land Needs Guardians campaign advocates for long-term support of Indigenous Guardian programs and stewardship opportunities. This campaign is supporting the movement from First Nations communities to ensure Guardians are a part of their future. They are circulating a statement for signatures, voicing their support for this movement, and encouraging the investment in Indigenous people as the Guardians of their rightful territories. The Indigenous Leadership Initiative serves as one of the leading partners with this campaign.²⁵

²⁴ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/together-for-wildlife/together-for-wildlife-strategy.pdf>

²⁵ <https://landneedsguardians.ca/>

The First Nations – Federal Pilot Joint Working Group on Guardians (JWG)

This working group supports First Nations communities in exercising their traditional rights and connection to the land and waters in their territories. The group is comprised of First Nations Guardian experts and representatives from the federal government, creating a shared and unified approach to responsible land and marine stewardship and decision making in Canada.

Through this working group, they look to encourage First Nation Guardian initiatives, improve the transfer of knowledge from Elders to Youth, and strengthen partnerships between Nations. Applications are accepted to support Guardian Initiatives under three separate Tiers, promoting the opportunity to further develop these programs, spread their influence across the country and offer long term funding for their sustainability.²⁶

As of 2019, the federal government contributed an additional \$6.4 million, supporting 22 projects within this pilot program to support Indigenous-led conservation projects.²⁷ This Group supports programs across Canada.

Indigenous Leadership Initiative

The mission of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI) is to support and strengthen Indigenous communities in acknowledging their cultural responsibility and rights to their lands. They aspire to train and educate new generations of Indigenous leaders to gain equal partnerships with government and to advance the rights and roles of Indigenous Nations in caring for their ancestral territories. They partner directly with Indigenous Nations primarily located in the Boreal region to promote Indigenous-led conservation.²⁸

The National Indigenous Guardians Network

Starting in 2016, this Network has supported collaborative work between Indigenous Nations and the Canadian Government, encouraging the inclusion of Indigenous leadership in program development as opposed to government implemented programs. They are working to expand the presence of Guardian Networks across Canada, aiming to add 200 programs over five years; and to continue pushing for long-

²⁶ <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/indigenous-guardians-pilot/first-nations.html>

²⁷ <https://thenarwhal.ca/indigenous-guardians-get-6-4-million-to-monitor-traditional-territories/>

²⁸ <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/mission>

term federal funding to support the sustainability and long-term growth of these programs and the communities they are in.²⁹

Dehcho First Nations

The Dehcho First Nations and Canadian Government created an Indigenous protected area in 2018, located in the Dehcho Region of the Northwest Territories, Edézhíe. This region will cover 14,218 square kilometres and help protect the rightful cultural, spiritual, and ecological lands of the Dehcho and Tlichô Dene.³⁰ The Edézhíe was the first new Indigenous protected area in Canada under the government's 2018 budget for Nature Legacy and formally designated as a National Wildlife Area, supporting its Indigenous caretakers in their objectives. "By designating Edézhíe as an Indigenous protected area and national wildlife area, the Dehcho First Nations and the Government of Canada will work together to protect the area's ecological integrity from impacts of future development and ensure that the Dehcho Dene way of life is maintained for present and future generations."³¹

The Wrecks of Erebus and Terror National Historic Site

Parks Canada is working with the Franklin Interim Advisory Committee, developing a Guardian program for the Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror in 2018. This program will include Inuit in protecting and monitoring these sites and will include more Inuit knowledge and insight with Parks Canada operations. The goal for this site is to have Inuit Guardians hosting visitors to these wreck sites, sharing information about the land and culture, and monitoring the area as it's Guardians.³²

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

The ACFN has been concerned about the negative impacts and changes in their territories resulting from the work of oil sands, climate change, hydroelectric development, and other events. Anxiety has grown amongst their Nation is accessing and using their natural resources due to the contamination of these industrial activities. Because of these concerns the Nation launched a Guardian program to patrol and monitor their territories, ensuring all activities and visitors in their Nation operated under sanctioned and approved manners. "Our strategy is to protect and steward the

²⁹ <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/publications/background-a-national-indigenous-guardians-network>

³⁰ <https://thenarwhal.ca/indigenous-hunters-are-protecting-animals-land-and-waterways/>

³¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2018/10/first-new-indigenous-protected-area-in-canada-edehzhie-protected-area.html>

³² <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/autochtones-indigenous/gardiens-guardians>

lands and water according to Dene law and the guidance of our Elders, as we have done for generations. In doing so, we will be strengthening an effective model of land and water care that is grounded in culture and tradition.”³³

International Guardian Programs

Australia

Currently in Australia, there are 78 Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) spanning 74 million hectares, covering more than 46% of their National Reserve System. Three of Australia’s National Parks are jointly managed with the traditional owners, the Kakadu, Booderee and Uluru kata-Tiuta Nation Parks. These Parks use the traditional knowledge of the rightful Indigenous owners to care for the land with over 100 of their park staff being Indigenous. The Indigenous staff bring invaluable insights into the culture and traditional knowledge of these lands and waters, preserving the cultural values of the parks.³⁴

Guardian programs create employment with good income for Indigenous peoples, overseeing IPAs. These ranger positions provide financial stability that in turn supports their community, inspires future generations to follow in their steps and oversee their IPAs bring social, cultural, health and educational benefits to their communities and ensure the cultural values of their lands are protected for generations to come. “There are now 109 Indigenous ranger programs in Australia managing lands and water. Studies found that “Working on Country” increases employment, reduces welfare payments, lowers crime rates and violence against women and improves public health.”³⁵

In 2020, The Australian Government committed \$700 million for their Indigenous Rangers programming, guaranteeing program support until 2028.³⁶ In 2021, the Australian Government announced an additional \$11.6 million of a \$100 million budget to support an Indigenous Protected Areas Sea Country Program, monitoring ocean habitats and coastal environmental health with the expertise of Indigenous Peoples.³⁷

³³ <https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/communities/athabasca-chipewyan-first-nation>

³⁴ <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/media-releases/bab99028-ac7e-4621-ab8d-4b2000aeeedf3/files/media-release-world-ranger-day-2016.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/publications/backgrounder-a-national-indigenous-guardians-network>

³⁶ <https://thenarwhal.ca/canada-indigenous-guardians-investment-covid/>

³⁷ <https://www.environment.gov.au/land/indigenous-protected-areas>

The IPA program continues to grow with new applications received regularly for review and acceptance. In addition to government support, Indigenous organizations around Australia supplement this funding with their own income generating opportunities, support from partnering private sectors, and grants and donations through philanthropic organizations.³⁸

New Zealand's Kaitiakitanga

In New Zealand, there are multiple groups of Guardians protecting the environment and culture in the Māori worldview. It is their traditional concept of Kaitiakitanga that supports the preservation, conserving and protection of their lands and waters. They view these programs as a way to conserve and sustain their environment for the future.

Kaitiakitanga is gaining popularity and recognition in New Zealand today, encouraging the New Zealand population to strengthen and maintain relationships with their environment. The Kaitiaki's responsibilities include upholding the mana of Māori people, sustaining their natural resources, protecting the Island's ecosystems, ensuring traditional food sources are protected for future generations, coordinating commercial developments with Māori leaders, and creating educational programmes to explain and teach about the connectedness between the lands, waters, wild and aquatic life, and people.³⁹

³⁸ <https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/environment/indigenous-protected-areas-ipas>

³⁹ <https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/2544-understanding-kaitiakitanga>



METHODS

In 2021, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (the Ministry) announced its 2021 Ministry priorities which reaffirmed their commitment to working with Indigenous Peoples in implementing the Declaration Act draft Action Plan, advance reconciliation through existing government-to-government agreements and improve natural resource and wildlife management.

In 2022, the provincial natural resource ministries reorganized, with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) being renamed as the Ministry of Forests (FOR), and a new ministry accountable for integrated land and natural resource management forming, the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship (LWRS).

As of April 2022, the Premier's commitment to engage with First Nations on the topic of Guardians is being jointly led by Assistant Deputy Minister Matt Austin of IROD (FOR) and Assistant Deputy Minister Jim Standen of BC Parks (ENV). Additionally, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and implementing the Action Plan released March 30th, 2022, remains a priority for the Province.

In keeping with these priorities, on June 4, 2021, Premier John Horgan announced the province's mandate to engage with First Nations on the topic of Guardians.

