



**COASTAL
FIRST NATIONS**
GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE



GUARDIAN PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLAN



COASTAL GUARDIAN WATERMEN

COASTAL GUARDIAN WATER

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Introduction

First Nations along the Pacific North Coast, Central Coast, and Haida Gwaii are the original stewards of their ancestral territories. For thousands of years, they have worked together to carefully manage their lands and waters, and this important work continues today through Stewardship Offices operating within coastal communities.

Each Nation within the alliance of Coastal First Nations (CFN) has a distinct set of stewardship goals, based on the uniqueness of their territories and governance structures.

They all share a sacred responsibility to protect their culture and natural landscapes for future generations, and they all manage a team of Coastal Guardian Watchmen who carry out their Nation's stewardship goals. These front-line stewards are now recognized across Canada, and globally, for their effectiveness in caring for their lands and waters.

A 2016 report prepared by EcoPlan concluded that, on average, Guardian Watchmen programs see a return on investment between 10:1 and 20:1 when measuring results in terms of dollar values of community values, such as economic opportunities, cultural well-being, governance authority, and taking care of territory. The report clearly showed the enormous value these programs bring to their communities, in both tangible and intangible benefits.



As these programs have become better known both within communities and to external agencies, the workload and expectations placed on Guardian Watchmen have grown.

PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE PLAN

The *Coastal First Nations Guardian Program - Strategic Plan* aims to build upon these successes and further improve Indigenous-led stewardship across the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. It is part of an in-depth internal process setting out clear action items, benchmarks and timelines.

This document outlines eight Strategic Priorities, determined through in-depth conversations and workshops between CFN member Nations' stewardship leaders, for enhancing the work of the Coastal Guardian Watchmen.

By articulating shared goals and objectives of all Guardian programs within CFN member Nations, the plan charts a way forward in fully realizing the *Coastal Guardian Watchmen Vision*.

Context and Background



FIGURE 1. COMMUNITIES OF COASTAL FIRST NATIONS - GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE

COASTAL FIRST NATIONS

For thousands of years, First Nations along the Pacific North Coast, Central Coast, and Haida Gwaii, have worked together to carefully manage an abundance of resources—ancient cedars, herring, salmon, halibut, shellfish and more. Given mounting pressures on coastal territories over the past century, from industrial logging, commercial fishing, tourism and climate change, these Nations agreed to work together to create a sustainable, conservation-based economy for their ancestral territories.

Today, Coastal First Nations (CFN) is governed by the Great Bear Initiative Board of Directors, representing the following entities: Council of the Haida Nation, Gitga'at First Nation, Heiltsuk Tribal Council, Kitasoo Band Council, Metlakatla Governing Council, Nuxalk Nation, Old Massett Village Council, Skidegate Band Council, and the Wuikinuxv Nation.

COASTAL GUARDIAN WATCHMEN

The Coastal Guardian Watchmen programs within CFN member Nations are borne out of the inherent right and responsibility to continue the work of their ancestors in protecting and managing coastal territories.

Within the context of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), reconciliation and efforts in collaborative governance, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen are at the leading edge of a continent-wide movement toward Indigenous-led stewardship. Based on generations of place-based knowledge and wisdom, and a shared commitment to sustainability, these programs safeguard our lands and waters for future generations. They are an essential part of self-determination for First Nations.

Given its ongoing success, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen provide an example for other Indigenous stewardship programs to replicate—whether they are fully established or just beginning.

In 2005, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen developed their vision (see page 6), which continues to guide their stewardship goals and efforts, and highlights the importance of this work.



COASTAL GUARDIAN WATCHMEN VISION

As Indigenous peoples we govern our 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 informed by 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 throughout 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.

As the Guardians and Watchmen of our territories, we will steward our marine and terrestrial natural and cultural resources to ensure that they are sustainably managed.

To this effect, we will...

- monitor commercial and recreational activities on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii;
- gather data on the ecological health and wellbeing of our territories;
- compile and share data that we gather in order to inform decision-making in our territories;
- have the mandate to carry out compliance and enforcement responsibilities;
- have a strong presence throughout our territories so that resource users regularly encounter and interact with us;
- have access to secure funding to support ongoing year-round Guardian/Watchmen programs in our communities;
- play an active role in community outreach and education regarding the protection of our cultural and natural resources; and
- work with the federal and provincial government (through management agreements that respect our title and rights) to ensure coordinated and robust monitoring and enforcement throughout our territories.

As Indigenous peoples we derive our authority and jurisdiction from our traditional laws to manage and safeguard the lands and waters of our territories for the health of future generations.

