

# INDIGENOUS ECOSYSTEM STEWARDSHIP EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Final Report: Common Themes, Opportunities,  
and Next Steps



April 2022



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Alaska Venture Fund is sincerely grateful to all those who contributed to this project and the development of this report. We would like to extend particular thanks to the participants, design team, and speakers who took part in the program for the insight, energy, and knowledge shared over the course of the exchange. We would also like to acknowledge our partners in facilitating this work, Raven's Group, The Nature Conservancy, and the World Wildlife Fund.

**For further information about the exchange program or any of the opportunities outlined in this report, please contact Matt Rafferty at Alaska Venture Fund: [matt@alaskaventure.org](mailto:matt@alaskaventure.org)**

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## Chin'an

By Michelle Ravenmoon

Who would I be without the sun, the moon, and stars?  
Who would I be without the water, plants, salmon, and moose?  
Who would I be without my ancestors, my people, my family?  
Who would I be without the creator, Naqdelani?  
I am part of all, all is part of me.  
What I give, I receive. What I receive, I give.  
To open up to our own awareness of the world  
Is to understand our position on this earth.  
It is with utmost gratitude and humility that I walk forward,  
That I give you my words, and that I receive yours.  
May we not only find wisdom to live by,  
But compassion for each other and courage to be our true selves.  
It is so, q'u lachq'u.

## I: Executive Summary

#01

Indigenous-led ecosystem stewardship programs around the world are returning the management and caretaking of traditional lands to the local Indigenous peoples. The United States lags behind other countries in this effort and there is a lot to learn from them to honor Indigenous sovereignty and shift management practices here. From October to December 2021 Alaska Native leaders from Bristol Bay, Bering Strait, and Southeast Alaska gathered virtually with their counterparts from around the world to learn from their experiences and generate ideas for what is possible in Alaska.

### Common Themes:

Indigenous leaders from around the globe surfaced important shared themes during this program that can guide the work of Alaska Native people as they advance efforts to establish Indigenous-led ecosystem stewardship programs in Alaska.

- Public lands are in fact Indigenous lands
- Consensus from local Tribes and communities is a critical first step
- Ensure Indigenous people have the economic means to thrive on their lands
- Invite federal and state governments to negotiate stewardship priorities on Indigenous terms
- The ecosystem is only healthy when all components, including the people, are healthy
- Indigenous Guardians programs are critical to successful ecosystem stewardship
- Indigenous languages matter for realizing stewardship and sovereignty

There are clear opportunities for Alaska Native people seeking to have the state and federal governments formally recognize them as the rightful stewards of their traditional lands and waters.

- Develop and implement Indigenous Guardians programs that meaningfully co-manage natural resources with state and federal agencies.
- Revisit existing laws where systemically incorporating Indigenous values could positively impact ecosystem stewardship.
- Find consensus for locally-driven solutions.
- Publicly restore Indigenous place names.
- Conduct future exchanges to continue to develop ideas, deepen relationships, and interrogate

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imposed structures related to Indigenous stewardship.

- Conduct needs assessments for hunting and fishing to inform co-management efforts.
- Show how Indigenous stewardship is a different relationship to the land and water that leads to better outcomes than western conservation.

Participants of this exchange program were drawn from three different regions of Alaska. Each regional team identified potential next steps to advance these conversations in their local geographies.

### **Bering Strait identified:**

- Strengthen marine mammal stewardship by increasing collaboration and integration among the co-management groups operating in the region;
- Use existing regional meetings and conversations to determine and set local priorities; and
- Conduct analysis to determine Indigenous stewardship opportunities in the region.

### **Bristol Bay identified:**

- Create a common vision of Alaska Native stewardship in the region;
- Seek partnerships and develop leadership to move Indigenous stewardship ideas forward; and
- Restore Alaska Native languages and center organizational cultures on Indigenous values.

### **Southeast Alaska identified**

- Build capacity at all ages and levels in areas where Alaska Native expertise is needed;
- Develop an intentional focus on healing as a cornerstone of this work; and
- Develop sustainable communities while reclaiming our lands and waters.

We are at an ideal time to prioritize Indigenous values and chart a new course forward for the planet. This is important not only for stewardship opportunities in Alaska, but also for humanity to survive in a rapidly changing climate that is straining our ecosystems and political systems. Indigenous peoples have an opportunity to think big and bold as they determine what is right for their people, lands, and waters.

