

# Aboriginal Guardian and Watchmen Programs in Canada

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There are a number of excellent examples in Canada of Aboriginal leadership in land stewardship, industry monitoring, ecological research, youth mentorship, and the preservation and restoration of cultural sites. This report provides a brief overview of several of these programs, each with its own unique attributes according to the interests and priorities of the sponsoring Nation and the circumstances of their homeland.

# First Nations — Guardian Watchmen Programs in Canada

## 1. Why Guardian Watchmen?

First Nations in Canada have always been intentional about their interest in governing ancestral traditional territories in ways that safeguard the health of ecosystems and provide economic benefits to adjacent communities for the current generation and for generations to come.

This enduring objective has been challenging since first contact with Europeans. The making of contracts and treaties, together with the making of wars, and the designing of assimilation programs have conspired to enable European economic activity and settlement to establish on the land and sea, often without due consideration to First Nations interests, and rarely with a view to co-creation on the land.

While the types of Aboriginal rights in Canada may vary, the reason for Aboriginal rights does not. Aboriginal people have these rights because they existed in Canada before Europeans arrived here (in the case of First Nations people) or before Europeans took control of Métis territories (in the case of the Métis).

In recent years, through court and civil actions it is now widely recognized that wherever the Crown (either federal or provincial) is making a decision which might have the effect of infringing an Aboriginal or treaty right the Crown is obligated to consult with the rights holder and if a right would be infringed, in Canada the Crown cannot proceed without accommodation and justification. The Crown is expected to proceed in a way that creates the least infringement necessary, and it is potentially subject to provide compensation for any loss suffered as the result of such infringement.

It is in this milieu that the Guardian Watchmen programs are born and thrive. With the intention of bringing Aboriginal culture, stewardship, traditional knowledge, and activity monitoring into their traditional territories, the size and focus of the programs vary considerably across Canada, but the benefits both on the land and in the communities accruing from these programs is very evident.

As stated by the Coastal Guardian Watchmen in British Columbia, *“As First Nations we govern our ancestral traditional territories and safeguard the health of our ecosystems. We are the Guardians and Watchmen of our territories. We are men and women carrying forward the work of our ancestors to manage and respect our lands and waters through our traditional laws to ensure a vibrant future for generations to come. We work with our neighbouring Nations to create a united and collective presence within our territories. From the Central Coast to the North Coast and Haida Gwaii, we are working together to monitor, protect and restore the cultural and natural resources in our territories.*

## **2. Range of Activity:**

**The Guardian and Watchmen programs vary considerably in terms of the focus of their efforts. This differentiation is the result of a number of factors including: where funding comes from; how each Nation has prioritized their concerns; what the goals are for the program (eg. stewardship, employment, youth engagement, compliance monitoring); and the maturity or age of the program.**

Examples of the types of activity undertaken by Guardians and Watchmen include:

Gathering data on the ecological health and wellbeing of ancestral traditional territories;  
Compiling and sharing data gathered in order to inform decision-making in ancestral territories;  
Compliance and enforcement (on behalf of federal or provincial agencies);  
Monitoring the activity of resource users;  
Community outreach and education regarding the protection of cultural and natural resources; and  
Working with federal and provincial government (through management agreements that respect the title and rights of First Nations) to ensure coordinated and robust monitoring and enforcement throughout territories.

### **Who are Guardians and Watchmen?**

Guardians and Watchmen are all the people who monitor and protect the lands and waters on their territory to ensure a vibrant future for generations to come. Guardians and Watchmen may have titles such as resource technicians, fisheries guardians, park rangers, community watchmen, or conservation officers. They may be elders or youth who volunteer their services, or they may be paid professionals. In some circumstances, Guardians receive formal training for their position. Each Nation has a unique approach to monitoring and stewarding their respective territory. All Nations are interested in empowering and strengthening their Guardian and Watchmen programs.

### **Why are These Programs Important?**

As the original stewards of their territories, First Nations are responsible for governing and managing their lands and waters. First Nations have the authority and responsibility under traditional laws to protect important wildlife species, food sources, and significant cultural resources. With government cut-backs and increasing pressures on natural resources, there has never been a more important time to strengthen Guardian and Watchmen programs. The Canadian Boreal Leadership Initiative is working towards establishing a National Network of Guardians and Watchmen in order to build a framework for core funding, youth mentorship and training.