With this engagement, the province sought to gain a better understanding of Guardian and Guardian-like programs across BC, identify current challenges facing these initiatives, and discuss opportunities and considerations for further partnership and collaboration moving forward.

To aid in this engagement effort, the provincial government retained the services of Four Directions Management Services (FDMS) to support the development of an engagement strategy, provide facilitation of the engagement sessions, and write this final report as a neutral, third-party.

The engagement approach was designed to listen, learn, and gather critical feedback and advice from Guardian experts, Nation representatives, and program leads. The engagement included:

- (1) Experienced Guardian program leaders engaged through their participation in a Guardians Engagement Working Group.
- (2) First Nations (and Indigenous communities and organizations) being engaged broadly in three virtual sessions.
- (3) Current, on-the-ground Guardians being engaged in one virtual session and through an online survey.

Guardians Engagement Working Group

Beginning in August 2021, the Guardians Engagement Working Group (GEWG) was established to bring together a cohort of experts of Guardian work and programs with the provincial staff and facilitation team (FDMS) to collaboratively shape the design and development of the engagement process.

The GEWG met a total of 5 times across the course of the engagement and members of the working group shared invaluable insights into what is currently working well with their programs, what isn't working well, and what changes they would like to see made to improve the success and effectiveness of their programs.

The GEWG offered input into this final document by having an opportunity to weigh in on the table of contents, the engagement methodology, and the providing feedback

on a draft version. Members of the GEWG offered their technical expertise and operated in a non-consultative participatory manner.

Broad Engagement Sessions

Virtual engagement sessions were held on December 7th, 2021, January 24th, 2022, and January 25th, 2022. The purpose of engagement with First Nations on the topic of Guardians was to:

- (1) Provide the Province with a fulsome understanding of Guardian programs in BC;
- (2) Understand the issues and considerations for potentially initiating and supporting these programs; and,
- (3) Discuss potential next steps.

The purpose of engagement was not to initiate or fund Guardian programs or discuss Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas (IPCAs), as this exceeds the current Provincial mandate. A total of 53 participants were engaged in these virtual sessions.

Guardian-Specific Engagement

In an effort to reach those doing this important work on the ground, a virtual session was hosted on January 20th, 2022, to hear from Guardians themselves. A total of 18 participants were engaged in that session.

Additionally, an online survey was created and remained open for the entirety of the engagement effort to offer an opportunity for individuals to share their insights. A total of 25 participants completed the survey. A full copy of the survey tool used, and a summary of its results, can be found in Appendix A.

What We Know Report Development

The information gathered through these multiple engagement opportunities has been summarized thematically in this report. Based on the expert advice provided to us from the GEWG, it was directed that this report be called a “What We Know” report rather than a “What We Heard” summarization.

The amount of knowledge and expertise held by Indigenous Peoples on the topic of Guardians is immense. This is not work being conducted at its early stages with a few lessons to share. This is work that has been happening for millennia and is built upon thousands of years of traditional ecological knowledge, the practicing of Indigenous legal orders, and the stewardship experience of managing lands and resources since time immemorial. Those who graciously shared their time to participate in this engagement effort have expert knowledge on this topic and it is important that this level of expertise be understood and not merely heard.

As neutral, third-party, and independent facilitators, FDMS, represented by Dan George and Kelly Mortimer, were responsible for writing this report and communicating herein what we learned.

Outreach

Broad outreach to invite all interested First Nations to participate in the sessions was attempted.

The Provincial government's contact information for First Nations and Indigenous governing bodies in BC, known as the 'Profiles of Indigenous Peoples' ("PIP"), was drawn from. This database of contact information is used when the provincial government is consulting and engaging with First Nations and is kept up to date by provincial staff across BC who maintain relationships with various local First Nations and through work at Forum levels.

In addition, Provincial staff over the years have also been compiling less-formal lists of guardian and guardian-like programs through their connections and relationships. This information, cross referenced with the ILI's database, was used to inform the participation of the GEWG and invitation distribution for the broad engagement sessions. For the GEWG, cross-provincial representation was attempted to support broad-based discussions bringing together a diverse group of experts that could draw on their regionally specific experiences and knowledge.

Throughout the engagement, FDMS also shared information about the engagement effort with their professional network where they believed it would have applicability and/or interest to the communities, organizations, and Nations they work with.



FINDINGS

Themes Listed Alphabetically

Capacity Building and Program Development

Making sure the forests, lands, rivers, and oceans aren't being too distributed, monitoring wildlife impacts and poaching, identifying natural resource (mis)use, water monitoring, participating in emergency management, and restoring ecosystem function are a small number of the many responsibilities Guardians take on, and it is difficult for them to monitor these concerns with current capacity.

Guardian programs meet these needs and provide monitoring of their wildlife and fisheries, care for their territories, nurture their cultural wellbeing, improve the general health and community wellbeing, advance governance authority for their Nations, increase community capacity, promote economic opportunities, and provide financial capital inflows to the community. These benefits cannot be overlooked when supporting program development.

Capacity development at the community and Nation level is needed for the full benefit of Guardian programs to be realized. This requires regular and predictable funding streams so that staff can be hired with the certainty of having secure jobs and for investments to be made in the training and skill enhancement of Guardians. It was made clear that without consistent funding, it's hard to build programs where employment is seasonal and not guaranteed from year to year.

With restricted funding, each season, new hires need to be brought on and training must start over again. With consistent funding, crews can be employed long-term, provided competitive wages, and their capacity enhanced through the cumulation of training and experience that requires years to build.

It was also noted that a key component of meaningful reconciliation is dedicated funding so that Indigenous-led Guardian programs, and other critical aspects of reconciliation that Indigenous Nations lead, are well-funded and that efforts to reconcile are not subject to short term, inconsistent funding.

Capacity building in terms of assets is also needed. Guardians are responsible for stewarding vast and at times, remote and difficult to access territories. Doing so requires equipment such as specialized vehicles and boats. Acquiring these critical assets are expensive purchases and even after acquired, they require regular maintenance to ensure they are operational which is critically important given their usage.

Building capacity, and restoring capacity, will also be enhanced as more Indigenous peoples are educated in and excel in environmental programs and western science-based academics. It was noted that developing programs that bring together western science with traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous peoples is key to the success of this work. Attracting young people to these fields will be an important step in building the necessary capacity for Guardian programs to thrive.

Climate Change

Indigenous peoples have a proven track record spanning millennia of living in harmony with the environment. Climate change is here and unavoidable. Indigenous Guardians are not just wanted, they are needed in the protecting and preserving of the land, waters, and resources.

One of the many functions that Guardians perform include having recorded knowledge and baseline data of species in the territories and being able to consult with

knowledge keepers and Elders about them. Being able to use that information to understand where changes need to be made is invaluable. With these programs, climate change can be monitored in a way that brings together Indigenous knowledge and western science. Using the full power that comes from the integration of these two knowledge systems can enable better, more informed, and enhanced collaborative decision-making over land-based planning and usages.

Introducing the designation of Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas ("IPCAs) was raised as opportunity for Guardians to not only monitor activities occurring within their territories but to have lands designated for stewardship and preservation purposes which would support climate change efforts through enhanced conservation. It was discussed that the relationship between IPCAs and Guardians share an important connection with climate change as it provides opportunity for adaptation planning and nature-based solutions to land and resource management.

According to the UN, "*Climate change poses threats and dangers to the survival of indigenous communities worldwide, even though indigenous peoples contribute the least to greenhouse emissions. In fact, indigenous peoples are vital to, and active in, the many ecosystems that inhabit their lands and territories and may therefore help enhance the resilience of these ecosystems.*"⁴⁰ Working with and supporting Guardians is an essential response to the overall strategy required to address climate change.

Conservation

Collaboration on conservation measures was identified as a significant opportunity area. For instance, joint patrols have been helpful practices bringing together Guardians and Conservation Officers. It was noted that communication and relationships between these groups should be enhanced. This point was emphasized when discussing situations where a Guardian would report an incident, but then little follow-up would take place afterwards. Guardians are not the general public; they are stewards of the land and require relationships with those in enforcement positions to be built on partnership and collaboration if a shared vision for conservation can be realized.