## II: Background

## #02

### A. Purpose

The United States federal government has stated a goal to conserve 30% of the country's lands and waters by 2030 (America the Beautiful) and ensure 40% of the economic benefit of all federal spending on climate and clean energy goes to disadvantaged communities (Justice40). At the same time, Indigenous people around the world are successfully creating area-based stewardship initiatives that provide benefits to the people, economy, and ecosystem while simultaneously and formally honoring Indigenous values and sovereignty. This virtual exchange program was created to capitalize on these federal opportunities and global examples to address sovereignty, stewardship, healing, and prosperity for Alaska Native peoples and their lands on their terms.

### B. Process

From October to December 2021, a cohort of 25 Alaska Native leaders from Bering Strait, Bristol Bay, and Southeast Alaska learned from founders of Indigenous-led ecosystem stewardship projects around the world. The program further galvanized and reinvigorated Alaska Native leaders to make interpersonal connections, build local and global networks, and identify ideas for common themes, opportunities, and regional next steps.

A Design Team with representatives from each region planned the program and Raven's Group, an Alaska Native-led consulting firm, facilitated the virtual exchanges.

Speakers from Australian Indigenous Protected Areas, Thaidene Nene (Northwest Territories, Canada), Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii (British Columbia, Canada), and Tallurutiup Imanga (Nunavut, Canada) shared information on how their projects were formed, what they have learned since implementation began, and the impact that has resulted for their people. Alaska examples included the Indigenous-led conservation work in Southeast Alaska (Sustainable Southeast Partnership, Seacoast Trust, and Indigenous Guardians Program) and the Village of Igiugig's work to create Tribally-Designated Protected Areas using Native land allotments.

A sub-group of program participants, called the Momentum Keepers, met after the exchanges to help refine the ideas that emerged from the program into next steps for each region. There is hope for this group to continue to meet on a regular basis to keep regional and statewide efforts moving forward.

This program was funded by the Alaska Venture Fund and the World Wildlife Fund's Arctic Program in partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

### C. Context

Alaska's 229 federally-recognized Tribes still live on their ancestral lands. Culture and language are still practiced and spoken, despite colonization and the systems it has imposed. Federal land makes up 60% (222 million acres) of the total landmass of Alaska and another 13% (44 million acres) is owned by Native Corporations that were chartered under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Much of these lands and adjacent waters remain abundant for wildlife, which provides food, cultural values, and economic stability for Indigenous people that live nearby.

What conservation means to Indigenous people of Alaska is influenced by their uninterrupted and continued connection to their land and active subsistence and gathering practices. Thus, conservation through an Alaska Native lens must be redefined to align with Indigenous values that honor the interconnection and reciprocity embedded in that relationship between all life, lands and waters. This shift towards Indigenous stewardship presents a great opportunity to create new systems in Alaska that support Alaska Native peoples' work towards more formalized western recognition of the management of their ancestral lands. This program sought to create space for and further strengthen statewide networks and relationships between stewards and leaders to identify these types of opportunities and possible next steps to achieve them in Alaska.





### III: Common Themes

### #03

#### Indigenous Stewardship Emergent Themes

Public lands are  
Indigenous lands

Consensus from local  
Tribes and communities  
is an essential first step

Negotiate stewardship  
on Indigenous terms

Ensure Indigenous people  
have an economic means  
to thrive on their lands

The ecosystem is  
only healthy when all  
corresponding components,  
including the people,  
are healthy

Indigenous Guardians  
programs are critical to  
ecosystem stewardship

Indigenous languages  
matter for stewardship  
and sovereignty

Presentations from around the globe surfaced a number of shared themes. These can guide the work of Alaska Native people as they advance efforts to establish Indigenous-led ecosystem stewardship programs.

1. Public federal and state lands are in fact Indigenous lands. Indigenous people, and specifically Alaska Native people and Tribes, have lived sustainably and continually on these lands and waters for thousands of years. They recognize the relationality that exists between people and the lands and waters, along with the animals and plants. This has been fractured based on land ownership structures imposed since colonization, from Russian occupation through ANCSA, ANILCA and today.