## The Gitga'at Guardian Watchmen:

**Overview:** The Gitga'at are working to achieve an ecosystem-based approach to land and resource management that recognizes the interdependence of the community's cultural, spiritual and economic wellbeing and the health of the lands, waters and resources in Gitga'at Territory.

From the beginning of their time, the Gitga'at people have existed in their Territory, dependent upon its abundance and richness. The wellbeing of the Gitga'at community is intricately related to the health of their lands and waters and the abundance of resources therein. The Gitga'at are committed to an approach to land and marine use planning that reflects and emphasizes the need to sustain this relationship.

**The Vision of the Gitga'at Guardians:** The Gitga'at are working to achieve an ecosystem-based approach to land and marine resource management that recognizes the interdependence of the community's cultural, spiritual and economic wellbeing and the health of the lands, waters and resources in Gitga'at Territory.

**Structure of the Gitga'at Program:** The Gitga'at Guardian Watchmen program is part of the Gitga'at Stewardship Program and works to:

- Protect and conserve Gitga'at cultural and traditional properties and resources
- Ensure sustainable management of the lands, waters and natural resources on Gitga'at territory
- Gain greater access and control over the benefits that flow from the development and use of the lands, waters and natural resources on Gitga'at territory
- Assist the Gitga'at community to develop and implement land and marine use stewardship plans
- Conserve and sustainably manage land and marine cultural resources, including seaweed, shellfish and other marine resource harvest sites, current and abandoned village sites, and important fish species and their supporting habitats and ecosystems.
- Respect and accommodate Gitga'at rights and title.

**Focus of Monitoring in Gitga'at Territory:** The Gitga'at First Nations began an extensive Coast Monitoring Program in 2008 to collect baseline information for the marine resources on their territories including:

- Sampling small streams for fish presence and habitat characteristics
- Bird surveys
- Intertidal diversity using photo surveys and beach seines
- Collecting mussels for baseline hydrocarbon toxicity
- Collecting sightings of marine mammals and cetaceans



## The Haida Guardian Watchmen:

**Overview:** The Haida recognize that nature and culture are intrinsically connected, and that the protection of the natural and cultural values on Haida Gwaii is essential to sustaining their culture. The Haida have always had Guardian Watchmen who protected the land and sea from harm. 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.

**The Vision of the Haida Guardians:** The Haida vision is reflected in the preamble of the Haida Constitution: "Our culture, our heritage is the child of respect and intimacy with the land and sea. Like the forests, the roots of our people are intertwined such that the greatest troubles cannot overcome us. We owe our existence to Haida Gwaii ... the living generation accepts the responsibility to ensure that our heritage is passed on to following generations."

**Structure of the Haida Program:** The *Haida Fisheries Program* has two offices - one in Skidegate and one in Massett. Its mandate is to take a lead role in the development of fisheries policy and management affecting Haida Gwaii, consider all fisheries and marine issues, and provide advice to the Council of the Haida Nation about political or other actions. The Program assesses and reviews all commercial and recreational fisheries including annual and long-term management plans, policies and regulations of federal and provincial governments, inclusive of environmental and habitat protection. It also assesses resource development plans affecting fisheries resources and freshwater and marine environments. The protection of the Aboriginal rights and title is a priority.

The *Haida Gwaii Watchmen Program* has a mandate to safeguard Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve. From spring until autumn, the Haida Watchmen serve as guardians at the old village sites. The Watchmen's primary mandate is to protect these sensitive sites by educating visitors about the natural and cultural heritage of Gwaii Haanas.

**Focus of Monitoring in Haida Territory:** The *Haida Fisheries Program* monitors:

- Recreational and traditional fishing effort
- Creel, coho and chinook salmon, halibut, lingcod, and rockfish species, herring, spawn-on-kelp, razor clams, sea urchin, and geoduck
- Health and recovery of abalone populations in two abalone stewardship areas

The *Haida Gwaii Watchmen* protect:

- The 5 most frequently visited cultural sites in Gwaii Haanas: SGaang Gwaii, Gandle K'in, Hlk'yah, T'aanuu and K'uuna.