⁴⁰ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/climate-change.html>

The relationship between Guardians, the general public, and local non-Indigenous communities relating to enhanced conservation is exciting. As shared by one participant, *"Our relationship with the local non-Indigenous communities is going well and they are expressing that they are enjoying seeing us out on the land saying, 'it's about time'."*

After this was shared, another participant from a different Nation added, *"both members and residents in the territory are pleased to see us there. We are getting a lot of reports from members and non-members on activities on the land base that are either inappropriate or requiring investigation. We are having good success with having things reported to our team and then we can bring issues forward to enforcement bodies."*

It was suggested by one participant that BC's program for conservation is not currently equipped to adequately manage the natural resources it derives its revenue from or to enhance and rehabilitate the landscape. This was elaborated on by one participant expressing, *"if you are going to develop a resource, you need to be prepared to manage it"*. Indigenous-led Guardian programs fill a vitally needed gap for conservation in this province. By working together, knowledge can be exchanged, interests aligned, information gathered and shared, and the health, vitality, biodiversity, and longevity of the environment and all life that it sustains can be supported.

Education and Training

Broadly, the needs and benefits of Guardian programs will differ from region to region and won't be adequately supported by one size fits all approaches. Providing provincially available information around natural resources, land use, and monitoring and sharing specifically tailored information specific to regions and needs of the communities would be of great assistance for these programs.

It was suggested that we need to encourage linkages and collaboration between Guardians and provincial staff for better communication and cooperation to help to identify and resolve issues. Almost all participants noted that there is great opportunity when further collaboration is possible.

To support course curriculum, BC needs to make major investments into capacity building as determined by Nations through supporting post-secondary courses

including the curriculum these programs are providing. A centralized approach may not be respectful for self-determination.

The “Stewardship Technicians Training Program” was highlighted as being a particularly helpful and useful course.⁴¹ The Stewardship Technicians Training Program (STTP) is a collaborative program with Coastal First Nations and Vancouver Island University. Through this program, individuals from CFN member Nations gain applied stewardship training, tangible skills required to work as Coastal Guardian Watchmen, fisheries technicians, heritage surveyors, environmental monitors and in other resource management field positions.

As shared by Coastal First Nations, the program has had “profound results” including

- healthier citizens with improvement in personal wellbeing;
- graduates who are inspired to continue with self-improvement and further training;
- graduates being better able to find and maintain employment;
- being recognized as respected professionals in their field; and,
- being part of a growing network on the coast that influences region-wide responsiveness to land and water stewardship.⁴²

It was made clear that the training needed must be regionally based and locally sound. However, it was recognized that accessible and well promoted training suited to all Guardians on topics that have general applicability would be an asset, especially if the training were designed to be hosted in community to allow for maximum participation and higher success rates.

Specifically, the need for flexible course delivery was highly recommended. It was remarked that while there are several “amazing courses” currently being offered, they are oftentimes delivered intensively over 2 weeks to 4 months requiring fulltime participation (e.g., 5 days a week) which is challenging if Guardians are also working. Being able to attend programs parttime or being able to take one module at a time would increase flexibility and better training outcomes.

It was also suggested that there are opportunities for Guardians to have a role in stewardship and education, including educating the public around Indigenous peoples’

⁴¹ https://indigenous.viu.ca/sites/default/files/print_stewardshiptraining-nanwakolas_brochure_updated.pdf

⁴² Ibid

right to steward and protect their lands. The general public's understanding of Indigenous rights is lacking. The stewardship roles that Guardians undertake for their Nations is an implementation of their inherent rights. This provides an opportunity to articulate how Aboriginal rights and title are being exercised by Indigenous Peoples and recognized by BC if Guardian programs are formally acknowledged, supported, and endorsed by the Province.

Enforcement and Compliance

Building Indigenous enforcement capacity in environmental collaborative stewardship is necessary. In this context, collaborative stewardship is being referred to in its broader practice and is not limited to the work being undertaken by programs such as the Collaborative Stewardship Framework or Environmental Stewardship Initiative.

Many participants expressed that Guardians need to have enforcement authority stating that *"you can't give somebody the responsibility without giving them the authority"*. During this engagement effort, much discussion was had about the need to dive into matters of enforcement/compliance and levels of jurisdiction and authority for Guardians.

For those Nations who have had more long-standing Guardian programs, they are now seeing the need to expand their role to include enforcement backed by provincial statutes. Indigenous Guardians were described as pivotal in the effective implementation of land use plans and other collaborative stewardship outcomes. Being the eyes and ears on the territories is an important role, but eventually Nations will want to see greater ability to follow through with consequences where laws and regulations are not followed on their ancestral territories and/or on Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas.

It was observed by participants in the engagement that the province is vast and with so few conservation and enforcement officers on the ground, many infringements are happening without awareness or punishment. For Indigenous guardians to be effective, they need their authorities to be recognized and their abilities to go beyond record and report and consider ways in which they want to pursue enforcement and compliance based on their own Indigenous legal orders.

There are also concerns connected to racist reactions from perpetrators and conflict-laden repercussions with regards to enforcement. More discussions are needed to consider how Guardians can monitor, gather information, and report on findings while

the Province would help to step in and enforce their recommendations. It would also be worthwhile to look at how enforcement can be a dually led effort, with Guardians given the same capacities as game wardens and fisheries officers but under the authority of Indigenous Governments as it was expressed that Nation's would not want to establish Guardians programs only to be used as enforcers of provincial legislation and policy.

It was expressed that the *"inadequate enforcement of Indigenous values is a major issue"*. Several participants who expressed the desire for increased enforcement and compliance responsibilities noted that their desire was to enforce their Indigenous Laws and that being recognized as an authority is critical to being able to do this safely. It was also stated that having Guardians strictly enforcing only Crown values on the landscape would not work. Support for Guardian programs will also require a relationship that respects the processes and plurality of both legal systems (Indigenous and Common Law).

To support compliance and enforcement efforts, resources will need to be given to Guardian programs to design, develop, and maintain the necessary IT systems that can hold compliance and enforcement data securely. Other considerations relating to enhanced compliance and enforcement responsibilities that requires further investigation includes understanding the liability for Nations associated with being enforcers; and what specific training will be needed for Guardians to be able to safely engage in these activities.

Emergency Management

2021 showed us many things but perhaps most significantly, it showed us how much more prepared we need to be to address what is happening with regards to climate change and what is undoubtedly to come. Within a few short months we saw land and lives lost to a pandemic, opioid crisis, heat dome, forest fires, flash floods, freezing, and threats to food security.

It was shared that Guardians know more about the land than anyone. The natural disasters experienced in the past year emphasizes what Indigenous peoples have been calling for and it demonstrates the need for the Province to recognize and support Indigenous peoples using their knowledge to protect and conserve the land base as they have since time immemorial.

It was shared by one participant that having a presence on the land base made a significant difference for emergency management as highlighted by their examples where *“having a presence on the land helped prevent some misfortunes such as preventing wildfires from getting out of control and also helping ensuring members of the public didn’t get lost”*.

Another participant noted that, *“this year, we got a lot of calls post-disaster when it was time for clean-up and mitigation. We should have been there during the disaster. We’re really advocating to be more involved when disasters are happening – we need to make decisions about where guards are placed, or actions taken. They’re sending people who don’t even live here to fight the fires – they don’t know anything about the landscape, the way the wind travels, how fire travels, how to get in and get out. We know that like the backs of our hands. We get the call afterwards to help fix the damage that they made. Guardians are essential to wildfire response.”*

A major element in the emergency response, planning, and management discussion is related to the resources needed that would allow for Guardians to halt their regular responsibilities and duties to respond to an emergency. Systems need to be in place that allow for this without sending regular operations into triage during an emergency. Funding people to be trained and essentially on call would be a necessity.

First Nations have been an information vehicle for real-time disaster management and Guardians are in excellent positions to be able to report back to decision-makers. It was shared that *“our Elders feel better knowing their own people are out there watching the land. Many times, we’ve been the first responders with forest fires, flood risks, and mudslides”*.

Guardian programs can put those most directly impacted and those most directly connected to the land in charge of protecting, defending, and saving it. Guardians are/can be responsible for and best suited to respond to emergencies on the land base.

Indigenous Law

Indigenous Law often emerges from Indigenous relationships to territory, and their distinct, unique cultural connection to their landscapes. This relationship requires a holistic, reciprocal understanding of their respective ecosystems, and informs sustainable, respectful relationships between the land and land users.