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2. Gaining input and consensus from local people and communities on how they want their lands and waters managed is a critical first step when seeking stewardship opportunities. This consensus-building work is challenging and time consuming and must happen before projects can be proposed or moved forward. Planning for these projects across the globe all relied on Indigenous values and knowledge of important hunting, fishing and cultural sites, with active involvement of elders and youth in their creation.
3. Upon finding this consensus, local Indigenous people assumed ownership over their lands and waters and invited the regional and federal governments to negotiate with them on how to manage the lands, as opposed to the other way around, which had been the status quo since colonization. Management itself is a western construct and is not ambitious enough for the shift needed to transition to a relational approach to caring for the lands, waters, plants, people and animals.
4. Sustainable economic development that recognizes that people are an integral part of the ecosystem and allows local people to thrive alongside nature is an essential part of ecosystem stewardship. This must be done on the terms and by the values of the Indigenous people that live there and successfully stewarded these places since time immemorial.
5. The ecosystem is only healthy when all the corresponding components, including the people, are also healthy. Colonization disrupted the relationship between land and people by establishing imposed structures that separated people from the environment. This has caused intergenerational trauma to Indigenous peoples and their lands and waters. Healing must be recognized and included as a critical element of stewardship efforts.
6. Co-management of the lands and waters via local residents in the form of Indigenous Guardians (or Rangers, Watchmen, or Sentinel, etc.) programs is a core underpinning of successful ecosystem stewardship. These programs create jobs in rural communities, incorporate Indigenous values and knowledge, and lead to better outcomes for people and the environment.
7. Indigenous language matters. Indigenous place names are deeply rooted in meaning and cultural significance, often tied to subsistence and survival. Restoring these place names is an important component of stewardship and healing, as is the revitalization of Indigenous languages more broadly.

## IV: Opportunities for Alaska

## #04

The program participants identified the following opportunities for Alaska based on what they learned from the global examples.

Description	Importance	Opportunities
<p>Develop and implement Indigenous Guardians programs that meaningfully co-manage natural resources with state and federal agencies.</p>	<p>These types of programs are the foundation of every international example we learned from.</p> <p>Alaska Native people successfully stewarded their lands and waters for thousands of years before colonization. The last 200 years have seen enormous degradations. Honoring and returning to systems led by Indigenous people and values can heal these.</p>	<p>Ensure the Indigenous Guardians Network housed at the Central Council of Tlingit &amp; Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska in Southeast Alaska and the <a href="#">Indigenous Sentinels Network</a> in the Pribilof Islands have the capacity and resources needed to successfully launch;</p> <p>Identify common needs and approaches that could create economies of scale or jump start the learning curve to allow programs in other geographies in Alaska to launch more easily; and</p> <p>Create educational opportunities and workforce development programs for Alaska Native people to become Indigenous Guardians in their communities.</p>
<p>Revisit existing laws where systematically incorporating Indigenous values could positively impact ecosystem stewardship.</p>	<p>The laws in place represent and prioritize western, not Indigenous, values. Federal laws like ANSCA and ANILCA, and state hunting and fishing regulations, for example, are in need of interrogation. They have not been updated sufficiently to reflect the needs of Indigenous people today. Laws centered on Indigenous values will have better outcomes for people and the environment.</p>	<p>Conduct a thorough legal analysis to determine opportunities.</p> <p>Conduct listening sessions in rural communities to gain their input and understanding of what is working and what needs to be changed and/or compile previously completed listening sessions.</p> <p>Consult with elders to understand the practices that were in place before colonization.</p>

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<p>Find consensus for locally-driven solutions.</p>	<p>Current systems have been imposed on Indigenous people since colonization. Locally-driven solutions break that cycle and will lead to better outcomes based on what has worked here before. Working with Tribes to determine need and find consensus was cited as a critical first step by each of the guest speakers.</p>	<p>Developing big ideas will require involvement from more people from each region as well as local leadership to design and implement a process. This will look different in each region, but starts with local leadership and bringing people together.</p>
<p>Publicly restore Indigenous place names.</p>	<p>Traditional place names have been erased from the public eye by colonization. These traditional names are connected to the land and convey important information that is needed for survival and rooted in culture.</p>	<p>Incorporate Indigenous names in federal and state negotiation processes to formally change colonial names back to Indigenous names.</p> <p>Change local, state, and federal road and interpretive signs to include Native names and languages.</p> <p>Create an atlas of Indigenous place names.</p>
<p>Conduct future exchanges to continue to generate and develop ideas, deepen relationships, and interrogate imposed structures related to Indigenous stewardship.</p>	<p>There is a need to continue these conversations around Alaska Native stewardship, and at local, regional, and statewide levels, it is important to provide more opportunities to learn, share, create, and spread ideas.</p> <p>Ongoing dialogues should include a diversity of Native organizations and perspectives, including Tribes, village corps, regional corps, non-profits, local governments, culture bearers, language bearers, hunters, elders, youth, and more.</p>	<p>Convene the Momentum Keepers on a regular basis as a body that can develop and disseminate ideas in their regions;</p> <p>Conduct regional convenings to determine opportunities for stewardship efforts specific to the needs and situations in these areas. This could include participants from this exchange program and others to generate visions and plans, gain consensus, and implement next steps;</p> <p>Conduct targeted interregional exchanges within Alaska to share replicable and inspiring projects that are underway or emerging;</p>