STEWARDSHIP OFFICES

Each CFN member Nation has a Stewardship Office, led by a Stewardship Director, that employs Guardian Watchmen to undertake stewardship work based on Nation-specific priorities. In addition to overseeing the stewardship goals and efforts of their own Nation, these directors share information and collaborate with each other regionally, through a CFN Stewardship Directors Committee (SDC), which helps to implement Nation-to-Nation agreements and other initiatives that have been approved collectively by the CFN Board of Directors.

COASTAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

The Coastal Stewardship Network (CSN) aims to further increase the capacity of Coastal Guardian Watchmen and enhance the regional stewardship efforts of CFN member Nations. The CSN supports Stewardship Offices and Coastal Guardian Watchmen by: developing stewardship training programs; hosting Guardian Watchmen gatherings and learning exchanges; coordinating data collection and information management through the Regional Monitoring System; and generating cohesive and streamlined communications materials, among other activities.

The CSN's work is guided by the CFN Board of Directors, and also by the SDC, which oversees what initiatives should be implemented across the regional network.



Strategic Priorities

The following eight Strategic Priorities are to be addressed and coordinated collectively, and adapted by member Nations, as needed.

Together, these priorities will help strengthen unity and provide a clear pathway for achieving stewardship goals and carrying out the *Coastal Guardian Watchmen Vision*.

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GUARDIAN ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



Guardian Watchmen play a variety of roles—from environmental monitoring and research to compliance and enforcement of regulations. But they are often asked to perform duties beyond the scope of their primary roles, such as assisting with community needs or responding to requests from agencies outside their Nation's government. These lower priority or non-stewardship demands often divert time, energy, and resources away from their core duties established by their Nations.

Ensuring Guardian Watchmen remain focused on their core roles and responsibilities is a high priority for all programs.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Identify and define current and desired Guardian Watchmen roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Clearly define the mandate for Guardian Watchmen to engage in compliance and enforcement.
- ▶ Define roles that can be applied to Guardian programs across all CFN member Nations.



As Guardian Watchmen take on greater authority in work related to compliance monitoring and enforcement, each Nation will need to have relevant structures, policies, and safeguards in place, so that Guardians can carry out their work effectively and safely.

Specifically, this means that each Nation's leadership will need to provide formal mandates for Stewardship Offices, and by extension Guardian Watchmen, to carry out compliance and enforcement on behalf of their Nation. These mandates will reflect each Nation's vision and could encompass a range of law enforcement and authorities, including Indigenous law, provincial and/or federal law, or a combination thereof.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Develop governance and management structures that enable Guardian Watchmen to undertake compliance monitoring and enforcement activities in relation to their Nation's laws.
- ▶ Make arrangements for Guardian Watchmen to undertake compliance monitoring and enforcement activities in relation to provincial and federal laws.
- ▶ Maintain and continuously review and improve the governance, administration and management systems that enable Guardian Watchmen to undertake this work.



Coastal Guardian Watchmen have seen some success in stewardship compliance on their lands and waters, but many values and resources remain at risk from exploitation and lack of protection. CFN member Nations have long desired to increase Guardians' capacity to monitor and enforce compliance of laws and policies related to the protection of ancestral lands and waters.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Develop, execute, and evaluate a region-wide pilot project to implement compliance and enforcement of Indigenous and/or Crown laws for selected priority resources or activities.
- ▶ Clarify how Guardian Watchmen can undertake compliance and enforcement of Indigenous and/or Crown laws at the regional level.
- ▶ Undertake communications strategies to:
 - support Guardian Watchmen programs and elevate their ability to engage in effective monitoring, compliance, and enforcement activities;
 - ensure consistent use of uniforms, logos, flags, and other distinguishing symbols across Guardian programs; and
 - increase awareness and understanding of the Guardian Watchmen, so their stewardship efforts are further legitimized and respected.
- ▶ Maintain consistent compliance and enforcement implementation across CFN member Nations.



Environmental monitoring is a highly important element of Guardians' work, since regular data collection and observation provides the baseline knowledge to determine effective stewardship priorities and make evidence-based stewardship management decisions.

Developing and implementing tools, such as the Regional Monitoring System (RMS), to collect data using consistent and rigorous methods will ensure this information effectively supports decision-making and environmental management policies.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Ensure all monitoring efforts, at both the regional and Nation-level, address key priorities and information required to develop and implement effective stewardship plans.
- ▶ Collect reliable and defensible data that are relevant to the Nations' needs and manage this information effectively.
- ▶ Build and maintain capacity at the stewardship offices and across the regional network to support effective Guardian Watchmen data collection and management.
- ▶ Share data whenever appropriate between CFN member Nations.
- ▶ Report relevant monitoring and research results publicly whenever relevant and appropriate.