“Indigenous law consists of legal orders which are rooted in Indigenous societies themselves”⁴³. This is distinct from Aboriginal Law which “is a body of law, made by the courts and legislatures, that largely deals with the unique constitutional rights of Aboriginal peoples and the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. [It is thus] largely found in colonial instruments ... but also includes sources of Indigenous law”.⁴⁴

Recognizing legal plurality with *Indigenous law* and *Canadian law* is essential for Guardians to do their work. Many of the First Nations representatives in the engagement sessions spoke of the implementation of their own Indigenous laws as being essential for true reconciliation and to help ensure sustainable development on their territories.

For some First Nations, the link between ancestral Indigenous laws and legislative reform under *DRIPA* was identified as an opportunity. It was expressed that “*if we don’t get better protection for areas, then the landscape will get worse. Indigenous laws are foundational to the evolution of guardians, and we need to figure out how they can be better reflected in enforcement.*” The weaving of Crown and Indigenous laws was identified as the strongest and most sustainable pathway forward. This work is supported by *Theme 1: Self-Determination and Inherent right of Self-Government* and *Theme 2: Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in the *DRIPA Action Plan* released March 30, 2022.

Information Gathering and Decision Making

The information Guardians gather needs to be better used in monitoring and decision making. Guardian knowledge and reports should be considered as reliable data for the Province to use, as it was expressed that the Province has few resources to expend on monitoring and compliance reporting and even fewer resources for actual groundwork.

It was suggested that information and recommendations could be generated at the regional levels, and that data could be used to direct Guardians on the ground, strengthen decision making, and determine what kind of conditions need to be there to have a healthy path forward.

There was an expressed need for Guardians to support informed, evidence-based decisions at the regional/territorial levels they operate within. This is integral to

⁴³ <https://guides.library.queensu.ca/Aboriginal-and-Indigenous-law>

⁴⁴ Ibid

Nations' self-determination and supporting good governance practices that BC is committed to aide in building. Recognizing "OCAP Principles" – Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession – for data that is generated and recorded is an important factor to respecting Indigenous rights over Indigenous ecological knowledge, data sovereignty, and data governance.

There are considerable barriers preventing Guardian programs to reach their full potential over the relationship that their information gathering can have for informed decision-making. One of noted benefits of Guardian programs was the added ability to have eyes and ears on the ground which aids in referrals. Guardians can provide and relay same day information to respective Councils and officers which aids in decision-making at the community and/or Nation level.

It was shared that this can be thought of as a "ladder of information" that Guardians are connected to where the data gathered on the ground can contribute to basic information gathering and be used to inform decision making. The importance of having *shared and trusted data* is very apparent when decision needs to be made that include both First Nations leadership and government decision-makers. An example of this is demonstrated by the work being accomplished through the ESI and CSF forums where information gathering is leading to the sharing of trusted data which is feeding into collaborative decision-making models.

Knowledge Transmissions

Greater recognition and respect are needed for traditional knowledge and training. Guardians need training from their Nation's experts in addition to attainment of training based in western science. The need for "mentor Guardians" to provide guidance to "new Guardians" was characterized as a *"walking with two legs and two-eyed seeing approach"* by one participant who further explained that the knowledge needed cannot be passed through courses alone as it comes from lived experience, "Guardian to Guardian".

Knowledge transmissions where there is a blending of Indigenous knowledge with western science was also identified as important component to success. For example, a representative from one Nation shared that they have had success collaborating with BC Parks by organizing two-way training through job shadowing where a Guardian learns about BC Parks and Parks Officers learn more about their Nation's heritage. This has led to additional opportunities where conversations are continuing to take place contributing to ongoing two-way training.

Knowledge transmissions between knowledge holders and youth is critical to the continuation of Indigenous languages, cultures, practices, values, and laws. Several participants noted that one of the most important successes from their Guardian work was in the strengthened connection it produces between Elders and Youth. Youth involvement through initiatives such as “Junior Guardian Programs” or “Warrior Programs” (for young adults) were raised as very important and successful initiatives stemming from Guardian programs.

Further emphasizing this point, a representative in another engagement session shared that youth in their community as early as Grade 11 are now asking what courses to take to become a stewardship Guardian in their territories. This enthusiasm and cultural pride needs to be supported and invested in.

It was also suggested that knowledge transmissions between Guardian programs and Nations are needed. Collaboration and coordination for neighbouring Nations was seen as an opportunity to align efforts and work together towards common goals. Connecting with other Guardian programs across BC was also recognized as an opportunity to learn from others doing similar work and the value of sharing experiences was desired.

Long-Term Program Commitments and Sustainable Funding

One of the common concerns with Guardian programs in BC and across Canada is lack of long-term committed funding. Funding application burnout, stretched resources, and lack of capacity are common issues experienced by First Nations. Guardians funding is just one of many Indigenous programs that do not have a healthy fiscal relationship to BC.

This issue is exemplified with insufficient human resources to apply for additional funding, the courting of donors and philanthropic organizations, and the need to stay up to date on changing requirements for government and private funding. Without long-term committed funding, it is difficult for Guardian programs to plan for the future, hire on staff to take on the work without being able to provide job security, and build out their programs.

For many of the engagement session participants, a BC-wide Guardian program was called for. One representative pointed to the Australian Indigenous Ranger Program as a good example of what could be done in BC and recommended that funding support

also be drawn from the federal government and industry to support such an investment.

When funding is attained and guaranteed, these programs are rapidly achieved and sustainable over time. Some programs have found ways to support their work through efforts with funding received through Forums (e.g., ESI and CSF) and government to government agreements, own source revenue and economic development funding, carbon credits, and shares of provincial resource revenues. Some Nations have also found opportunities raising funds through charging tourism operators to use their territories, ultimately funding the programs that are helping to protect their very territories.

Alternative methods for acquiring financial support include working directly with the industries using their land, waters, and resources, monitoring the activity taking place while accessing funding through these relationships to support program development.

Charitable organizations such as the Mastercard Foundation, McConnell Foundation, Vancouver Foundation, MakeWay (formerly Tides Canada) and Nature United (formerly TNC Canada) have also been known to provide support for these stewardship initiatives. Provincial and Federal Government funding has been accessed through departments such as DFO, Environment Canada, Forestry Service, Natural Resources Canada, Parks Canada, BC Parks, Compliance and Enforcement Branch, Advanced Education BC, ESI/CSF Forums, and more.⁴⁵

Self-Determination and Nation Rebuilding

Recognition from the Province that these programs are essential and vital to Indigenous communities is an important step in the path towards reconciliation. Through these programs, First Nations are getting back on the land and contributing to the restoration of ecosystem function. This is an important step towards self-determination and Nation rebuilding.

Building on the work that is happening on the land base by Guardians, is how the information they gather is relayed to their leadership and the ways that it enhances nation-rebuilding work. Guardian programs is an example of Aboriginal rights being

⁴⁵https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Final%20Report%20with%20Profiles%20March%2027%202015_1.pdf

exercised. The legitimacy of these programs is essential and when recognized, proper funding and training will lead to enhanced outcomes at all levels within the system from monitoring to decision-making.

As government moves to improve decision-making and streamline processes for the benefit of all parties, including proponents, core funding to support First Nations decision-making is essential. It was shared that providing core funding will bring us all one step closer to achieving the 'inescapable economic component' of Aboriginal title outlined in the *Delgamuukw* Supreme Court decision. Core funding for Nations can allow them to broaden decision-making cycles to include more robust monitoring and compliance programs, namely Indigenous Guardians.

Socio-Economic Well-Being

It was stated by one participant that "*the point of Guardians and Stewards is to restore capacity, work, and responsibilities in how their territories are managed*". Guardian programs provide employment opportunities where Indigenous workers can obtain gainful employment that is inclusive of training, entrenched in their worldview and values, in service to the wellbeing of the entire community, and has a positive impact on how the environment is looked after.

These are jobs that are intrinsically tied to the responsibilities that have existed within Indigenous Nations since time immemorial. Investing in Guardian programs is also an investment in communities – local, rural, and isolated – who all benefit from providing more jobs to their members by offering meaningful opportunities that keep members home and supports their broader socio-economic well-being.

Guardian programs are also tied to improved social wellbeing. Healing is tied to Guardian work and the relationship to the land. It was shared that there is a spiritual connection to the work that Guardians undertake which is a significant part of their importance and success.

