



# Guardian Watchmen Essential for MaPP

It is not easy to get hold of Heiltsuk's Desiree Lawson these days. When you call the office of the Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department they tell you she is not available; she is out on the water doing crab surveys, or assessing archaeological sites or doing more training. Try tomorrow, they say. But that won't work either. First thing in the morning she'll be off again doing any number of tasks in her new role as a Guardian Watchmen in Heiltsuk territory.

"It is exciting to be a Guardian Watchmen", says Desiree. "We are the eyes and ears on the land and water and we help inform our managers about what is going on. It helps them make sound decisions for our territory."



Heiltsuk Guardian Watchmen Desiree Lawson showing off a Dungeness crab captured during a crab survey in her territory.

The Heiltsuk are not the only Nation humming with activity from their Watchmen. With funding from the Central Coast Marine Planning Partnership process (MaPP), each central coast Nation has hired and trained two new Guardian Watchmen in the last year. A big part of their jobs in the months and years ahead will be implementing strategies in the Central Coast MaPP plan and monitoring the plan's effectiveness.

The MaPP plan is the result of a comprehensive government-to-government marine planning process co-led by First Nations and the provincial government. For our Nations, the overarching objectives are to ensure that coastal ecosystems, our economies and our cultures flourish in the future – and that our Nations are directly involved in stewardship decisions in our territories.

But all this planning will only be effective if change happens on the water – and our new Watchmen are the front-line workers poised to make that happen.

## Watchmen provide local vision

"It is essential to have Guardian Watchmen implementing the MaPP plan," says Heiltsuk's Fisheries Manager Mike Reid. "The Watchmen, like Desiree, know their territories, the resources and the various user groups intimately. They have all grown up here and have all this local experience to bring to this work. If we hired outsiders for this, there would be big gaps in their knowledge."

Importantly, the Watchmen are also the ones who will monitor how well the MaPP plan is working over time. "Without the Watchmen we are going in blind," says

**"Watchmen are... a critical presence on the water... We see everything and are well-positioned to be there to enforce our traditional laws, which is critical." — Desiree Lawson, Heiltsuk Guardian Watchmen**

Mike, “we won’t really know what is working [with MaPP] and what isn’t. The Watchmen will be the first to know if the plan is working or not.” (See Measuring MaPP’s Progress on page 13).

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. The first phase of this training was in Prince Rupert last November. Training continues within each Nations’ territory, and this fall the new Watchmen will reconvene at Hakai to further enhance their skills. With more training under their belts, each Watchmen will return to their territory better equipped to help implement their Nations’ marine planning objectives.

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Our Guardian Watchmen are the eyes and ears in our beautiful territories. Photo by Ian McAllister.

## Welcome to our new Coastal Guardian Watchmen

Each of the central coast Nations has hired two new Guardian Watchmen (See Watchmen story page 10). All of them are already out on the water helping implement our marine plans and monitor their territories. They include:

Desiree Lawson and Jordan Wilson	(Heiltsuk territory)
Chantal Pronteau and Curtis Rollie	(Kitasoo/Xai'Xais territory)
Charles Sanders and Keith Windsor	(Nuxalk territory)
Josh Vickers and Gordon Moody	(Wuikinuxv territory)



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“Watchmen are an important resource to our Nation and a critical presence on the water,” says Desiree. “We are the only ones who are always here. We see everything and are well-positioned to be there to enforce our traditional laws, which is critical.”

