

Indigenous-led conservation and protected areas

The achievement of Canada's conservation targets to protect 30% of land and ocean by 2030 (Target 3 of KMGBF) requires a new approach for funding and supporting Indigenous communities' articulation, implementation, and stewardship of land and water use visions and plans over time. Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) requires states to give legal recognition and protection to Indigenous peoples' "right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired."

The Green Budget Coalition commends the Government of Canada's support for Indigenous self-determined conservation and stewardship priorities, including investments in up to four Indigenous-led Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) initiatives and the launch of a First Nations Guardians Network announced at COP15.^{97,98} However, current funding programs do not match the demand and the extent of resourcing needed.⁹⁹ Most of the funding presently committed to IPCAs is focused on establishing new protected and conserved areas, with little funding set aside for spatial planning or long-term stewardship. The Indigenous Guardians program is still in "pilot" phase, with demand for Guardians programs far outstripping opportunities.¹⁰⁰ More fundamentally, it is increasingly clear that the current federal 'program funding' model does not adequately advance the Nation-to-Nation relationships required to further reconciliation and implement Indigenous rights.

97 Prime Minister's Office. "Protecting more nature in partnership with Indigenous Peoples", <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2022/12/07/protecting-more-nature-partnership-indigenous-peoples>

98 Government of Canada. "Introducing the New First Nations Guardians Network", <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2022/12/introducing-the-new-first-nations-guardians-network.html>

99 Indigenous Leadership Initiative, "Indigenous-led Conservation: IPCAs & Guardians." <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/publications/backgrounderipcasguardians>

100 Social Ventures Australia, "Analysis of the Current and Future Value of Indigenous Guardian Work in Canada's Northwest Territories" (2016). Current and potential value of Indigenous guardian work in Canada FINAL.docx (Indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca)

Long-term stewardship depends on sustainable funding that Indigenous communities can direct towards capacity- and leadership- building priorities. As highlighted in recommendation 4.12 in the Indigenous Circle of Experts' landmark We Rise Together report, "a more streamlined, predictable and flexible funding model is required."¹⁰¹ Permanent financing arrangements – including endowment funds and Project Finance for Permanence – co-designed with Indigenous peoples and managed and implemented by Indigenous-led institutions, can provide the confidence and predictability that project proponents need to embark on new and ambitious conservation initiatives that uphold their socio-economic and cultural values.

Long-term funding for Crown governments, NGOs and other partners is also necessary to ensure they have the capacity necessary to meaningfully support Indigenous-led and co-led conservation initiatives.

The following key considerations should guide long-term funding allocations in support of Indigenous-led and co-led efforts to meet KMGBF Targets 1 and 3:

- Set up IPCA establishment funds (terrestrial and marine), similar to the Target 1 Challenge Fund. [ECCC, PC]
- Establish and contribute to a Project Finance for Permanence fund that supports long-term IPCA implementation. [ECCC, PC]

101 Indigenous Circle of Experts, "We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation." pg 51. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57e007452e69cf9a7af0a033/t/5ab94aca6d2a7338ecb1d05e/1522092766605/PA234-ICE_Report_2018_Mar_22_web.pdf

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Photo: Malachi Brooks



- Increase long-term funding for Indigenous Guardians programs and distinctions-based networks.¹⁰²
- Support Indigenous-led or co-led land use/land relationship planning initiatives.
- Include long-term funding to encourage and enable provincial and territorial governments, NGOs and others to meaningfully support Indigenous-led and co-led conservation initiatives.

102 These recommendations are consistent with shared priorities 42, 47, and 96 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Shared priority 42 states, “Through meaningful consultation and collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous governments, organizations, communities and other partners, advance marine Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas to support Canada’s commitments to reconciliation and marine conservation.” Shared priority 47 states, “Continue to support Indigenous leadership in conservation through initiatives such as Indigenous Guardians, Indigenous Partnerships Initiative and Indigenous-Led Area Based Conservation that will provide capacity support until 2026, as well as the Project Finance for Permanence.” Shared priority 96 states, “In coordination with other action plan measures, advance policy and on-the-land initiatives within the heritage places it has a role in administering to support and revitalize the relationships and connections of Indigenous peoples with lands, waters and ice that are essential to the overall well-being of Indigenous communities and individuals. A range of initiatives that will result in economic and employment opportunities will be implemented including, among other things, enhanced and sustainable Indigenous Guardian programs, support for on-the-land language and cultural learning by and for Indigenous peoples including youth, Indigenous-led place-renaming and revitalization of the stories of these places, promotion of public education to build understanding of Indigenous histories and stewardship approaches, and other policy-based initiatives that promote cultural continuity and revitalization. This work will be guided by the Indigenous Stewardship Circle, a diverse group of Indigenous leaders providing advice on how Parks Canada can support the implementation of the UN Declaration.”

Recommended Investment:

Financing needs should be determined by national and regional Indigenous Governments and Organizations, and allocated to reflect the diverse distinctions and needs of their communities. In the interim, the Green Budget Coalition supports a **minimum investment of \$1 billion per year in permanent funding, increasing to \$1.5 billion per year by 2030.** [ECCC, PC]

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