DISCUSSION

Guardian programs provide significant opportunity for government to engage with First Nations communities, sowing seeds for strengthened and more collaborative relationships moving forward.

It is important to see these programs guided by the goals, values, and needs of the Nations they reside in and not just be based on government and industry initiatives. More First Nations communities across BC are starting to or have developed their own stewardship programs, either separately from other governments or in collaboration with other Nations.

There is this common perception that Guardian programs just monitor and collect data. That's only one part of these programs.

Importantly, Guardian programs guide: the design of data collection and monitoring techniques and protocols; the use of the collected data; what analyses should be carried out; how the results of those analyses contribute to adaptive feedback loops; how the results of those analyses inform higher-level strategic planning; and recommendations for changes to law, policy, and operations.



Many Nations are regaining their authority and jurisdiction over their ancestral territories by developing programs that support their communities and membership. However, while some programs operate successfully, many struggle with lack of capacity, funding, and support.

The Province's recently released DRIPA Action Plan identifies several goals and actions that would be realized with official provincial support for Guardian programs. With commitments from government towards these goals, there will need to be collaborative processes designed to co-develop stewardship programming between Government and Nations.

Collaborative process to set the goals and develop programs for Guardians are important - especially at the regional level where collaborative priorities should be developed. Requests need to be very clear and collaboratively developed. A balance will need to be struck between determining the goals and priorities of the Province in setting out a mandate for these programs and the expected outcomes, while ensuring the unique and relevant needs of each region and Nation are met. With each region comes specific activities, requirements, training, budgets and more to allow those Guardians to do their work effectively. If a "cookie cutter" model is applied BC wide, the same effect may not be met.⁴⁶

Program development should take place, cross-sector, between the provincial government and participating First Nation governments, strengthening the relationships, and acknowledging these Nation's respectful and traditional claims to their territories. As stated by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development,

"We will evaluate, in collaboration with participating Indigenous governments, existing guardian and compliance projects with a focus on wildlife and habitat stewardship. Starting in 2021, and building on successes identified in the evaluation, we will support guardian and compliance programs (e.g., through developing approaches) that will be implemented locally with Indigenous governments at their request."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Guardians-valuationreport_v10_Final_TNC%20Canada.pdf

⁴⁷ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/together-for-wildlife/together-for-wildlife-strategy.pdf>

Key questions that need to be addressed by Nations doing Guardian work include defining what the responsibilities and standards of safety are for Guardians in their training and work. Safety requirements are necessary for those doing this work on the ground. The relationship between Guardian programs and Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas (IPCAs) also needs to be further considered by the province as engagement relating to IPCAs was not in the scope or mandate for this work. However, the relationship between the two is integral. As one participant noted,

“As Guardian programs evolve, we need areas to steward instead of just monitoring resource development and enforcing what is happening”.

It was expressed repeatedly by participants that Nations want to see BC prove they are serious about Guardian programs by improving long-term, committed funding and capacity. Fragmented and inconsistent funding is a big problem and was one of the most expressed concerns.

Currently, Nations are competing for one off grants and funding opportunities. There needs to be proof that fiscal relationships and capacity building is serious to the Province and no longer offered with one-off approaches for grants that only support a handful of groups. They have found that the currently available piecemeal funding makes this work almost impossible, and Nations need to be able to pace the work in a way that is sustainable and works for them versus what can be accomplished before fiscal year ends.

Training requirements are hard to meet without proper guaranteed and continual funding for Guardian programs. Differing regions require unique training and skills development with a region-specific approach to each program versus a provincial wide approach.

BC is a highly diverse province in species, ecosystems, and habitats; Guardian programs provide feasible opportunities to address the specific problems or areas of concern, species at risk and climate change factors that each region may possess.⁴⁸ With this, it is important that programs operating now and those that are created moving forward have long-term support established for program development. The hiring and training of personnel and long-term planning all require the knowledge of

⁴⁸ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/together-for-wildlife/t4w-indigenous-what-we-heard.pdf>

funding in place, and when funding is an unknown, this can hamper program success and cause frustration and fatigue in constant applications.

It will be important that the Province establishes long-term support of these programs so First Nations communities can anticipate the resources they will have to plan with to budget the general costs accrued in Guardian program development and operations. Program costs can include salaries, equipment expenses, skills training and education support, vehicle purchases, and maintenance required and general operational costs.

The benefits seen in these investments with Guardian programs has a bolstering effect as the return on investment is not simply a financial measure of dollars gained and lost but the overall value to and improvement within the community, the Guardians, and the land, water and health of the wildlife and ecosystems in the regions these programs are operating in. In the Business Case Report on Coastal Guardian Watchmen Programs, they found on average that investments made in Coastal Guardian Watchmen programs generated a 10 to 1 annual return (on the low end) and a 20 to 1 annual return (on the high end) for participating Nations.⁴⁹

Guardians must acquire highly diverse skillsets to be knowledgeable and prepared for each of their unique regions and responsibilities. The training can be both scientific and traditional in nature, supporting both the western side of their responsibilities while honoring the traditional ways their Nation would have protected and lived off their lands and waters.⁵⁰

The importance of expanding the authority of Guardians to be more than observe, record, and report was made very clear. The desire to have more joint patrols was offered as a meaningful tactic towards this end. It was also relayed that when you have more authority, you have more respect. Gaining the respect of the general public was noted as an important factor for Guardians to be able to do their work safely and meaningfully.

As expressed by one participant, *"we're kind of like a toothless tiger... The Guardian program is great but until we have the capability to come down on things ourselves, it's just going to be a never-ending cycle of trying and trying again. We start education*

⁴⁹ https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Guardians-valuationreport_v10_Final_TNC%20Canada.pdf

⁵⁰ <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/publications/background-er-a-national-indigenous-guardians-network>

in our community, but the general population seems resistant to the conversation and resource management practices we are stewarding”.

Educating the public through a strategically developing communications plan and meaningful tailored campaign will be an important endeavour that the Province can take on to support Guardians.

The current gaps in knowledge that the general public has on Indigenous rights, Indigenous Law, the province’s commitments to Indigenous reconciliation, and the roles that Guardians play were noted as an impediment to their ability to operate effectively on the land base. As an example, when it comes to limitations of harvesting for recreational land users, it was expressed by one participant that *“we have a right to harvest, they have the ability”*. Addressing such issues by increasing overall understanding will be important moving forward.

The overall message that was made strongly during this engagement process was clear – a stronger mandate is needed from government to participate and engage in Guardian programs. Such a mandate can ladder down into funding mechanisms, implementation of Guardianships, and be used to garner support from Crown Agencies such as the BC Oil & Gas Commission, and Industry.

This message was made effectively by one participant who explained, *“the Nations are doing the work that the governments should be doing and there is a value that the government is getting by having the Nations do this work. There is an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to have active and engaged partners. By working together, we can get to a better place where the territory is managed in a better way. Let’s change the framework so that we can fill this role on the ground and bring a benefit to the federal/provincial which is a huge win for all.”*

All lifeforms are sustained by our environment. How the environment is stewarded is of paramount importance. Working together in partnership with Indigenous Nations to support Guardian programs in being established, implemented, and scaled will benefit all British Columbians while also breathing life into reconciliation and climate change commitments.



CONCLUSION

Commitment and compassion for the land is critical and an integral value shared by Indigenous knowledge holders. The positive effects of Guardian programs are far reaching, supporting their communities for generations to come, improving the health and longevity of the territories and regions they steward, and educating on the knowledge-based and cultural connection our First Nations peoples have to these lands and waters.

Guardian programs provide opportunities for strengthened, unified relations and collaboration between First Nations and the Provincial Government; supporting the reclamation of their ancestral territories and their rightful roles as Guardians, stewarding their lands, waters, wildlife, and natural resources. The need for Guardians is greater than ever. The recently released United Nations climate report is calling for drastic action on a huge scale, warning that nearly half the world's population is already vulnerable to increasingly dangerous climate impacts.⁵¹ "Adaptation saves lives," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said with the recent report's release. "As climate

⁵¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

impacts worsen — and they will — scaling up investments will be essential for survival... Delay means death." Within this report, the North America fact sheet includes adaption option recommendations including:

Supporting Indigenous self-determination, recognizing Indigenous Peoples' rights, and supporting Indigenous knowledge based-adaptation are critical to reducing climate change risks to achieve adaptation success (very high confidence).⁵²

The direct benefit of Guardian programs in First Nation communities cannot be understated with the far-reaching positive effects and lasting change they create across the landscape. Significant investment is needed so Nations can lead their own programs. Nations need to lead their way with their own values rooted into their programming if they are to be successful.