### **This makes it personal**

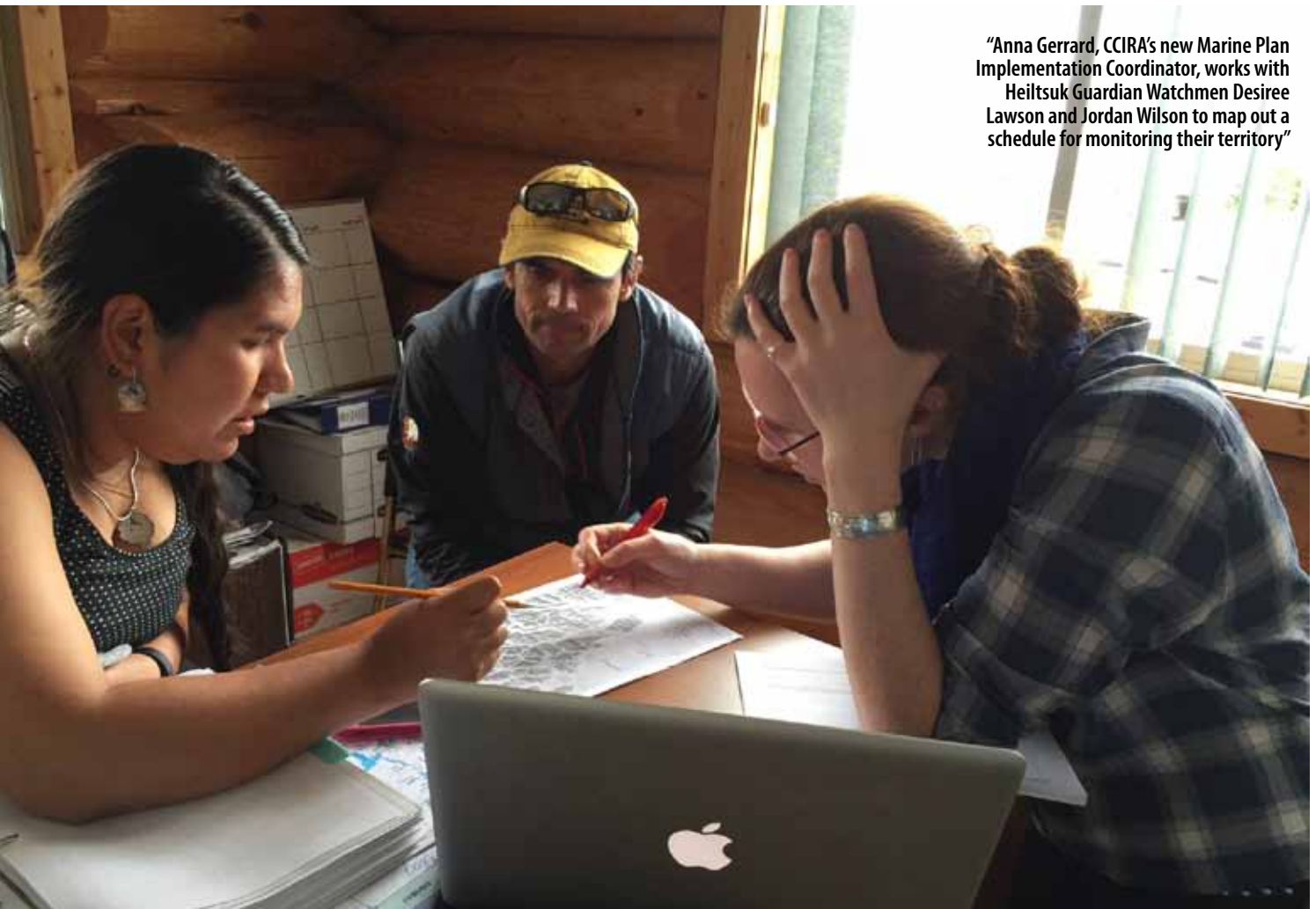
As part of her Watchmen training, Desiree also began studying her own ancestry and learned that her family has long history with places like Roscoe Inlet and Stryker Island, not far from where she grew up in Bella Bella. This, she says, gives her a very personal connection to these places. Talking through tears Desiree explains: “Now when I am doing fieldwork in Roscoe it means so much more to me because I know I have deep roots there – it is

a place where my family lived - and it is really meaningful that I am now conducting research to help protect it.”

These personal connections to place are one reason our Watchmen are such important caretakers for our territories. It is also one reason why they are so well suited to implementing the MaPP plan.

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There is a lot of work to do in the months and years ahead to achieve our MaPP objectives, and it is our Guardian Watchmen, like Desiree, who will be out on the water playing a key role in making that happen.



**“Anna Gerrard, CCIRA’s new Marine Plan Implementation Coordinator, works with Heiltsuk Guardian Watchmen Desiree Lawson and Jordan Wilson to map out a schedule for monitoring their territory”**