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Secwépemc Indigenous Guardians Program

Shuswap Band, Splatshin, Skw'lax te Secwepemculucw, Adams Lake, and Neskonlith are working with Parks Canada to create an Indigenous Guardians Program in four National Parks across the Secwépemc territory. As the “eyes and ears” on the land, Indigenous Guardians are trained to support Nations and Bands to maintain, revitalize, honour, and practice their connection with lands and waters. Guardians will share these activities with their own communities and other visitors on the land as appropriate.



Where and when will the project take place?

The project is located within four National Parks: Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, Yoho, and Kootenay. During the pilot program (April 2024 - March 2026), the goal is to hire two guardians in Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks and two guardians in Yoho and Kootenay National Parks. The program will start in April 2026, if the necessary funding is secured during the pilot program.

What type of work will Guardians do in the park?

Your community priorities and direction will guide the development of the Program and the Guardians themselves. Guardian stewardship activities are co-developed with Indigenous partners, respecting both the Canadian National Parks Act, Park Management Plans, and Secwépemc priorities, laws, and protocols. Guardians often maintain and revitalize connections with lands, waters, and wildlife that sustain Indigenous knowledge, culture, and governance. Specific activities will reflect community values, interests, and priorities.

How will community members be informed about the work being done?

Guardians will deliver updates on work being done to all community members. A community communication plan will be developed based on determined needs at engagements. Communications will meet your community's needs as we hear and understand what they are.

How is the Program funded and managed?

In 2021, the federal government committed significant funding toward new and existing Indigenous-led Guardians initiatives and the development of Indigenous Guardians Networks. Seed funding for the pilot program comes from Parks Canada to the five Secwepemc Bands through a contribution agreement to hire Guardians that will work within the Parks. Currently, the Shuswap Band handles financial management and administrative duties, while each Band has one appointed lead to assist in invoicing and processing operations. However, we encourage community feedback on the structure that is most preferred.



Examples of Indigenous Guardian Programs in National Parks

Haida Gwaii Watchmen

The Haida Gwaii Watchmen is managed by the council of the Haida Nation with financial support from Parks Canada. They work within Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, and Haida Heritage Site. From May to October the program provides seasonal employment for Haida people. They offer a first-hand introduction to Haida culture by sharing their knowledge of the land and sea, stories, songs, dances, and foods.

West Coast Trail Guardians

In the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, First Nation partners are continuing the age-long practice of welcoming and sharing Nuu-chah-nulth history, traditions, and culture with visitors. Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht Guardians work with Parks Canada to care for the trails and protect the land and visiting hikers. An encounter with a West Coast Trail Guardian might include a story or song told by the fire.

Band Representatives



Shuswap Band

Josh Martin

jmartin@shuswapband.ca



Splatsin

Jimmy William

jimmy.william@splatsindc.com



Skw'lax te Secwepemculucw

Dianne Francois
dfrancois@lsib.ca



Adams Lake

Dave Nordquist

dnordquist@alib.ca



Neskonlith

Brad Arnouse

bradarnouse@neskonlith.net