## The Haisla Guardian Watchmen:

**Overview:** For hundreds of years, the Haisla people have occupied many village sites and used their territory, over 394,963 hectares (approximately 4million acres) of land and water ways that branch off from the Douglas Channel inlets on British Columbia's North Coast.

Their aboriginal rights and title have existed since time immemorial - the right to make decisions on how the land and its resources are used and the responsibility to steward the land and resources on behalf of this and future generations.



The word “Kitamaat” comes from the Tsimshian people, who originate from the Prince Rupert and Metlakatla areas, also on British Columbia’s North Coast. “Kitamaat” means People of the Snow in Tsimshian. The Haisla Name for Kitamaat Village is Tsee-Motsa which means Snag beach. Most Haisla continue to carry on the tradition of hunting, berry picking, gathering, and fishing.

**The Vision of the Haisla Watchmen:** To be the “eyes and ears” of our traditional territory resulting in a “share and say” in resource use and management.

**Structure of the Haisla Program:** The Haisla Natural Resource Department maintains responsibility for monitoring and stewardship of cultural and natural resources on the territory. Their programs include: as the Haisla Fisheries Commission; marine use planning; and the Haisla Watchmen.

**Focus of Monitoring in Haisla Territory:** The *Haisla Fisheries Program* undertakes the following activities:

- Research and monitoring of salmonids, including stream assessments;
- Monitoring Oolichan runs particularly in the Kemano, Kitlope, Kitimat Kildala rivers;
- Monitoring food, social and ceremonial catch and community access;
- Conducting a whale study. and

### *The Haisla Watchmen:*

- Observe, record and report on all seasonal activities, in the Kitlope and Kowesas watersheds and all Parks and Conservancy areas;
- Observe, record and report all seasonal wildlife, boat, and trap sighting.

## The Heiltsuk Watchmen:

**Overview:** Heiltsuk monitoring and stewardship is integral to the effective implementation of Heiltsuk marine and land use plans. Monitoring and stewardship ensure that resources are sustainably managed in Heiltsuk territory and that important cultural and natural resources are protected.

**The Vision of the Heiltsuk Watchmen:** “We are the stewards of our traditional lands and waters; we are the eyes and ears of our territory. A coordinated and integrated Guardian Watchmen monitoring effort will improve our ability to protect the health of our cultural and natural values and sustainably manage and steward our resources. We will:

- Have a strong presence in our territory
- Protect our cultural resources and restore natural resources
- Be recognized as the authorities, rather than stakeholders in our territory, in terms of both knowledge and management
- Have priority access and control over food, social and ceremonial resources
- Help enforce Heiltsuk and other agency’s rules and regulations
- Control external access to other resource users
- Ensure that monitoring leads to improved decision-making and management actions
- Have control over data and access to data for future uses and management decisions”



**Structure of the Heiltsuk Program:** Within the Heiltsuk Nation, several organizations/entities are currently involved in monitoring and stewardship activities, including the Heiltsuk Fisheries Co-Management Program, the Qqs Projects Society (non-profit), 'Coast watch, and Heiltsuk Marine Use Planning.

### Focus of Monitoring in Heiltsuk Territory:

*The Heiltsuk Fisheries program monitors:*

- Food, Social and Ceremonial Fisheries (includes salmon, SOK, groundfish, clams, crabs, prawns)
- Escapement for Pink, Sockeye and Chum
- Water sampling for temperature, PH levels, dissolved oxygen levels, EColi, PSP
- Stream Assessment
- Green Crab Eradication
- Log poaching
- Abalone, Sea Otters and Whales Sockeye Salmon Enhancement

*The Coastwatch Program monitors:*

- Koeeye river system (baseline surveys include temperature, invertebrates, mammals, crabs, fish presence and fry counts, grizzly bear populations)
- Salmon-bearing streams
- Spring Grizzly Bears DNA project in Namu, Nootam, Koeeye
- Tourism boat counts (being piloted in Koeeye)
- Collecting Regional Monitoring Strategy data

## Kitasoo/Xai'xais Watchmen:

**Overview:** The Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation embrace the important environmental, cultural and ecological values of their territory. They wish to preserve these values and recognize that their task is to balance ecological values with the rights and needs of the community for economic health, including lasting job creation. The Kitasoo have developed environmental protocols, identified and protected areas and implemented ecosystem-based management philosophies into any extractive or non-extractive resource plans. The Kitasoo Watchmen Program was developed to control and participate in the stewardship and monitoring of traditional lands and waters. This program is a mechanism for the Kitasoo to ensure that the activities and practices within their territory are consistent with community plans and government regulations.