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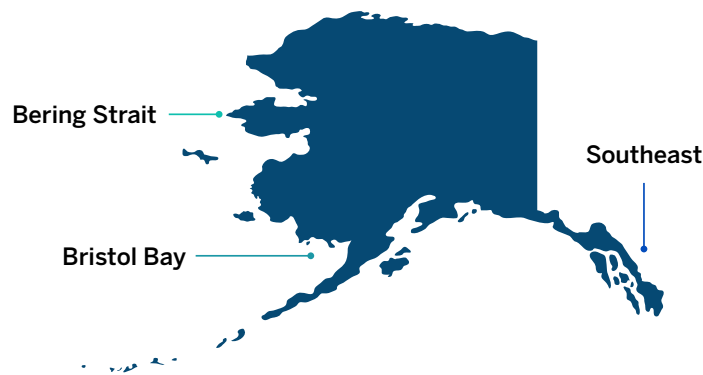
		<p>Bring Alaska Native leaders from specific places to locations abroad that are analogous to their needs; and</p> <p>Conduct Indigenous Guardians focused exchanges where leaders of emerging programs in Alaska engage with leaders of established programs around the world for in-depth, hands-on learning to determine program design and implementation.</p>
<p>Conduct needs assessments for hunting and fishing, informed by climate shifts, to help form the direction, vision, and intent of local co-management efforts.</p>	<p>Local hunters and fisherman continue the traditions and practices of subsistence that have sustained Alaska Native peoples for over 10,000 years. Their input is vital to informing stewardship efforts.</p>	<p>Conduct research, mapping, elder-interviews, and analysis to identify important habitat, cultural sites, traditional knowledge, and ideas already under consideration.</p> <p>Develop maps to visually convey the most important lands and waters needed for animals to thrive and Indigenous people to harvest food.</p>
<p>Show how Indigenous stewardship is a different relationship to the land and water that leads to better outcomes than western conservation.</p>	<p>There is a difference between the Native lived experience of stewardship and the mainstream western idea of conservation, which current laws are based on. This Native stewardship understands the relationality between people and the environment. It recognizes the interconnection between everything that is there – the land, water, plants, animals, and people. Western cultures instead focus on a static, museum-like notion of conservation that keeps people separate from everything else. There is a need for broader understanding of Indigenous stewardship for systems to shift.</p>	<p>Convene a series of workshops involving elders, hunters, and culture bearers that articulate what Indigenous stewardship is.</p> <p>Develop a communications strategy on how Indigenous values have been used to steward lands and waters in Alaska.</p> <p>Conduct funder, media, and decision-maker trips to Native villages that show Indigenous stewardship in action.</p>

## V: Next Steps for Each Region

#05

Program participants spent time during each exchange session working together to identify ecosystem stewardship opportunities for their regions and next steps to be taken to start this work.

### Next Steps & Priorities for Alaska



#### Bering Strait

Strengthening marine mammal stewardship in region

Use regionwide conversations to set local priorities

Conduct a feasibility study to determine what's possible in region

#### Bristol Bay

Create common vision of Alaska Native stewardship

Seek partnerships and develop leadership to move Indigenous stewardship ideas forward

Restore Alaska Native languages and center organizational cultures on Indigenous values

#### Southeast

Build capacity at all levels and ages in areas where Alaska Native expertise is needed

Develop an intentional focus on healing as a cornerstone of this work

Develop sustainable communities and reclaim our land and waters

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### A: Bering Strait

The team from Bering Strait identified three primary next steps:

