

## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS GUARDIANS NETWORK

### Recommendation

The GBC supports the Indigenous-led proposal to the federal government to invest in a national Indigenous Guardians Network.<sup>58</sup>

#### Required Investment

For 2017/2018	\$26 million
Ongoing	\$500 million over five years (including 2017/2018 expenditures) to support a National Indigenous Guardians Network and create an associated funding program for community-based Indigenous guardians.

#### Rationale

A National Indigenous Guardians Network represents a powerful opportunity for the Government of Canada to fulfill its 2015 Speech from the Throne promise to forge renewed, Nation-to-Nation and Inuit-to-Crown relationships with Indigenous Peoples. It also fits squarely within federal mandates to promote and create training opportunities and good quality jobs, particularly among youth; to promote reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples; and to address key priorities such as climate change and getting products to market sustainably.

Indigenous Guardians are employed to manage and steward their lands and waters in a way that allows for cultural vitality. Guardians monitor ecological health, maintain cultural sites, protect sensitive areas and species, interpret culture and heritage aspects for visitors, contribute to land and marine planning and management, and promote intergenerational sharing of Indigenous knowledge. They also help build capacity to engage with other land users, development proponents, and governments, thus strengthening decision-making at all levels.

There are approximately 30 Indigenous Guardians programs in place across Canada. The proposal for a national initiative is inspired in part by Australia, where the federal government is investing \$618 million AUD over ten years to create a network of 109 Indigenous Ranger groups managing more than 1.7 million square kilometers of land and sea across the country.

#### Outcomes:

Within five years, it is anticipated that more than 200 community-based Guardian programs employing over 1500 Guardians could be in place across the country. Associated outcomes would include: increased employment and employability, particularly in remote areas; increased health outcomes for Indigenous communities; enhanced environmental stewardship; and a greater sense of confidence and well-being in Indigenous communities.

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<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.ilinationhood.ca/our-work/guardians/> for more details.