**The Vision of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Watchmen:** “Our watchmen will:

- Monitor and report on activities related to a variety of resource activities;
- Collect baseline and ongoing data on human and ecological activities in the area to protect the values cherished by all;
- Have the authority to carry out compliance and enforcement;
- Integrate cultural values;
- Work cooperatively with neighbouring Nations;
- Be functional year round with adequate staff;
- Be well supported politically and financially;
- Be involved in outreach and education;
- Be supported by a comprehensive and regionally based training program.”

**Structure of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Program:** The Guardians work as an independent entity under the Kitasoo Band Council. Kitasoo Guardians conduct monitoring for compliance and outreach. The Guardians enforce government regulations as well as (non-written) community rules. Informal communications with people on the land and waters has been one of the main roles of the Guardians, aimed at improving relationships around stewardship of the territory.

**Focus of Monitoring Efforts:** The Kitasoo Guardian Watchmen are involved with:

- Monitoring the use of the Spirit Bear conservancy on Princess Royal Island;
- Monitoring the use of the territory by commercial tourism operators, recreational users, forest companies and industrial operations to ensure compliance with agreements and management plans;
- Collecting wildlife observation data - marine, terrestrial and bird life;
- Collecting freshwater/saltwater harvest data from non-commercial users when possible;
- Conducting salmon enumeration and creek assessments.

## The Metlakatla Watchmen:

**Overview:** Metlakatla people are the stewards of their traditional lands and waters. They have existed on their territorial lands and waters since time immemorial as the eyes and the ears. They have the authority and responsibility under traditional laws to protect cultural and natural values for future generations.

### The Vision of the Metlakatla

**Watchmen:** Metlakatla people are guided by respect for their people and land based on aboriginal rights and title so that they can assert appropriate control and jurisdiction over Metlakatla traditional territory. Metlakatla identity is fostered through the knowledge and pride of culture, history and traditions. The Nation's vision is that people in the community are strong, healthy, educated and skilled with close interconnections to the land and ecosystems. The land and the environment must be cared for in a sustainable and holistic way.



The purpose of our Guardian Watchmen program is to protect the health of cultural and natural resources by monitoring resource use in the territory and helping to enforce rules and regulations. “The Metlakatla Guardian Watchmen Program will work to:

- Establish a year-round Metlakatla presence throughout the territory;
- Build the authority to enforce regulations;
- Provide a clear and strong role for community members to be involved in monitoring efforts;
- Develop mentorship relationships between elders and young people;
- Help to improve the quality of life for Metlakatla people by monitoring and protecting species important for food and cultural purposes;
- Support the implementation of land and marine use plans and the Metlakatla treaty process.

**Structure of the Metlakatla Program:** The Natural Resources Department of the Nation is currently responsible for coordinating stewardship and monitoring efforts. Metlakatla are in the process of designating a Watchmen's Program that will support, strengthen and compliment current monitoring efforts.

**Focus of Monitoring Efforts:** Currently, the Fisheries Program conducts the majority of Metlakatla's current monitoring, including: Abalone, Food Social Ceremonial Fisheries (salmon, halibut, clams), Roe on kelp, bird by-catch, crab surveys, remediation efforts for salmon habitat.

## The Nuxalk Watchmen:

**Overview:** The Nuxalk are salmon people of the rainforest and without healthy and abundant lands and water, their very existence is seriously threatened. Subsistence activities on Nuxalk territory, including trade with other Nations have always been central to their way of life. Nuxalk maintain their rights and title to their traditional territory and strive to maintain traditional systems of governance and power.

The Nuxalk Guardian Watchmen Initiative involves staff of the Nuxalk Integrated Resource Office. Programs focus on salmon and other fish species, with a clear goal to implement projects in conservation, assessment, enhancement, and monitoring (i.e. cultural and village sites, forestry practices and areas important to community resource harvesting).



