

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**

**Submitted By:
International Boreal Conservation Campaign
August 2020**

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada commit to Indigenous-led conservation - including Indigenous-led land use planning, the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), and Indigenous stewardship via Guardians - as a central component of Canada's domestic plan to protect 25% of its lands and waters by 2025.

Recommendation 2: That the Government of Canada act as a global leader in championing Indigenous-led conservation in ongoing efforts to set new targets under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

Recommendation 3: That the Government of Canada commit new funds to Indigenous-led conservation sufficient to complete Indigenous-led land use plans and establish new IPCAs managed by Indigenous Guardians to fill the gap between current levels of protection and the Government's targets, estimated at \$1.5 billion over 5 years.

Recommendation 4: That the Government of Canada commit additional funds to expand support for existing Guardians initiatives and the creation of a National Indigenous Guardians Network.

Recommendation 5: That the Government of Canada pursue bilateral, whole-of-government agreements with provinces and territories to achieve the government's goal of 25% protection of lands and waters by 2025 in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendation 6: That the Government of Canada explore policy and accounting mechanisms required to recognize the protection of large boreal carbon stores through IPCAs, as part of its approach to natural climate solutions.

Body of Submission

SUMMARY: As decision-makers think about how our nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and emerges stronger than ever, the next federal budget provides an opportunity to invest in a greener economy that creates greater opportunity for Indigenous peoples and communities. **New federal investments in Indigenous-led conservation – including Indigenous-led land use planning, Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), and Indigenous Guardians – will help with the recovery. It will also ensure Canada meets its international and domestic biodiversity commitments while creating immediate, vital new jobs in Indigenous communities across the country.** Investments in IPCAs and Guardians will advance reconciliation, support climate change strategies, create new business opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses alike, support sustainable development and greater certainty for industry on the landscape, help build new, more resilient local and regional economies, and contribute to the cost-effective achievement of Canada's domestic and international commitments to nature conservation.

Canada's International Biodiversity Targets

In recent years, Canada has accelerated action towards achieving its international biodiversity conservation commitments. For example, since 2017, Canada has established the Pathway to Target 1 process with provinces and territories, created several advisory bodies to advise on implementation of these targets, and announced significant new investments in nature conservation in Budget 2018, including up to \$175 million to support efforts by Indigenous, provincial and territorial governments to secure 17% of Canada's lands and waters by 2020.

The 2019 Speech from the Throne and the mandate letter for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada committed to increase protection of lands and waters in Canada to 25% by 2025, on the road to 30% by 2030. The Prime Minister repeated this pledge in his 2020 Earth Day statement.

International biodiversity commitments for the post-2020 period will be determined in 2021. Canada has a unique opportunity to demonstrate global leadership in both setting ambitious new global targets, and promoting the transformational role of Indigenous-led conservation in meeting these commitments.

The Essential Role of Indigenous-led Conservation

Indigenous-led conservation is the single most important pathway for Canada to achieve its international and domestic nature conservation goals.

Recognition of the centrality of Indigenous-led conservation has been one of the most successful aspects of Canada's approach to nature conservation over the past three years.

This is reflected in both the extraordinary number of Indigenous-led proposals submitted to the Government of Canada's Target 1 Challenge Fund, and the fact that the vast majority of new protected areas over the last 18 months (such as Edézhíe, Thaidene Néné, the Peel watershed, and Ts'udé Niljné Tueyata) are either Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) or the result of Indigenous-led land use planning.

Given the significant increase in land protection required to achieve Canada's new targets, **getting to 25% and 30% will only be possible through continued focus on large-scale protected areas, which require partnerships with and leadership by Indigenous nations, particularly in the boreal region.**

This in turn will require:

- Increased, ongoing funding dedicated to Indigenous conservation planning efforts that support the design and creation of IPCAs, including Indigenous-led land use planning, and
- Committed funding to support the Indigenous Guardians to both help establish and subsequently manage and steward these areas over time.

The Role of Indigenous-led Conservation in Economic Recovery

Investing in Indigenous Guardians as an integral approach to establishing and managing IPCAs also has an immediate, tangible and outsized impact on job creation and local Indigenous economies.