1. **Strengthen marine mammal stewardship in the region.** Structures are already in place that can be built upon via the five marine mammal co-management groups in the region. Another cohort gathered by IPCoMM has been meeting to talk about similar topics. It would be beneficial to bring both groups together as a next step to further these conversations.
2. **Bring the conversations started here to the people of the region** to allow them to set the direction forward. This follows the path laid out by the global examples about building consensus. It could be done simultaneously at both the community level and region-wide via existing structures, such as the Kawerak Regional Conference. An entire day at this conference could be focused on Indigenous stewardship that would allow community leaders to have these conversations and provide resources for them to hold further conversations in their communities. This must be grassroots, not top down, with local people driving outcomes.
3. **Conduct analysis to determine Indigenous Stewardship opportunities in the region.** A road map for potential opportunities needs to be created as a starting point. It should include resources that ensure goals are created and adjusted, the effort is organized, and legal assistance is available.

### B: Bristol Bay

The team from Bristol Bay identified the following next steps:

1. **Create a common vision for Indigenous stewardship in the region.** The Bristol Bay Vision, developed a decade ago, worked to create a common vision for the region that people still referenced today. This process could be revamped with a focus on land management to develop consensus on Indigenous stewardship.
2. **Seek partnerships and develop leadership to move Indigenous stewardship ideas forward.** There are so many people and organizations in Bristol Bay interested in this work, but there is no central body charged with making it happen. We must find the champion and an organization to house a position, perhaps Bristol Bay Native Association or Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC), and develop partnerships with those that have resources to help, such as BBNC, The Nature Conservancy, and Alaska Federation of Natives. We must also develop ways to recognize and encourage young talent.

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- 3. Restore Alaska Native languages and center organizational cultures on Indigenous values.** Language is critical for cultural survival and our relationships to the land and one another. All communities can follow the example of Iguigig and install signs in Native languages that show how place names, culture, and stewardship are all interconnected. We can shift the cultures of organizations working in our region to mirror Indigenous values by joining boards, creating intentional mission statements, and ensuring these values are at the root of everyone's work.

### C: Southeast

- 1. Build capacity at all levels and ages in areas where AK Native expertise is needed,** such as management, monitoring, science. We will:
  - a. Continue to build and grow the Indigenous Guardian Network so that it impacts all communities in the region;
  - b. Build pipeline of young people (20-30 year olds) in the different corporate and public sectors related to the work and priorities of Alaska Native people and Indigenous stewardship;
  - c. Build a subsistence education track in post-secondary institutions that includes scholarships and financial assistance;
  - d. Fiscally support community members who go out on the land and find ways for them to bring young people out with them. This includes cultural teachings such as passing on the knowledge and awareness that the plants, lands, waters and animals are our relatives and we have a relationship and responsibility towards caring for the lands and respectfully utilizing their gifts.
- 2. Develop an intentional focus on healing as a cornerstone of this work.** The concept of "being a good relative" is core to our cultures and can be rebuilt between organizations and individuals to dissolve walls, past real or perceived, between tribes, corporations, individuals, families, clans and communities. This can be accomplished by leading a series of community potlatches across the region and diversifying our representation in the tent – clans, community members with different backgrounds, regions, communities, ages, etc.
- 3. Develop sustainable communities while reclaiming our lands and waters.** People need to be able to live and thrive in rural communities. We can develop a regional economy (not industry) that is based on Indigenous values that includes, but is not limited to, buying back fishing permits and developing cultural and regenerative tourism. Tribes can take responsibility for management and permitting, restoring traditional place names in Indigenous languages, and wielding existing tools such as ANCSA and ANILCA to our advantage while working to adapt or amend them to adjust to today's needs.



## VI: Key Points from Each Exchange

#06

### Exchange 1: Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area

Steven Nitah, Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, [Indigenous Leadership Initiative](#)

Thaidene Nënë is an Indigenous protected area that was designated by the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation (LKDFN) using Dene Law in 2019. In partnership with Parks Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories, portions of the Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area have been designated a national park reserve (NPR), a territorial protected area (TPA), and a wildlife conservation area (WCA).

Steven Nitah was the lead negotiator in the process that established Thaidene Nënë. He was raised by his great grandparents on the land around Łutsël K'é and was elected to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 1999, where he served as chair of the Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act. After his four-year term as an MLA, Steven took the position of President and CEO of the Denesoline Corporation, the economic development arm of the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation (LKDFN) before transitioning to become the LKDFN Negotiator in the Akaitcho land claims process.