**The Vision of the Nuxalk Watchmen:** “Our Nuxalk identity and spirit are connected directly to our ancestral land and aquatic resources. We know that one will not survive without the other. Our Nuxalk ancestors were one with the land and water. This ensured that all Nuxalk were provided for without sacrificing the needs of future generations. It is our responsibility to honour the wisdom of our ancestors and respect what is provided to us by Tataw. Our hereditary chiefs, elders and community leaders are leading the way to ensure that our people are always provided for. Nuxalk ancestral laws and knowledge will guide marine and land resource management. It is now time for Nuxalk to re-establish a healthy balance with our environment. Our Nuxalk customs, traditions, and spiritual values will provide a means of self-reliance and social well-being. As Nuxalk, we stand together with pride and unity to ensure that our marine and land resources and cultural values are managed with authority and integrity to provide for all Nuxalkmc.”

**Structure of the Nuxalk Program:** The Nuxalk Guardian Watchmen Initiative involves staff of the Nuxalk Integrated Resource Office. The programs focus on salmon and other fish species, with a clear goal to implement projects in conservation, assessment, enhancement, and monitoring (i.e. cultural and village sites, forestry practices and areas important to community resource harvesting). The Nuxalk Guardian Watchmen will work closely with the Nuxalk Fisheries Department that operates a scientific-based research facility that also conducts resource monitoring and enforcement activities to protect salmon and other species and their habitats. Nuxalk River Monitors have an enforcement protocol with DFO and have a work-share relationship with Snootli Creek Hatchery.

**Focus of Monitoring Efforts:** The Nuxalk Guardians monitor human resource use activities occurring within Nuxalk territory in addition to conducting assessment on important species (e.g. ooligan and salmon). Specific activities include: ichthyoplankton river and estuary sampling, stream assessments, and stock assessments.

## The Wuikinuxv Watchmen:

**Overview:** The Wuikinuxv have established a community-based Guardian Watchmen program, with dedicated staff and resources to be the “eyes and the ears” of the territory. They help monitor and protect important cultural and ecological resources that are critical to the health and wellbeing of the Wuikinuxv people.

### The Vision of the Wuikinuxv Watchmen:

The long-term vision for the Wuikinuxv Guardian Watchmen program is to:

- Help monitor, protect and maintain healthy ecosystems that support the ecological and cultural resources required to meet the food, social, cultural and economic needs of the community members on and off reserve
- Have the capacity to monitor resource activities that impact important cultural and ecological values and the authority to control these activities.
- Gather relevant information to inform planning and decision-making.
- Have a respected and recognizable presence throughout the territory
- Have strong and collaborative relationships with resource users and the resource management agencies active in the area.
- Have a community that respects, supports, and participates in the program
- Establish strong communication protocol to alert proper authorities of impacts and to further assist in the cleanup and solutions to rectify the issues.
- Build supportive relationships specifically with the resorts and lodges to help protect the resources and land and marine use areas.
- Recruit and train other Guardian Watchman annually to build a strong team network and build capacity within the Guardian Watchman program, especially for our youth.
- Develop long term career and job opportunities.
- Build skills and gain experience to efficiently and effectively manage the program. Work together with neighbouring First Nations to ensure that all First Nations on the coast have the authority and power needed to ensure the long-term health of our territories and communities for generations to come.

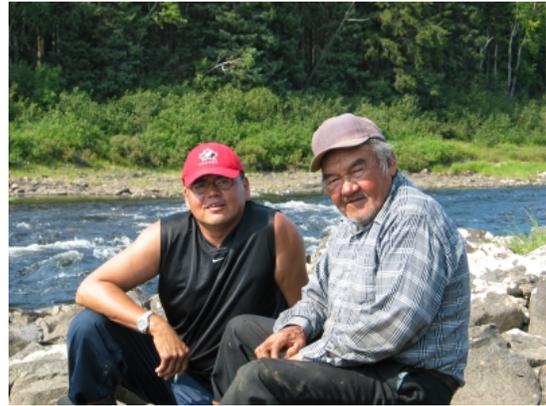


**Structure of the Wuikinuxv Program:** The Wuikinuxv Guardian Watchmen program builds on and strengthens the work currently undertaken by staff in the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy program, land use planning, and marine use planning.