Guardians strengthen cultural knowledge within their communities, helping to reconnect their members to their traditional language(s), cultural ways of living off their lands, and caring for the resources in their region. When communities are reconnected with their traditional food sources and hunting methods, the community health rises and their connection to the land and waters are strengthened. The importance of this was stated in the Province's "*Together for Wildlife: Improving Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia*" strategy which expressed that:

"We will know that our work together is successful when Indigenous rights are recognized by society as foundational to how the Province and Indigenous governments steward wildlife and when Indigenous peoples can meaningfully practise their traditions and customs."⁵³

Guardians boost their community's economies by acquiring better paying employment, promoting economic development, and supporting the growth and healing of their people. This is demonstrated when "*young people grow up knowing they can choose jobs at home, on the land, and connected to culture. Women and men gain professional skills and support families with good wages.*"⁵⁴

There is a natural connection to this work for First Nations communities and a benefit to the environment in having Guardians involved, as they bring local and intimate

⁵² https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FactSheet_NorthAmerica.pdf

⁵³ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/together-for-wildlife/together-for-wildlife-strategy.pdf>

⁵⁴ <https://landneedsguardians.ca/what-guardians-do>

knowledge of the lands and waters in their territories and are the only people to always be there. They are present to witness changes in landscape and wildlife, and notice developments in ecosystems and habitats, reclaiming their rightful authority over their traditional lands.

The approach to managing the wildlife, habitats, and natural resources in these territories must include dynamic and inclusive ways of thinking to address the current changes and impacts faced. These responsibilities include building lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, updating society's expectations, and reimagining how we approach this work moving forward.⁵⁵

Integrating traditional Indigenous practices in developing management strategies and plans recognizes their value and the importance of including their traditional and informed knowledge and experience in planning moving forward. Recognizing increased opportunities to include Indigenous knowledge and have it guide, and direct marine and land use planning could help to strengthen relations between Indigenous and provincial governments moving forward.⁵⁶

We can amplify connections and relationships with each other and external agencies by coming together to steward the environment. In doing so, the health of the land and the management of British Columbia's natural resources will be better taken care of. To get different results, things must be done differently.

Supporting Indigenous Guardian programs is placing support in Nations who have an entirely different worldview, values-set, knowledge based, and motivation behind land management and the roles and responsibilities we have over the stewardship of our environment. British Columbia needs Guardians more than ever.

⁵⁵<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/together-for-wildlife/together-for-wildlife-strategy.pdf>

⁵⁶ https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Guardians-valuationreport_v10_Final_TNC%20Canada.pdf

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY

This survey was distributed throughout the engagement process as an opportunity for Guardian experts to provide written feedback. We have included the questions and raw data with the intention of presenting deeper insight into participants' experiences and knowledge. Spelling, grammar, and any content is left unchanged.

Q1: General Contact Information

A1: 25 Respondents completed the survey. All personal information is protected for confidentiality and held by Four Directions Management Services.

Q2: Guardian programs benefit from Provincial management of land, water, and resources.

A2: 40% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Absolutely! In our area there is 2 Compliance and Enforcement Officers, a few Natural Resource Officers and Conservation Officers who cover a HUGE amount of territory. They simply do not have the capacity to monitor our territories effectively so having Indigenous guardians is beneficial for everyone.
- Guardian programs benefit from Indigenous stewardship of land, water and resources
- Provides financial support to have a dedicated guardian crew
- They ALL should be co-managed
- Agreed, but can be improved by Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Guardians programs would benefit more from collaborative efforts, where decision making power is shared.
- BC lacks on the ground monitoring, ground-truthing and C&E staff and resources particularly in the northeast. Guardians can help fill that gap.
- All these natural resources have been badly managed by the Province thus we want the opportunity to manage these ourselves. The Province is only giving over "some" management of these resources because they messed it up so badly!
- The Province manages for industry and economics, so I'm not sure if the yet if the guardian program benefits from that.

Q3: Information of the land base that reflects both Indigenous and Western knowledge, enhances natural resource decision-making.

A3: 64% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- I often find that there is blanks in information that Provincial Biologists or other Technicians do not know because they don't have that local Indigenous knowledge. Combining Indigenous and Western knowledge creates much stronger information that Indigenous nations and the Province can rely on.
- Plans go to the community for approval (shared 2x)
- Need to have both for more informed decision making.
- We need adequate information to make better decisions. The EAB agreed with this in the FNFN v Nexen / OGC case.
- Indigenous and Western knowledge must be given equal weight when these are used together to make a decision which results in an outcome that will be beneficial to both parties.

Q4: There are benefits to working in partnership with Provincial enforcement agencies (Natural Resource Officers/Conservation Officers, etc.).

A4: 52% of respondents agreed with this statement rating their support as a 3 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.3 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Yes! As noted in a previous response.
- Improving all the time
- Yes, we need more eyes on the ground
- Only because guardians don't have authority at the moment. For now it works because the guardians report to the heavily UNDER funded provincial agencies.
- There are a lot of benefits to sharing information on areas of concern within our territory.
- From honouring Treaty 8 to implementing DRIPA and sharing jurisdiction on the land, partnership is where it's at.
- Partnership can be beneficial as long as both parties are on equal footing and can be open to different ways of thinking.
- Maybe, I have to think about this one.

Q5: Guardians and Provincial staff out on the land base (e.g., Natural Resource Officers), should have a shared approach to decision-making.

A5: 60% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- 100% there is no reason why Indigenous guardians cannot get the same training and qualifications as Provincial Staff. With collaborative decision making agreements that currently exist and that are evolving this is the future of shared jurisdiction within BC.
- If the approach is putting the health of the land base above profits and progress
- More joint patrols – looking for agency to step up
- Yes, the local people have more information to assist
- Again, for now this is how the province is managed. It does work somewhat.
- And shared jurisdiction... grounded in both Indigenous and Crown legal orders.
- There is a dire need for CrossCultural awareness with Provincial staff before embarking on developing a relationship.
- I don't agree with this until we have the representation at the table.

Q6: Guardians should be delegated authorities to enforce both Provincial and Indigenous laws on the land base.

A6: 72% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.7 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- YES!
- Still need joint inspections for authority
- Yes with proper training
- I totally agree on this point. We are the original caretakers of this land for thousands of years.
- With training or education
- I believe we should as we are out on the land more often than anyone
- And Federally
- Again, shared jurisdiction is important from decision-making to enforcement. Unclear who is doing the delegating in this question.
- Both parties have to be equal and have equal authority to enforce both laws.
- Only if the guardians are Indigenous and know the land and community they are serving.

Q7: Guardians want to enforce/administer Provincial laws on the land base.

A7: 62.5% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.5 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Yes! As noted previously the Province simply does not have the capacity for the type of monitoring and enforcement that is required.
- Working on First Nations issues land and water
- I believe so with proper training
- We want to enforce our own law
- I believe this will provincial government on what could be overseen and missed
- And Federally
- Sure, if they are also enforcing Indigenous law on par with Crown laws. The treaty is a peace and sharing treaty, this means both parties share jurisdiction, not just one in exclusion of the other.

- They have to have those capabilities otherwise the responsibilities could hinge on discrimination and make conflicts.
- Are we talking about hundreds of guardians? This will fail land base if you operate in the same capacity as C/E.

Q8: Guardians want to enforce/administer Indigenous laws and practices on the land base.

A8: 83.3% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.8 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Unsure
- Need to have written laws and development of traditional laws
- Development of First Nations laws
- Once they are all in place and with clear community direction yes
- This is how the province should be run.
- It's all about respect and think enforcing what's already there will carry more respect for the land and people on the land.
- We need the resources, time and space to rebuild our law. Our legal orders have been disrupted by colonialism and all it entails. We need to rebuild and BC needs to support that process.
- Have the knowledge keepers on the land base.

Q9: The Province's support of Guardian programs is important to the Province's commitment to reconciliation.