Elected Chair of LKDFN in 2008, and under his watch, the Ni Hatni Dene Guardians Program began. Steven and his team successfully negotiated establishment agreements with the federal government and the Government of the Northwest Territories, creating Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area, National Park, and Territorial Protected Area in 2019. Steven served as a core member of the Indigenous Circle of Experts from 2017-18, contributing to a historic report, *We Rise Together*, about “achieving the Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit of practice and reconciliation.”

Steven shared that the Łutsël K'é First Nation asserted their sovereignty by assuming they had authority to manage their lands and invited the Canadian and provincial governments to participate in negotiations with them on their terms. First, they researched global models and developed plans for their lands. They then gained community consensus by creating a process that was led by elders, engaged community members for input, and then voted on a plan, before bringing that to the government. A governance structure that includes youth and elders was created to manage the lands and it is designed for youth to take over management in time.

Steven's advice included:

- Agreements and laws are never final. They are living breathing ideas that will need to be improved over time;
- Use the energy and examples of the other organizations and international agreements to help put the pressure on your own local governments;

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- The [Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership](#) (a project he helps lead) exists as a resource to support the Indigenous-led conservation movement; and
- Think big and bold. The power to make change is real and evidenced by all of these examples around the world.

### Exchange 2: Australia's Indigenous Protected Areas

[Denis Rose](#), Budj Bim Sustainable Development Partnership

[Dale Mundraby](#), Djunbunji Aboriginal Corporation

Australia's Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) are voluntary agreements on Aboriginal lands. They are a cooperative arrangement with a shared vision to take care of the land together. The non-legal aspect helps to bring people to the table and have conversations about IPA. Under the agreements, lands are used for food, culture, and to develop sustainable economies. Each IPA has its own management structure that is based on local peoples needs and interests. Each presents an opportunity for local, sustainable economic development on Aboriginal lands on their terms, which allows for an alternative to mining and cattle ranching. First created in 1997, there are currently 78 IPAs covering nearly 75 million hectares.

Denis Rose is a Gunditjmara traditional owner from Western Victoria. He is the Chair of [Country Needs People](#), an alliance calling to grow and secure Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Areas across Australia. Denis has led the World Heritage listing of his local area, the Budj Bim cultural landscape, and was an early mover in engaging with Indigenous Protected Areas. He has had a long involvement in Aboriginal land and cultural heritage management and has worked extensively around Australia in community-based land and sea management for the federal government and local community organizations. Denis was the Chief Executive Officer with Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation from 2002 until 2010. From 1995 until 2002 Denis was involved in the development of the IPA Program, which assisted Aboriginal people throughout Australia to achieve greater control and management of their traditional lands.

Dale Mundraby is a Mandingalbay Yidinji Traditional Owner and CEO of Djunbunji Aboriginal Corporation. Dale has been involved in the planning and implementation of the Mandingalbay Yidinji IPA near Cairns for over a decade. This IPA comprises multiple land tenures as well as sea country - including native title land, national park, conservation reserve, forest reserve, and marine park. This includes Mandingalbay Ancient Indigenous Tours, a \$46-million eco-cultural tourism project on formerly degraded cane land that is being converted back to its natural state by Djunbunji Rangers.

Both Denis and Dale vocalized the need to start by talking to the local people, taking their pulse, and understanding what they need. They recognized that this is difficult but stressed its importance for

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long term success. For Australia's Aboriginal peoples, it's about country and the control of country that drives them and IPAs.

Indigenous Rangers programs have been established to manage the IPAs. The Federal government supports Rangers programs and IPAs. [Country Needs People](#) was created to raise funds and create collective impact with the government. IPAs create a strong work ethic, create knowledge of cultural and land management practices, and it is fundamentally more cost effective to hire local people than to hire outsiders. For example, Aboriginal people understand fire and the importance of prescribed burns and they are sharing that knowledge with the government. Education is critical. Ignorance leads to conflict.

Each acknowledged that all of this started in the smallest way that eventually grew into the national consciousness. Governments took land from Aboriginal people; it is time to give something back. Denis stressed for Alaska Natives to have confidence in themselves and to have their aspirations be clear from the start. Dale advised Alaska Natives to keep going, keep your hand on the wheel, keep revisiting if things get stuck. He suggested designating a team of three to five people to ensure the vision keeps going.