## The Cree Nation of Waswanipi:

**Overview:** The modern community of Waswanipi is located on Highway 113 along Waswanipi River and is accessible by road. While the development of the region has had an impact on lands and community, the Cree are committed to the sustainable management of their resources. As the southernmost Cree community, the Waswanipi are the gateway to Northern Quebec



In 1997, the Waswanipi Cree received funding from the Canadian Forest Service as the only Aboriginal-run Model Forest in the Canadian Model Forest Network. The Cree Research and Development Institute brought together all stakeholders in a vast territory of northern Quebec in a novel partnership that allowed parties to air differences, find common ground and pursue research on better ways to manage the forests sustainably.

Out of this innovative, stakeholder process groundbreaking research that married Western science and Cree traditional knowledge emerged. It brought new understanding of the needs of the moose in the boreal forest and forced officials to consider new methods of protecting this vital species.

The CRDI also created a pioneering consultation and land-use mapping process—called Ndoho Istchee, or "Cree Hunting Ground" that integrates Crees into the forest-management process and is intelligible to all sides. It allows Crees to translate their traditional cultural land use into language that forestry planners and officials can take into account. Elements of the new process have influenced the implementation of the Adapted Forestry Regime that Crees and Quebec have created in northern Quebec to co-manage the forests. Ndoho Istchee is also easily adaptable to any Aboriginal community that faces development issues.

Since 2007, when the NRCan financial support ended, the community has been working to create a new entity called the Cree Research and Development Institute that can pick up where the Model Forest program left off and strive to bring a Cree voice to development decisions.

**Waswanipi Cree Vision:** To provide First Nations/Aboriginals with the opportunity to apply traditional knowledge and values to the concept of sustainable forest management; to integrate Cree culture with environmental stewardship approaches; and to advance the Cree's broader agenda of treaty rights and protecting the "Cree way of life".

**Structure of the Program:** Initially structured as a Model Forest (one of 11 sites in Canada), the Waswanipi Model Forest adopted a conventional organizational culture. A 14 member Board of Directors that eventually expanded to 26 members during its tenure was responsible for overall

direction of the initiative including staffing, project selection, financial management and reporting. To expedite decision making in a complex political environment, the Model Forest eventually opted to elect a much smaller Executive Committee of the Board who were involved in more day to day management than the Board as a whole. Preferably, decisions at the Board level were made by consensus, but where necessary decisions were made by majority vote. An official quorum required a majority of Aboriginal/First Nations representatives and a minimum of seven voting members. Of the voting members of the Board (CFS and the General Manager have no votes), the majority must be Cree.

Since the end of the financial support from NRCan, the Waswanipi Cree have been working to develop a Cree Research and Development Institute, that would carry on the work of the Model Forest plus add academic research partnerships, and agreements with industry to have Cree Guardians engaged in project oversight.

The Cree of Waswanipi also maintain a Youth Council as a 'learning zone' for young leadership and for youth to gain positive experiences in all aspects of their life. The Youth Council leaders are elected every 4 years, seating nine members including a youth chief. To assure the long term viability of the Cree traditional ecosystem management system (trapline system) by developing and experimental harmonisation measures with our industrial partners and establishing harmonisation guidelines that will support the land capacity to sustain the Cree traditional way of life.

**Focus of Monitoring Efforts:** The Cree of Waswanipi are actively involved in forestry in their homeland, and seek to balance the need for economic development with the cultural interests of the Cree Nation on the land – particularly hunting and traplines. The Guardians are involved with implementing a community-endorsed management strategy for their forestry activity that combines traditional ecological knowledge with modern science. The Youth Council ensures that young Cree between the age of 13 and 35 receive opportunities to live and work on the land.

## Innu Nation Guardianship Program:

**Overview:** The Innu were nomadic peoples, depending on the products of hunting, fishing and gathering for subsistence. Their ancestral territory covered the region between Quebec City and Labrador and extended north of Schefferville. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, settlement and the forest industry began to displace Innu from their traditional lands and economies. Recognizing a need to protect their land, resources and culture against future threats, the Innu people first joined Quebec's Mi'kmaq and Inuit people in 1973 to form the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, and three years later formed the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association, which was named the Innu Nation in 1990. The Nation has made strides in a number of important areas, gaining royalties for industrial development in their territory and negotiating a place as status Indians, allowing them to access federal programs and services. In 2008 they began talks with the federal and provincial governments to become self-governing. These talks continue today.



