

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**

**Respectfully Submitted By:
Indigenous Leadership Initiative
August 2020**

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada commit to Indigenous-led conservation, including Indigenous-led land use planning, the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), and stewardship (through Indigenous Guardians), as a vital component of Canada's domestic plan to protect 25% of its lands and waters by 2025.

Recommendation 2: That the Government of Canada expand funding to support existing and new Guardians, ramping up to at least \$300 million per year, for a total of \$831.5 million over 5 years as requested by the Assembly of First Nations, having the result of expanding Guardian initiatives from approximately 70 programs to more than 400 programs across Canada (see Annex A). This investment would be a significant step towards recognizing the leadership role by Indigenous Nations in land conservation and management and contribute to meeting the Government of Canada's reconciliation commitments.

Recommendation 3: That, in addition, the Government of Canada commit at least \$1.5 billion over 5 years in investments to support the completion of Indigenous-led land use plans, the establishment of IPCAs and their management by Indigenous Guardians.

Recommendation 4: That the Government of Canada demonstrate global leadership by championing Indigenous-led conservation in ongoing efforts to set new targets under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and in addressing the growing climate crisis.

Body of Submission

We are pleased to present this proposal which, in our view, presents a fulsome and multi-faceted approach to meeting key priorities in addressing important challenges that we face as a country and will create the conditions for a meaningful and deep partnership in the spirit of a renewed Nation-to-Nation relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada.

SUMMARY: New federal investments of up to \$300 million per year in Indigenous stewardship, including Indigenous Guardians, and \$1.5 billion over 5 years in Indigenous-led conservation and additional federal investments is the single most important strategy to address climate change and biodiversity loss, and will create vital new jobs in Indigenous communities across the country.

Guardians are employed in and by Indigenous communities to help care for the lands and waters, including identifying areas for conservation and sustainable economic development. New investments in their work will help transform local and regional economies – particularly in remote and Northern communities – towards a more sustainable future. Investments in Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and Indigenous Guardians will also advance reconciliation, support climate change mitigation and adaptation, and contribute to the cost-effective achievement of Canada’s domestic and international commitments to nature conservation. Guardians are uniquely placed to monitor and mitigate against climate change and biodiversity loss in partnership with Canada.

Background

Indigenous Guardians are trained experts who care for the land and water. Supporting Guardians programs helps Indigenous Nations create more resilient futures by supplying good local jobs that contribute to vibrant local economies and a sense of pride and possibility for Indigenous youth.

Indigenous Guardians support land use planning efforts, which identify areas for both conservation and sustainable development, thereby providing certainty for resource development and support for stronger rural and Northern communities. Guardians work with provincial and territorial governments, industry and regulators to support monitoring and implementation of environmental agreements at mine sites and other resource development projects. They also play an important role in assessing the environmental risks and benefits of land use proposals for their Nations, helping ensure the implementation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and contributing to resolving land and resource conflicts. In a time of curtailed travel, Guardians will become key partners in on-the-ground monitoring and research for industry and academia alike.

Indigenous Guardians also help establish and manage Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) – places that sustain healthy populations of caribou and salmon, clean water, and a more stable climate – through protection of some of the largest carbon storehouses on the planet.

The creation of IPCAs is the single most important pathway for Canada to achieve its international and domestic nature conservation goals, in particular, the 2019 Speech from the Throne commitment to protect 25% of lands and inland waters in Canada by 2025. Indigenous-led land use plans and IPCAs will be essential to Canada’s ability to bridge the gap from current protection levels to 25% and beyond.

Many of the IPCAs currently under development across the country are in the boreal region, the largest terrestrial storehouse of carbon on the planet. These IPCAs can therefore help protect these extraordinary carbon reserves. Supporting and investing in these efforts is Canada’s single most important nature-based climate solution.

IPCAs and other forms of Indigenous-led conservation also provide a good opportunity for the federal government to recognize and embrace Indigenous knowledge and science, and Indigenous approaches to protection and management of lands and waters as essential contributions to biodiversity and cultural sustainability. Such an approach addresses reconciliation in practical terms and helps create the conditions for maximizing shared prosperity for Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians.

The Assembly of First Nations has passed two resolutions in support of Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship through initiatives like Indigenous Guardians and shares the view that Indigenous-led conservation (land use planning, IPCAs and their Guardians), totalling \$1.5 billion over 5 years, in addition to investments in Guardians of up to \$300 million per year, are much-needed and wise investments.

Case for Support

Investments in Indigenous Guardians and the design, establishment and management of IPCAs have an immediate, tangible, and outsized impact on job creation and local Indigenous economies.

Investment in Guardian initiatives and the establishment of a fulsome National First Nations Guardians Network is a powerful reconciliation opportunity that can help forge a renewed Nation-to-Nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

This investment in Guardian initiatives can also contribute greatly to economic recovery, particularly in smaller, remote Northern communities by enhancing access to good quality jobs and training opportunities, new local and regional business opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs, and the potential for greater certainty for industry on the

landscape by having Guardians and their communities more fully engaged in reviewing resource development projects.