For example, east of Yellowknife, the Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation guardians (NiHat'Ni Dene) monitor caribou and respond to climate impacts. They employ 10 people in the summer and 4 in the winter. In a community of 300, these jobs have a profound impact far in excess of their actual number, sustaining families and circulating money through the local economy through personal purchases.

In addition to immediately creating jobs across the country with multiplier effects for local and regional economies, investments in Indigenous Guardians and IPCAs can also offer savings to governments and taxpayers through reduced pressure on the judicial, social service and health care systems. Studies in Australia – which has committed more than \$1.5 billion since 2007 to similar Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas initiatives – estimated that **the true cost of their program was 17% to 23% lower than its budgeted cost due to both reduced welfare costs and increased tax revenue.**

In addition, when examined through a Social Return on Investment (SROI) lens, evaluations of the Australian program confirm that **every federal dollar (\$1) invested generates almost \$3 in social, cultural and economic return.** Similar research into

nascent Guardians programs in the NWT found an SROI of \$2.5 in value created for every dollar invested.

As such, investments in Guardians and **Indigenous-led conservation can help lay the groundwork for more resilient economies, stronger communities, and environmental sustainability, while also positioning Canada as a global leader in biodiversity conservation.**

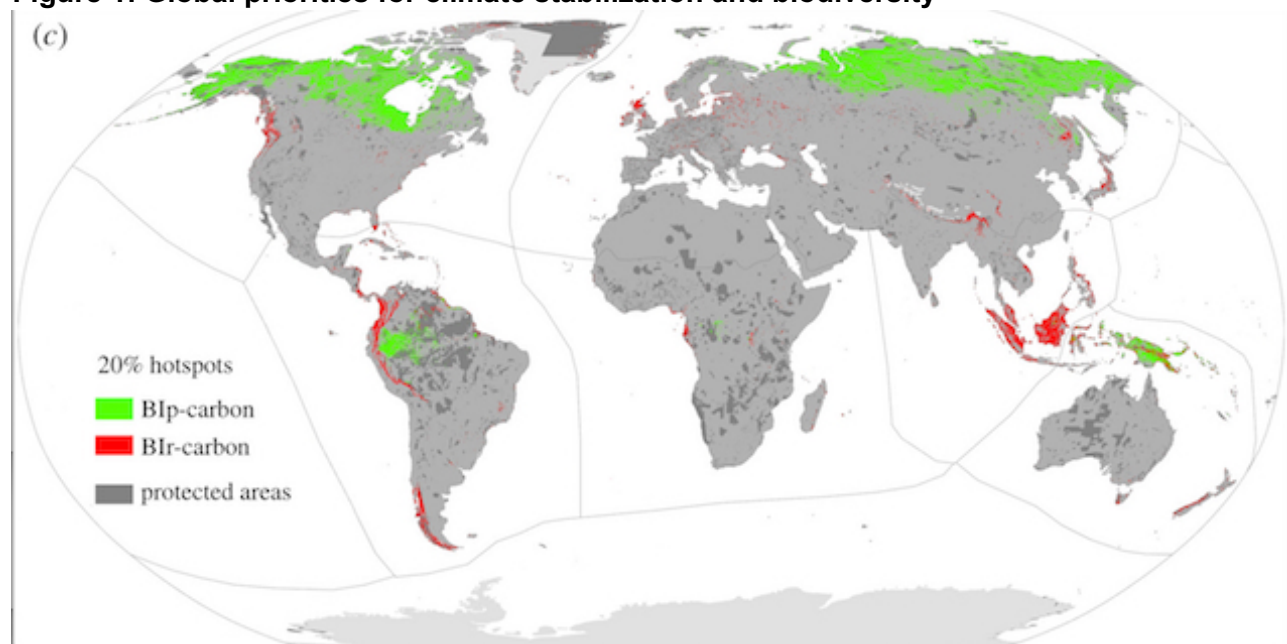
Protecting Carbon Landscapes

Indigenous-led conservation efforts will be particularly important in the boreal region of Canada, which is the largest terrestrial storehouse of carbon on the planet. In addition to contributing to Canada's international and domestic biodiversity goals, preventing the release of irrecoverable carbon deposits in boreal peatlands, wetlands and forests is essential to meeting Canada's long-term climate goals.

As such, the boreal region offers a unique opportunity to integrate Canada's approaches to climate resilience and biodiversity conservation.