Started in 1992, the program has grown ten years later into an environmental protection agency, based in Seshatshiu that dispatches guardians as part of every industrial development in the territory. The Guardian program includes a formal relationship with an academic partner who assists with the provision of training curriculum.

**The Vision of the Innu Guardians:** The Innu Environmental Guardians exist to protect their lands and resources because these provide their culture, their economy and their future. The Watchmen work in collaboration with agencies and industries working in their homeland. They are the eyes and ears of the Innu people on the land.

**Structure of the Program:** Innu began working as Guardians in 1992 when the Fisheries Guardians program was established with core funding from DFO and two Guardians began to work as conservation officers on the water. In 1993 this successful program was extended to the forest sector. Since 2000, by pooling resources from a number of partnerships (notably with Environment Canada) and undertaking new initiatives, the Innu Nation has secured sufficient resources through government grants, impact benefit agreements, and pre treaty agreements to employ a number of Environmental Guardians in the areas of fisheries, forestry, wildlife, mining, and environmental research. Currently there are 14-20 full time or seasonal Innu Environmental Guardians employed by the Nation, including: Forest Guardians, Voisey's Bay Monitors, Fisheries Guardians, and Environmental Guardians dedicated to environmental research and community education projects. Increasingly Guardians are working to support academic research projects in the region. Guardians are based in both Utshimassit/Natuashish and Sheshatshiu.

To support the program, the Innu Nation has established a dedicated Environment Office in Sheshatshiu which provides the necessary infrastructure and support staff (including highly-trained technical advisors in the areas of environmental engineering, geographical information systems (GIS) and forestry) to support the Guardians in their work. The Environment Office is supervised by the Innu Nation's Director of Environmental Protection, and supported by an office administrator. The Environmental Office works in support of broader Innu Nation programs, including land rights negotiations, Voisey's Bay IBA implementation, environmental co-management (including the environmental management and monitoring of the Voisey's Bay Project in partnership with Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador and the Labrador Inuit Association) and National Park establishment.

It is expected that the role of an Innu Guardian will evolve over time as he/she gains experience and confidence, and as skills evolve through on-going training and learning "on the job". At this stage, it is also reasonable to expect the Guardians program to expand with increased opportunities for Innu employment in environmental management and monitoring of future development activities, as well as expanding research initiatives relevant to both Sheshatshiu and Utshimassits. There are expected to be numerous opportunities for new projects involving external partners and co-researchers.

Another important aspect of the Innu Guardians Program is the creation of an environmental youth core. Beginning organically with youth participating with their Guardian parents, the program has grown to include both training curriculum for youth as part of their highschool education, and a field program operating out of Utshimassits that incorporates youth at risk into Guardian activities.

Since 2001, Saint Mary's University, through their Gorsebrook Research Institute, has been working with the Innu Nation to create and offer a training program for Innu Guardians. Training involves classroom-based course work interspersed with on-site training and hands-on participation in active Innu Nation co-management activities, environmental monitoring projects, and environmental research partnerships.

**Focus of Monitoring Efforts:** Today, the Innu Guardians are involved with environmental research in partnership with academics and government agencies; compliance and reporting efforts; forestry and fisheries management. The program continues to expand as necessary to ensure that activities occurring on the Innu homeland are well managed and respectful of the Innu's cultural and environmental interests.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research conducted for this report, together with Ecotrust Canada's knowledge and observations of some of the Guardian Watchmen (GW) programs in B.C., the following observations and recommendations are offered for program planning consideration at the Chief's Forum.

1. Most of the GW programs have found it challenging to create sustainable levels of funding. Several have received start-up or special project funding, which has allowed them to provide short-term or focused guardian programming (usually in a single sector or for a limited duration project), but has not allowed them to build strong program permanence. This factor has negatively influenced employee retention and field coverage. Where longer term funding has been secured, it has made a significant and positive difference to both the security of the program, and also the seniority and professionalism of service delivery.