A9: 87.5% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.8 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- 100% - Many of our Nations are dealing with the cumulative impacts of resource extraction that our communities did not create. Supporting and funding Guardian programs would be ONE way to reconcile some of these damages.
- Province needs to step up to the game
- We shall see
- Not sure what kind of provincial support we receive at the moment other than getting the provincial law system to enforce their laws.
- Yes definitely agree 100%, a little recognition goes a long way
- Reconciliation is transformation and BC needs to transform its relationship to the land and to Indigenous peoples, Guardian programs and shared jurisdiction are fundamental to that transformation.
- You only see it was a commitment. If you are only reacting to a situation are you not resolving it.

Q10: Indigenous knowledge can be incorporated into natural resource management.

A10: 91.7% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.9 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- This is not even a question - Indigenous knowledge MUST be incorporated into natural resource management.
- An open topic need more time to discuss
- Traditional laws are vast, need to narrow down to specific types of management
- Yes, this has been said over and over again
- This is a given with our vast knowledge of our own territory
- I strongly agree that "Indigenous Knowledge can transform natural resource management" if a new approach is taken. Indigenous knowledge is not just another data set to be inserted into western management models and regimes.
- It HAS to be incorporated in natural resource management
- Should have been all along

Q11: There are challenges facing Guardian programs but feasible solutions in the short or long term.

A11: 50% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Yes, I agree! collective forums can help others find solutions to common problems
- looking for long term solid funding not being supported
- Need long term reliable funding
- There needs to be more work here
- The only challenge is getting consistent funding
- Feasible, but difficult, we need more indigenous students to lean towards the sciences in post-secondary, and for the public community to be more aware of threats to the environment and land
- Long-term, stable funding, and shared jurisdiction and authority on the ground are a good start
- depends on the commitment of the Provincial government. Currently there is no commitment for long term sustainable funding.
- I'm not sure I have not heard enough about your program

Q12: Guardian programs would benefit from additional staff (on the ground Guardians and Guardian management), training and equipment.

A12: 100% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Yes! We especially need help in data management and analysis

- Still need funding
- Funding is required
- Yes, always the more capacity building at the moment the more benefits to the community
- We are severely UNDER funded much like provincial agencies
- most definitely just to have one guy out there just makes the job more risky compared to having two on the ground
- Requires a commitment to long-term stable funding. Our guardians are on one-year contracts dependent on grant-writing and successful project proposals. Guardian program development and management is done off the side of my desk. Training programs need to be developed with nations and affordable to nations. There are some enviro services companies getting into the business of guardian and "TEK" training and offer to charge us huge money for the training they feel we need. We'd rather work through the local college to co-develop a training program for our people that is funded or supported by Ministry of Advanced Ed or something like that. Finding funds for capital equipment (vehicles, garages, GIS and data management systems etc.) are hard to find, most funders do not allow capital expenditures.
- Esketemc traditional territory is massive! 2 guardians cannot manage the entire area. Province gave Esketemc a commitment for 2 years of funding for wages only - no training and no equipment. We had to apply for other funding to cover these needs.
- Yes, we should have about 200.

Q13: Guardian programs would benefit from improved safety training and equipment.

A13: 100% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Absolutely necessary
- Still need funding
- Annual training required. Funding is needed to replace and maintain current equipment.
- Especially equipment there are areas very hard to access without proper equipment and it is very expensive to be renting from suppliers.
- Training only helps the guardians along with getting new equipment.
- Yes, it will improve efficiency of resources as well.
- Yes, our teams need to be safe and equipped properly when on the land. Our territory is huge and remote, they need to be able to self-rescue and prepared to assist others when things go sideways, especially when working with elders.
- Communication is key.

Q14: Education and training programs for Guardians are necessary.

A14: 95.8% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.96 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- Still need funding and training beyond what is required
- Funding. Training is to be equivalent or beyond what is required.

- Yes, as things change and duties change necessary training needs to happen.
- Again, this is a no brainer
- Yes, there is a lot to identify out on the land and just knowing will help a lot
- Guardians need a wide range of skills and knowledge to conduct the work we'd like them to do. They need to develop fluency in Indigenous knowledge, skills and practice as well as ambassadorship, compliance and enforcement, environmental monitoring and technical writing skills.
- it would be advantageous IF a Guardian training was developed for ALL guardians and was mandatory upon hiring. This way, the guardians could move around to other communities for different experiences and not have to stay within a designated territory.
- It would be good if you elaborate more on some of your suggestions

Q15: Education and training programs should focus on knowledge of the land from an Indigenous perspective.

A15: 62.5% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.5 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- As well as scientific information (I believe they can inform each other in various ways)
- Having own laws as well
- It would help
- It should also focus on the NON-native avenue unless things change
- Not focus, but should be half the education, western science is still very important
- Also from a scientific approach, a lot has changed
- Indigenous cultural fluency is foundational and they also need to develop other skills and knowledge to allow them to be safe on the land and effective in the work they are doing to support the transformation of land management and decision-making in BC.
- E & T programs should focus on what the needs/challenges and opportunities are on the land from any perspective.
- All of our lands are managed differently. it's important for you to know that.

Q16: There are external obstacles to Guardians' safety (e.g., issues from the public).

A16: 54.2% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement rating their support as a 4 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- I think safety is always an issue, and I understand from hearing from NRO's / CO's that safety is a big concern for Indigenous participation in their inspections. However, I believe Indigenous guardians should be given the same training and authority to safely conduct investigations.
- Talking about Canada
- Especially in the area of non-local hunting pressures and making sure that proper data is collected. There is a lot of out of season hunting pressure and people that hunt and do not process all the meat lots of waste
- There will always be negative, racist people who will oppose any first nation involvement.
- Covid made it difficult to engage in the public as well

- Especially when doing patrolling of non-Indigenous hunting/fishing/harvesting activity. This is why recognized authority and shared jurisdiction is necessary, as well as BC providing adequate communication to its constituents about the role of Guardians. Ambassadorship and compliance communication training for Guardians is needed as well.
- Just give us guns

Q17: There are internal obstacles to Guardians' safety (e.g., not enough training or equipment).

A17: 50% of respondents agreed with this statement rating their support as a 3 on a scale out of 4. The average rating was 3.4 out of 4. Comments to this question included:

- More training always looking for equipment
- Need more training
- We do need more equipment and the training that goes with it for access especially
- This will always be an issue until the guardians are properly funded.
- More training and equipment (and the funding to do so)
- Need more training
- This is easier to overcome than the external obstacles. We just need adequate resourcing.
- Hire qualified people and you won't have this issue.

Q18: What are the kinds of activities you do and roles that you fill as a Guardian on the land base (e.g., manage protected areas, restore animals and plants, test water quality and monitor development)?

- We do not currently have a guardianship program, but are interested in managing protected areas, restoring animals and plants, providing construction site and restoration monitoring, data analysis etc.
- Saik'uz monitors have largely focused on water quality testing, and pre and post harvest monitoring of forestry activities. They will also look at areas proposed for development via the provincial referral system. In the past few years we have started collaborating on wildlife research projects with the Province as well.
- I train FN members in components of Guardian programs (environmental monitoring, communication, ESC, etc.)
- Education, restore and protect wildlife and wild lands, protect water sources, help mother earth
- Patrols, water monitoring, Emergency Response Fire, Floods, Habitat/predator control, education, hunting, fishing, PR. BC Parks contract
- patrols, water monitoring, provincial park contracts, emergency response fire, floods, predator control, education. hunting, fishing, boat patrols. public relations
- Patrol title land watching our land protection for wildlife
- restoration, water monitoring, food security, culture camps, starting to look at managing protected areas, wildlife surveys, work with the community
- Our program monitors water at ground wells around contaminated sites. We help out with marmot releases and hopefully funding soon. Habitat restoration work at our estuary because of damage from the introduced Canadian geese.
- watch over forestry logging....test water

- Environmental & Project Management, Land Surveys (of all sorts, plants, animals, geographic locations, CMTs), Flood Management, Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Bank Stabilization, Invasive Species Management, Species Restoration
- wildlife management, placer water sampling, identify invasive species, traditional knowledge, environmental concerns, joint mining inspections with the province of BC
- My activities include patrols, archeological assessments, and environmental DNA sampling, also evidence gathering, road checks, security patrols on First nation buildings like band office, health building, youth and elder center, equipment and vehicle storage yard, community houses
- pre post logging checks Culvert installations Pick up garbage along the roads Elementary school engagements elders' stories, oral history of the land' Indigenous place names, placards
- PFRs, Tributary assessments, water testing/water sample collection, environmental/cultural monitoring.
- Land-based cultural education support and elder on the land support (trail clearing, cabin maintenance and minor repair, cut wood etc.); environmental monitoring and data collection (air, soil, water, climate); land restoration and remediation; maintain a presence on the land (patrolling, emergency response, band-owned cabin caretaking); liaise with CO/NROs; respond to community reports of concern on the land; technical support for on-the-land research projects; community outreach and ambassadorship.
- I do all of the above mentioned. I also deal with all the racists young men who think they have a right to do whatever they want on the lands, because they pay taxes lol

Q19: What are some of the most important things needed to complete your Guardian work (e.g., reliable transportation, funding for wages, training, data management/analysis, respect, etc.)?