The following ideas emerged during the discussion on Australian IPAs:

- What if Native corp lands were used to create IPAs or protections in Alaska? How about state and federal land?
- [Bristol Bay Vision](#) project 10 years ago brought people together to create a shared vision for the region. It needs to be updated, but is a good starting point.
- Canada has rewritten their land claims over 100 times; we haven't done that with ANSCA or ANILCA. Those need to be updated to reflect current times.
- We have an opportunity to take back the language by the federal and state governments and use Native words, terms, relationships, and concepts on our lands.
- There is a difference between western conservation and Native conservation. Part of that difference is listening to the land, listening to stories. Western cultures don't have that understanding. They focus on a static concept of nature that is more like watching it in a museum. Native conservation is about everything that is there – the land, the water, the plants, and the animals. We need to help Westerners understand this; there is a difference between living it and teaching it. That understanding without being said is a component of what Native conservation is, compared to western concepts. Taking that control back is what we lack. We're going to be doing this for the next 100 years; this is the statement. We have 1000s of years of understanding of the coastline here and have been here with it gaining that understanding. This is what conservation truly is, not the western perspective of it.

### Exchange 3: Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii

Dallas Smith, Nanwakolas Council

Danielle Shaw, Wuikinuxv Nation

Ginn wadluu un uula isdaa ayaagang (Trevor Russ), XaaydaGa Waadluxan Naay, Council of the Haida Nation

The Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) is one of the largest temperate rainforests remaining in the world. Home to more than 20 First Nations, more than 70% of its old-growth forest is now protected from logging and sustainable, economic development and management of the land and waters is being led by these First Nations with support from the [Coast Funds](#), which were created as part of the negotiations that resulted in the GBR.

Dallas Smith is Board President Nanwakolas Council and Board Chair Coast Funds. He has roots from all four corners of the Kwakwaka'wakw speaking peoples with his mother coming from Haxwa'mis (Wakeman Sound) and Tsakis (Fort Rupert) and his father coming from Gwayasdums (Gilford Island) and Qalagwees (Turner Island). He has spent the majority of his career working to bring greater human well-being and capacity to the Nations of the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR). As one of the architects of the GBR agreements and as the Founder and President of Nanwakolas Council, he has built positive working relationships with all levels of government, industry, and the philanthropic community to find balance between conservation and sustainable economic development. His pragmatic and straightforward style has made him a welcome addition to many boards and committees and even led to him running as a candidate in the 2017 provincial election in the North Island riding. He lives in Duncan with his wife Toni and three beautiful daughters.

Ginn wadluu un uula isdaa ayaagang (Trevor Russ) is Vice President, XaaydaGa Waadluxan Naay, Council of the Haida Nation and has been an elected member of the Council of the Haida nation since 2007. During this time he has been an active member of the executive committee, was appointed to the Haida Gwaii Management Council for a two-year term in 2010, which set the Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) for Haida Gwaii, The Archipelago Management Board (AMB), the body that is tasked with co-management of the Gwaii Haanas, Haida Heritage Site, An active member of the working group that oversees the work of the Marine and Planning Partnership (MaPP) agreement between the Haida and the province of BC. Prior to entering politics, Trevor worked as a commercial fisherman for 20 years in numerous fisheries, from Southeast Alaska to Vancouver Island, with the majority of this time fishing Dungeness Crab in the Hecate Strait, off the coast of Haida Gwaii.

Danielle Shaw is Chief Councillor of the Wuikinuxv Nation. After growing up in Burnaby and attending the School of Business at Capilano University for business administration, she moved home to Wuikinuxv in 2010. She is excited to apply her education and administrative experience to resource stewardship in Wuikinuxv Territory. Since moving home she has worked within several program areas in Wuikinuxv

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including treaty development, a traditional foods study with the Wuikinuxv Health Administration and more. In June 2013 she started working on marine planning and became the Wuikinuxv Stewardship Director in November 2016 and was elected as Chief Councillor in 2020. She is eager to continue her work to move Wuikinuxv and other central coast Nations towards sustainable marine resource management.

The work of the First Nations is rooted in Indigenous values. The speakers shared that their Elders have known and said an ecosystem is not healthy unless all components are healthy, and that we humans are a component of the ecosystem. They know that if we can all take care of our own backyards, the world will be a better place.