**SEEK LONG TERM (5 YRS +) FUNDING AGREEMENTS AT THE OUTSET OF PROGRAM DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT. BUILD TO SCALE AND GROW INCREMENTALLY.**

2. More secure funding arrangements have been the result of one or more of the following: (1) successfully situating the GW programs as a core component of Impact Benefit Agreements with industry; (2) negotiating GW services as an ongoing program attribute within senior government departments (ie. National Parks); and/or (3) securing contracts for service provision with some level of government or with business (ie. Campground maintenance or salmon escapement surveys). A few programs are beginning to experiment (with mixed results) with the notion of ecosystem service fees or user fees aimed at raising money for GW programming.

**INCLUDE FUNDING OF THE GW PROGRAM AS A CENTRAL COMPONENT OF ALL OTHER ACTIVITIES AND NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS.**

3. GW programs situated as separate divisions within existing departments (ie. the GW Unit of a Natural Resource Management Dept), or as separate departments (ie. The GW Dept.) seem to establish a clearer identity and stronger sense of purpose more quickly, and to therefore do better in the longer term than where guardian services are considered as part of an existing department (ie. Forestry Dept. provides guardians).

**ESTABLISH A SEPARATE GW UNIT OR A SEPARATE GW DEPARTMENT**

4. The level of training provided to GW varies widely across the programs reviewed - from no training to classroom-based and accredited training. The variation in type, scope and duration of training may be the result of available funding or program inception or leadership philosophy. The method of training delivery also varies - from academic partnerships that build curriculum, to field-based mentorship provided by elders and/or sector professionals. It seems that the day-to-day success of these GW programs (including how they are perceived and then actively supported by government and industry over time), favour those that provide some level of formal

training to their Guardians, and that manage their guardians as professionals in their field - including opportunities for ongoing training as part of their employment.

**ESTABLISH SOME LEVEL OF FORMAL TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH GUARDIANSHIP EMPLOYMENT. ESTABLISH THE PROGRAM AS A PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM.**

5. GW programs vary widely in terms of the services they offer and the role they play in the field. Most have developed incrementally - adding activity according to funding availability or as opportunity arises. Those that are well-established and successful over time seem to be multi-dimensional (ie. providing GW in every industrial activity agreement regardless of industry) rather than uni-dimensional (ie. providing GW's only in fisheries). On the surface, strength and permanence in this regard may appear to have a direct relationship to funding (where more activity = more money), but on deeper inspection it seems to be equally the result of achieving wider acceptance as an important and necessary function of territorial management.

**AIM TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM THAT IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, WITH GW ATTACHED IN SOME CAPACITY, AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, TO AS MANY ACTIVITIES AS POSSIBLE OCCURRING IN THE TERRITORY.**

6. The role of youth and elders in the establishment and ongoing operation of successful GW programs was less apparent than anticipated. Clearly those working as GW tend to be individuals more inclined to the observance of culture and tradition, but the research found few examples where elders and/or youth are central to programming (training or service delivery). In the few cases where there is specific mention of elders, it is because there has been a deliberate attempt to collect and collate their knowledge about the conditions of territory as part of establishing a monitoring regime. In the case of youth, the engagement that has emerged has been largely the result of latter-stage thinking, once a program is well established, about how to engage the next generation. In this case some exciting examples have emerged including designing classroom curriculum, creating field trip opportunities for youth, and offering summer camp experiences.

**DESIGN AT THE OUTSET FOR THE ROLE OF ELDERS AND YOUTH, WITH A CLEAR STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR PARTICIPATION AND RESOURCES SET ASIDE TO SUPPORT ACHIEVING THESE OBJECTIVES.**

7. Program leadership is another area where it is clear that dedicated and financially supported staffing has made a difference to program growth and stability over time. Whether this program leadership is provided through workplan assignment amongst existing staff, or through a dedicated hire, it appears necessary to have staff identified and clearly assigned to the program. These staff should be engaged from the outset, and responsible for ensuring GW hiring and training, program funding, and regular reporting on activity to leadership and to community.

**START THE GW PROGRAM WITH STAFFING DEDICATED TO THE FUNCTION OF PROGRAM MANAGEMENT.**