Over the past 3 years of the joint ILI/ECCC implementation of the Indigenous Guardians Pilot Program investment of \$25 million, the number of Guardian programs has increased significantly, from approximately 20 programs in 2017 to over 70 existing programs, located in all regions in Canada. The demand for new programs is fast increasing as the Indigenous Guardians movement continues to expand.

In addition to immediately creating jobs across the country, with multiplier effects for local and regional economies, investments in Indigenous Guardians and IPCAs can also offer savings to governments and taxpayers through reduced pressure on judicial, social service and health care systems. Studies in Australia – which has committed over \$1.5 billion since 2007 to similar Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas initiatives – estimated that **the true cost of their program was 17% to 23% lower than its budgeted cost due to both reduced welfare costs and increased tax revenue.**

When examined through a Social Return on Investment (SROI) lens, evaluations of the Australian program confirm that **every federal dollar (\$1) invested generates almost \$3 in social, cultural and economic return.** Similar research into nascent Guardians programs in the NWT found an SROI of \$2.5 in value created for every dollar invested.

As such, investments in Guardians and Indigenous-led conservation can help lay the groundwork for more resilient economies, stronger communities, and environmental sustainability. It will help Canada fulfill its stewardship mandate, particularly in remote and northern environments.

Building on Initial Federal Investments

The Government of Canada has made initial investments in this vital work. For example, more than 25 IPCA proposals are moving forward with support from the Challenge stream of the Canada Nature Fund announced as part of Budget 2018.

In addition, the \$25 million national Indigenous Guardians Pilot Program launched in 2017 is helping some of the almost 70 Guardians programs across the country care for their lands and waters.

However, these programs are short-term in nature and can only meet the demand of a small fraction of the Indigenous communities that have expressed interest in creating IPCAs and/or Guardians programs. To date, the Challenge Fund has focused primarily on the costs of establishing protected areas, with limited funding for their stewardship and management through Guardians and other similar initiatives.

Given that Indigenous-led conservation lies at the heart of Canada's ability to meet its international and domestic biodiversity commitments, as well as the key role that Indigenous Guardians play in both creating and managing IPCAs, early and sustained funding for both will be essential for Canada to meet its future targets while also contributing to reconciliation and to climate protection.

The Challenge Fund provides an essential existing infrastructure for delivering on expanded priorities that contribute to direct and indirect job creation and economic recovery. Existing projects are building the capacity required to advance IPCAs and design Guardians programs that can manage these areas now and in the future.

The First Nations' portion of the national Indigenous Guardians Pilot Program has been implemented through a co-governance model that was co-designed by the Indigenous Leadership Initiative and Environment and Climate Change Canada. The process has ensured that investments made have benefited from the rich experience of the Joint Working Group on Guardians members in demonstrating the model of Guardianship across different landscapes, recognizing local/regional differences and demonstrating how Guardians contribute to implementing a successful Nation-to-Nation relationship.

Building National Capacity – the National First Nations Guardians Network

Investments in Guardians and Indigenous-led conservation represent an important opportunity to implement a Nation-to-Nation approach that empowers Indigenous-led decision-making while creating the context for a more meaningful and respectful partnership with Canada.

Additional investments should build on the co-governance model implemented through the pilot process and further enable Indigenous leadership. Creation of a National First Nations Guardians Network would be the expression of this partnership approach.

The Network would initially be formed by representatives of Canada and First Nations with existing Guardian programs and expanded over time to include all interested Nations. A national board of directors with knowledge of on-the-land stewardship approaches and experience with similar program models would govern the Network.

A small national staff would provide support, coordinate regular national Guardian gatherings, and promote effective communication within the Network and with external players.

Summary of Needs

The new investments identified above offer a unique opportunity to marry **economic recovery, community and climate resilience, nature conservation, and reconciliation**. They also offer the potential to build new conservation economies that incorporate tourism and cultural experiences that reflect Indigenous leadership and stewardship.

The Indigenous Leadership Initiative anticipates a gradual increase in programs over 5 years, from approximately 70 programs currently in operation to 400 active programs by the end of the 5-year period.

This would allow for more than 2/3 of First Nation communities across Canada to have a Guardian program in place, developed to meet their specific needs, and ensure that sufficient capacity for Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship exists in the majority of communities that choose to engage in this way.

An investment at this scale would generate powerful benefits for individuals, for Indigenous Nations, for governments at all levels, and indeed for all Canadians, while creating new pathways towards truly shared prosperity. It would also create and reinforce the supportive partnerships with provincial and territorial governments, industry, the philanthropic community and environmental organizations that are important to ensuring sustainability of the programs and the Network.

Annex A

Proposed Approach to Ramping up Investments

Program Element	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5 and ongoing	Total over 5 years
Existing Capacity						
# Full Programs	70	100	150	250	400	400
Cost (\$M, at \$750k/program)	\$52.5	\$75	\$112.5	\$187.5	\$300	\$727.5
Capacity Development						
# New Programs in the Year	30	50	100	150	n/a	n/a
Cost (\$M, at \$250k/new program)	\$7.5	\$12.5	\$25	\$37.5	n/a	\$82.5
Network Support (\$M)	\$2.5	\$4	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$21.5
Total Cost (\$M)	\$62.5	\$91.5	\$142.5	\$230	\$305	\$831.5