- Funding, training, data management/analysis, interest/capacity etc.
- Funding, training to expand our program, and data management/analysis especially! Our monitors are GREAT technicians with a lot of western and Dakelh knowledge of our territory - however they lack in computer skills especially data management and analysis.
- BC driver's license is a huge asset.
- Wildlife and Habitat studies employing more guardians, authority, and support to enact indigenous laws and responsibilities, data and project management software, trail cameras, funding for wages and studies
- more authority to do the work, funding better wages for the workers (long term employment)
- Funding long term. more authority to do the work.
- Funding for more Rangers and transportation
- Special equipment to access remote areas, boats, argo, snowmobiles, quads, upgrade to data management software, training, wages, etc.
- All of the above
- Funding for training & equipment, funding for wages (it's just me, but our community is small), Safety Training (wildlife, rough terrain, firearms license)
- Transportation, continuous funding, data management, more funding to create capacity to hire more people
- My work truck and making sure it's in good running condition and full of fuel and equipment in case of emergencies
- Vehicle, funding for 4 Guardians, Guardian training, data management and analysis report writing, computer skills, water/soil sampling, safety training

- Reliable transportation and equipment, funding for wages, training, data management/analysis, respect from outside agencies
- Funding and training
- Funding for wages, funding and time for training across many subjects (wilderness survival, data management/analysis, conservation etc.), funding and time for knowledge transfer sessions
- Everything
- Reliable, long-term funding; data management support; capital assets (vehicles with proper storage space).
- That we are collecting information so that one day we will win our claim in court

Q20: What is working well for you as a Guardian?

- Being out on the land and monitoring activities has been incredibly beneficial for our community and our ability to advocate for the territory. We are able to make informed decisions over proposed development which has resulted in some changes!
- Seeing other programs working and making a difference. We do not have a guardian program yet, but we have passionate people committed to stewarding and understand balance is needed to protect the lands.
- Having the Nation seeing the Rangers are part of the solution.
- Protecting our land and wildlife just being out there
- Our program has a dedicated crew with various strengths to build the team
- Our increased exposure has helped with people understanding how and what a guardian program is and does
- All the available research in my area, the support I get from my Band/Team
- Knowledge of the land, and building those relations with government agencies like DFO and Cos
- Having the use of the Natural Resources truck, part time. Virtual Training through NRTG, Guardian Training all virtual, safety training.
- Small, closely knit workforce. Open sharing of information between team members.
- We have a great team of Guardians, mostly FNFN members under 30 with a wide, complementary range of skills. Some are fluent in language and culture and know the land, others have technical and computer skills learned at college/university. They are eager to learn and share what they know and to act as stewards of the land.
- That I'm a strong woman

Q21: What are some obstacles that you face as a Guardian, and how can they be overcome?

- Data management and Analysis - more training and technical capacity to help our Land and Resource Office would make our program a lot more effective. Currently a lot of the data analysis reporting lies on the Land and Resource Manager who has a ton of files and priorities that come up every day. Funding is always limited for equipment, maintenance and fuel - the programs can be quite expensive using own source revenues to fund.
- lack of data so more studies are needed. Lack of perceived "authority" over Traditional Lands. Lack of a Lands Department funding to oversee, fund and get a program on the ground that continues in perpetuity.
- Need funding to keep the program going. Past just reporting, but want to work jointly with the agencies.

- Funding for the guardian program. Long term funding to show the guardian program as a career rather than a job.
- Have no jurisdiction on our land
- Ensuring that there is dedicated funding for the program
- Finding yearly funding can be a challenge
- Funds training
- Being the only person on the environmental team, hiring assistance – to be out in the field and to have someone to brainstorm and talk things through
- No enforcement capability so creates safety issues when working out in the field
- Training, funding
- COVID 19, no personal contact with community members, youth or elders
- Not enough manpower, there are too many things going on, all happening in such rapid succession that we are unable to focus fully on any one problem and make headway before the next crisis sets in and we have to shift focus again.
- COVID-19 prevents us from working with elders right now. Reliance on project-based funding creates uncertainty on the crew and we lose good people who need more job security. Lack of resources to hire a program manager. Over-reliance on consultants to help develop the program. Lack of jurisdiction. Lack of recognition/respect from BC COS and NROs. All (except for covid) can be overcome with a commitment from BC to share jurisdiction and resources to develop strong Guardian programs in BC.
- The government likes to have their choice of grant writers. this is not acceptable to us and shows that you are not working in good faith.

Q22: What do you like most about being a Guardian?

- Plants, Land, Animals and restoring the land are my passion
- Connection with my culture and language, and being able to learn more and experience what our traditional territory has to offer
- being out on the land fresh air daily is great and beautiful view daily
- To be and bring community members out on the land, when they have no means to do so, when safe, if they have their own vehicle.
- Meaningful, important work. Passionate team members. Getting to be out on the land frequently
- Representing the FNFN and being on the land the most.
- Not much yet. Its still a fight that will not go away

Q23: Do you have access to the proper training, equipment and/or other resources needed to perform these activities on the land base?

A23: 41% of respondents expressed that “Yes” they do have access to proper training, equipment, and/or other resources needed to perform these activities on the land base. 27% indicated that “No” they didn’t. 32% responded that the question wasn’t applicable to them.

Q24: Are there specific kinds of training, tools, equipment that you use to collect and monitor information gathered out on the land base?

- trail cameras, quads, gps, spot, trucks, radios, collar data
- iPad, survey123 to make forms, note book; Looking for a data base will need funding
- Ipad and Laptop. Notebook. Game Cams

- tablets, gps, cameras, vehicles
- Water Quality Monitors, Lab Analysis Equipment, Safety Equipment & Clothing
- survey 123 for data management and collection, avenza maps
- Evidence training to collect from kill sites
- Avenza maps on tablets, spreadsheets
- We have a qualified team

Q25: Are there activities/responsibilities not reflected in your program's scope of practice but that you think are important and would like to do?

- Traditional Laws and establishing them outside DTL, mental health awareness
- establishing and implementing traditional laws
- we want to work and collaborate more with other guardian programs
- WE need to be involved in wildlife management. At the moment no provincial involvement.
- To be able to monitor the Hunting and amount of moose going out of the territory by non members of our community
- Water testing, regular photographing and recording of current conditions (ie: Forest cover, water levels, wildlife populations)
- There needs to be a legal component of how Guardians should collect information

Q26: In addition to this survey, do you have any suggestions on how to reach out to First Nations involved in Guardian programs and similar activities?

- A central database of programs and program contact/administrators would be handy. This may exist already but I don't know if it.
- Is this program partnering or part of the Indigenous Guardians organizations that produced the "Indigenous Guardians Toolkit"? They have a following and access to Guardian programs across Canada
- Have the Province broken down in to like areas to discuss similar concerns (coastal, interior). Case studies from a Rangers concern is shared to other communities within the group. Funding to exchange Rangers from other programs within the Province.
- have the province broken down in to like areas to discuss similar concerns (coastal, interior). case studies for ranger concerns, group sharing with other communities. funding to allow exchange rangers with other programs in the province.
- Visit title land and do a patrol with guardians
- Have yearly coastal guardian meetings
- provide more information....offer funding for training
- With covid I believe this is perfect doing zoom engagement meetings helps a lot
- Organize panels and hold press conferences, invite leaders to ask questions in an open and safe space. Become advocates for the programs and their development, provide funding but hold Nations accountable
- Host a gathering with a strong facilitator to share ideas, vision and resource materials
- Initiate a Land Guardians Association or something of that nature
- No, we're too competitive