

# **FIRST NATIONS MONITORING EVALUATION PROJECT**

## **FINAL REPORT**

PREPARED FOR: British Columbia Oil and Gas Innovation and Research Society

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## Executive Summary

In November 2017, the Ministries of Forests, Lands, Natural Regional Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) received direction to:

- *Collaboratively review existing programs during 2018/19 to develop a new, coordinated program that meets the needs of First Nations and government. During the review period, continue existing programs (including the Aboriginal Liaison Program (ALP) and various Guardian programs); and*
- *After the evaluation is complete (expected to require six to eight months), enter into a collaborative development phase with First Nations to put the results of the evaluation into action.*

That direction resulted in a two-step process to evaluate a selection of current initiatives and provide recommendations for consideration during the second step of the Project; which is to undertake a collaborative program design process with Indigenous communities.

This Report includes the results of the Evaluation Project which involved one on one interviews with, and questionnaires issued to over 50 initiative participants, Indigenous community members and key personnel involved in the delivery of resource stewardship-related activities in British Columbia. In addition, an extensive review of various initiatives operating in British Columbia and across Canada was undertaken.

To organize the Evaluation, a Framework was used to collect information and findings under the dimensions of Governance and Leadership, Alignment, Delivery Models and People and Culture, then categorize findings by themes and then make recommendations to assist in the collaborative program design step of the overall process.

In considering all of the above, there is significant opportunity for enhancing the province's engagement with Indigenous communities in the stewardship of natural resources, which could achieve positive outcomes.

Indigenous communities will continue their on-going grassroots movement to establish a presence on the ground and influence the use and management of natural resources to advance self-determination and ancestral responsibility.

Some of the evaluation observations include:

- There are numerous provincial activities underway that fall within the realm of Indigenous monitoring/liaison/guardian program and initiatives, but not all are well planned, coordinated or evaluated.
- Indigenous communities assert guardian type initiatives lead to *"taking care of territory, nurturing cultural wellbeing, improving general health and community wellbeing, advancing governance authority, increasing community capacity, opening and promoting economic opportunities in Indigenous and conservation economies, and providing financial capital inflows."*<sup>1</sup>
- There is a high degree of support for the various Indigenous monitoring/liaison/guardian programs and initiatives across participating provincial agencies – but in many cases,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource\\_Guardians-valuationreport\\_v10\\_Final\\_TNC%20Canada.pdf](https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/Community%20Resource_Guardians-valuationreport_v10_Final_TNC%20Canada.pdf)

lack of formal structure and long-term commitment to funding have hindered progress and resulted in a lack of capacity, diffuse goals, limited resources and inconsistent approaches.

- Current provincially funded initiatives have been driven primarily by government's objectives (i.e., resource development and use projects) and not by Indigenous community priorities or values.

There are many positive aspects to the initiatives reviewed with most Indigenous participants noting the following outcomes:

- A greater degree of influence over resource management issues and the ability to hold resource users to account;
- Increased awareness of and protection for significant cultural and ecological values;
- Opportunities to engage elders and youth in traditional ways of life and transfer traditional knowledge;
- Positive relationships with government agencies and other users of the land (i.e., hunters, fishers, outdoor recreationalists);
- Provision of employment in meaningful activities that improve overall community health; and
- An opportunity to exert authority over traditional territories and raise awareness and understanding between neighbors, resource users and with community members.

Some of the typical challenges noted by participants (provincial participants as well as Indigenous communities) include:

- The lack of articulated overarching (or in some cases specific) long-term vision, goals, objectives, policies and procedures needed to direct and frame the work, made even more challenging by a lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities;
- Inability to attract and retain qualified human resources;
- Significant training requirements that can be difficult to find and fund;
- The inherent seasonality of the work makes it difficult to keep people engaged full time, year-round;
- The geographic distribution of resource development and use opportunities means provincial interests and Indigenous community interests are not always aligned; and
- Barriers to entry due to vast, rugged and variable terrain which often require appropriate vehicles and equipment that are expensive to access and operate.

There is a clear need for engagement between the provincial government, Indigenous communities, and other potential partners in the development and design of a collaborative, coordinated, cross-sector approach to an Indigenous monitoring/liaison/guardian program. This new program should provide a formal structure, a clear strategy, a balanced set of objectives, secure funding and an appropriate delivery model focused on accountability. New tools designed to advance and align with the reconciliation goal should be investigated and developed and should include a broad range of resource stewardship activities.

A phased approach to implementing the recommendations is suggested which would involve the province pursuing short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives to advance Indigenous engagement in stewardship related activities in support of the goal of reconciliation.

Oversight and direction from the province will initially be assumed by a Task Force, appointed to be responsible for the coordination and on-going oversight of existing initiatives, and be responsible to lead a collaborative program design initiative with Indigenous communities.

The high-level timeline for the phased approach would be dependent upon receiving approvals from government at each phase of the Project and would involve the following:

- Phase One (months 0-3)
  - Establish an ADM Task Force for review, coordination and oversight of all Provincial monitoring initiatives, with a full-time senior staff member leading the initiative;
  - Support the ALP and other provincially funded monitoring initiatives - seek long-term base program funding for three years;
  - Expand the scope of the ALP to coordinate and integrate activities with other existing Indigenous monitoring/liaison/guardian programs and initiatives to provide more formal support and engagement by provincial agencies;
  - Provide a greater degree of engagement with existing ALP Nations and Natural Resource Sector (NRS) agencies to enhance the program and resolve outstanding issues;
  - Explore linkages and opportunities for integration with other NRS initiatives (e.g., Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) Forums, Collaborative Stewardship Framework (CSF) Pilots, etc.); and
  - Explore opportunities in Great Bear Rainforest to pilot approaches to advance the transfer of authorities to Indigenous communities via the Guardian/Watchmen.
  
- Phase Two (months 3-12)
  - Collaborate with Indigenous communities and other potential partners (Federal government, philanthropic organizations) to develop a broad array of stewardship related activities and potential funding sources to form a new provincial approach to a monitoring/liaison/guardian type program; and
  - The collaborative program design should consider a menu of flexible arrangements to partner with Indigenous communities according to need, opportunity and capacity, and involve opportunities related to environmental monitoring, planning, shared decision making, compliance and enforcement, emergency management and response, and reclamation and restoration.
  - Ensure the program is:
    - Flexible - meet different needs, interests and capabilities;
    - Formal – long-term program status with funding and executive level support; and
    - Integrated - tied to NRS initiatives where there are opportunities to complement and support (i.e., ESI, CSF).
  
- Phase Three (months 12-14)
  - Establish a policy framework and program design, seek approval and funding for new provincial approach.
  
- Phase Four (month 14+)
  - Implementation, monitoring, reporting, and continuous improvement.