A 2020 study¹ underscores this opportunity, identifying the boreal as a global priority from both a carbon and a biodiversity perspective. In particular, it highlights large intact areas representing high levels of carbon storage and biodiversity values in the Hudson Bay lowlands and the northern boreal and Arctic (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Global priorities for climate stabilization and biodiversity



¹ Soto-Navarro et al., *Mapping co-benefits for carbon storage and biodiversity to inform conservation policy and action*, January 2020, Available at: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2019.0128>

Many of the IPCAs currently under development across the country are in the boreal region. These IPCAs can therefore help protect these extraordinary carbon reserves, meet Canada's international and domestic biodiversity commitments, support reconciliation in action, and position Canada as a leader on the global stage in advancing integrated biodiversity and climate solutions. **Supporting and investing in these efforts is Canada's single most important nature-based climate solution.**

Existing IPCA projects across the boreal supported through the Challenge Fund, particularly in the most carbon-dense areas in the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, could permanently protect billions of tonnes of soil organic carbon – equivalent to decades of Canada's annual industrial greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, these IPCAs represent only a small portion of proposed IPCAs across the region, all of which offer powerful opportunities for climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and reconciliation in action.

While research and policy questions remain over how these globally significant carbon storehouses will be accounted for in efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, it is clear that maintaining irrecoverable carbon stores will be crucial to ensuring long-term climate resilience.

As such, support for Indigenous-led conservation across the carbon-rich boreal offers an immediate, tangible, and highly effective nature-based climate solution that should be reflected in the Government's overall plan for nature-based climate solutions.

Building on Initial Federal Investments

The Government of Canada has made important initial investments in this vital work. More than 25 IPCA proposals are moving forward with support from the Challenge Fund, while capacity projects are laying the groundwork to advance additional IPCAs over time. These represent highly cost-effective and impactful investments in advancing Canada's progress on protected areas.

As such, the Challenge Fund has provided essential existing infrastructure for delivering on the government's commitment of 17% while also leveraging significant additional investments from Indigenous organizations, the philanthropic community and other organizations.

In addition, the \$25 million national Indigenous Guardians Pilot Program launched in 2017 is helping some of the almost 70 Guardians programs across the country care for their lands and waters.

However, these programs are short-term in nature and could only respond to a small fraction of the Indigenous communities that expressed interest in creating IPCAs and/or Guardians programs. In particular, the Challenge Fund has primarily focused on the

costs of *establishing* protected areas, with limited funding for their *stewardship and management* through Guardians and other similar initiatives.

Given the key role that Indigenous Guardians play in both creating and managing IPCAs, early and sustained funding for both will be essential for Canada to meet its future targets while also contributing to reconciliation and to climate protection.

As part of the Government of Canada's plan for reaching 25% and ultimately 30%, the International Boreal Conservation Campaign (IBCC) recommends that the Government of Canada commit new funds to Indigenous-led conservation sufficient to fill the gap between current levels of protection and the Government's targets, estimated at \$1.5 billion over 5 years.

In addition, the IBCC recommends that the Government expand funding for both existing Indigenous Guardians programs not associated with IPCAs and a national Guardians network, as outlined in a separate submission by the Indigenous Leadership Initiative.

Finally, given their key role in recognizing Indigenous-led conservation and supporting the creation of IPCAs, IBCC recommends that the Government of Canada consider investing in whole-of-government, bilateral approaches with provinces and territories to advance IPCAs, land use plans and other initiatives required to achieve Canada's targets.

Anticipated Outcomes

New federal investments in Indigenous-led conservation over the next five years offer a unique opportunity to marry **nature conservation, economic recovery, community and climate resilience, and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples**. They also offer the potential to build new conservation economies that incorporate tourism and cultural experiences that reflect Indigenous leadership and stewardship.

In particular, these investments will:

- Support achievement of Canada's international domestic and biodiversity commitments, in particular, the Government's commitment to protect 25% of Canada's lands and waters by 2025, on the path to 30% by 2030;
- Create jobs in Indigenous communities, many of which are in remote northern locations that are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19;
- Support associated indirect job creation and opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs in both traditional sectors and the emerging conservation economy; and
- Support economic recovery and transformation at the community and regional level, with particular benefits for Indigenous youth.