Guardian Watchmen and Stewardship Directors have expressed a clear need for improved capacity in terms of human resources, coordination, and funding. Coastal Guardian Watchmen capacity demands continual investment and support if their Nations' stewardship and environmental management efforts are to be sustained.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Initiate a needs assessment for all Nation-level Guardian programs.
- ▶ Identify existing capacity and future needs of the CSN, in order to implement strategic priorities in support of Guardian programs.
- ▶ Build further capacity through Nation-driven collaborations with other government agencies.
- ▶ Streamline engagement with external parties so it supports and enhances, and does not overload, Guardian Watchmen programs.
- ▶ Facilitate connections between Guardian Watchmen and community Elders and knowledge holders to create ongoing learning opportunities.
- ▶ Explore partnership opportunities with universities and other research institutions, as well as knowledge sharing opportunities between Nations.



Training is an essential part of ongoing support for Guardian Watchmen—not only for improving safety and technical skills, but also for personal development, well-being, and foundational competencies for workplace relationships and professionalism. Developing an in-depth training strategy is a high priority for CSN, in efforts to support the Nations and their Guardian programs.

This ongoing stewardship training will help ensure the maintenance of high standards among Guardian Watchmen, and consistency with respect to public understanding and expectations.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Clarify the baseline foundational and specialized skills required for Guardian Watchmen to fulfil their current roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Develop and implement a regional training strategy that equips Guardians with those baseline skills and knowledge, and also improves health and well-being.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for new Guardian hires to receive training, both formally and informally.
- ▶ Continually assess training programs and adjust as needed to meet changing criteria and needs.
- ▶ Create specialized training opportunities for senior Guardian Watchmen, so they can act as mentors for newer Guardians.



Providing opportunities for advancement and retaining Guardians in their roles over the long term is an essential part of maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs. Strategies to improve advancement and retention include developing long-term funding, career or specialization options, and year-round job/wage security.

Having a successful Guardian program is only possible when individual Guardians possess the knowledge and expertise to perform their jobs well; they must feel a sense of ownership and pride in their work.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Establish Guardian Watchmen careers as a desirable option for more individuals throughout CFN member Nation communities.
- ▶ Increase human resources and management training for senior stewardship office and Guardian program staff.
- ▶ Secure stable and consistent long-term funding to retain Guardian Watchmen.
- ▶ Create a structured and effective training process for entry-level Guardian Watchmen positions.
- ▶ Retain skilled Guardian Watchmen by providing opportunities for growth and advancement.



To fully realize the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Vision and to implement the strategic priorities outlined in this plan, it is essential to secure long-term funding—at both the Nation and regional level.

Guardian Watchmen programs provide a wealth of benefits to CFN member Nations, far in excess of the cost to run them, but an average program still costs approximately \$300,000 per year to operate (2016 EcoPlan Report). Meeting these operating costs and generating long-term revenue sources will become more important as these programs scale up efforts and grow the Guardians' influence over their ancestral territories.

Goals and Objectives

- ▶ Identify all current and projected operating costs, with consideration for implementing this strategic plan at both the regional and Nation-level.
- ▶ Enable the CSN and CFN to pursue and acquire project-based and cyclical types of funding based on specific stewardship needs that may arise.
- ▶ Consider ways each Nation could generate own-source revenue.
- ▶ Develop and secure external partnerships for Nation-level and regional long-term funding.
- ▶ Increase awareness of the extensive benefits of Guardian Watchmen for coastal communities, wildlife and ecosystems.

Moving Forward

The regional network of Coastal Guardian Watchmen programs is recognized as a successful stewardship model that other regions across the country are seeking to replicate.

As the scope of work and services being asked of Guardian Watchmen continues to grow, strategic actions with respect to collective support, capacity building, and governance will be required to focus the progression of Guardian Watchmen programs. The strategic priorities outlined in this document will allow Guardian Watchmen programs to develop their own unique strengths as members of a strong and mutually reinforcing regional network, the Coastal Stewardship Network. They should be continually reviewed, updated and revised as conditions and needs change.

For all of the above, current funding streams for Guardian programs need to be complemented by additional long-term, sustained funding sources, so that Stewardship Offices are able to make strategic decisions and actions with the future in mind.

The ultimate goal is that First Nations along the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii will continue to assert their rights and authority, and steward and manage their ancestral territories.



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