As part of the GBR agreement, the Coast Funds were created and have had a major impact across the region. These are two funds that support the First Nations:

- The first is an endowment, started with \$58 million from private philanthropy in exchange for a land deal that kept old growth trees standing, to support Indigenous Guardians in each community. There are now 27 communities with Indigenous Guardians.
- A second drawdown fund, started with \$58 million from the provincial and federal government, to support First Nation-led sustainable community economic development.

The following ideas emerged during the discussion on GBR:

- We have commonalities with them and need to overcome political differences. We need to get all the ideas from all the areas that need to be represented to figure out how to move forward. This is a big long process that we are only beginning. How did Canada and others do this work? How did they find unity? This is our biggest struggle.
- A lot of mistrust exists between us because of the imposed, colonial systems. We will have better outcomes if we stick to a bigger question, like the 100-year vision. We should acknowledge but not dwell on the limitations of our current, imposed structures.
- People in AK support programs that manage their food – beluga whales, polar bears, on and on.
- Who are our champions for this work? Is there a center with the corporations and foundations to help with it? Right now, the work is not comprehensive or planned out for the region.
- We need to find the shared interests within our regions – what do we want to do?
- Can we do feasibility studies? Is this doable and how? We need a road map, not random ideas.

- We need to understand the scope and scale of where we are: ecosystem-scale management vs. individual species management. Our management systems are currently divided up by species, this makes us weaker. We need to bring these efforts together to change this system, using the system we have now to do so. Having a Tribal leadership and role in this is important.
- We should put the Sealaska example on a pedestal, hold other Native corps accountable, communicate that to shareholders, engage them in vision and change to have their missions be centered on Indigenous values. Who are the key figures with regional corps that need to learn about this example?
- We must develop a 100 year vision for our regions and communities to determine how we can still live here in 100 years. This will require us to think beyond existing barriers and systems, getting back to systems that existed before colonization.

### Exchange 4: Tallurutiup Imanga

Kunuk (Sandra) Inutiq, Qikiqtani Inuit Association

Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area was established in 2019 when the Government of Canada and Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) announced interim protection for Tuvaijuittuq and an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA). Together, these areas cover more than 427,000 square kilometers. IIBA supports Inuit stewardship of Tallurutiup Imanga and Tuvaijuittuq and creates economic development opportunities in local communities, including Inuit training and employment and infrastructure.

Kunuk (Sandra) Inutiq was the chief negotiator for the Qikiqtani Inuit Association's Tallurutiup Imanga Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement. She currently works for Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. studying the possibility of Nunavut Inuit pursuing self-government. She has a law degree and was the first Inuk woman in Nunavut to pass the bar exam. Sandra previously served as the Official Languages Commissioner for Nunavut and worked for the Tides Canada Foundation. She spent her childhood in an outpost camp in Kangiqtualuk and in Clyde River. In her youth she moved to Iqaluit, where she now lives.

QIA started negotiation from the foundation of these three central values that guided the negotiation process:

- Use/restore traditional place names, removing the English names (ex. Lancaster Sound was restored to its original name - Tallurutiup)
- Use Inuit worldview where the land is to be protected/used first for hunting and fishing and then exceptions can be made for exploitation if needed. This is the opposite of Canadian law, which says all land is for exploitation and then exceptions are made for conservation.

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- Hunting and harvesting are a part of Inuit livelihood and food systems.

Via community outreach and using traditional knowledge, QIA created a map in the negotiations (that Kunuk called it her favorite map in the world) that visually and easily shows important Inuit knowledge about natural resources in their region. Hunting is recognized as a job, critical to the community and all food that is harvested is shared, first with elders and then with the community. This ensures food security and doesn't commoditize it, which could put it out of financial reach of many people.

The agreement, signed in 2019 between QIA and the Canadian and Nunavut governments, includes:

- Inuit Stewards in all five communities (five stewards in the two smaller communities and seven in the larger three communities)
- \$1.9 million over 7 years to ensure hunters and trappers organizations, capacity development, and participation in governance and management for the five communities
- \$190 million in infrastructure, including:
  - multi-use facilities in communities that include country food processing;
  - community harbor development in two communities;
  - small craft harbor development in two other communities; and
  - regional training center for Inuit knowledge.

The following ideas emerged during the discussion on Tallurutiup Imanga:

- We need to develop protocols for sharing Native foods. They share their traditional foods on the radio, but we keep quiet about ours in our communities for fear of ridicule. We need to be more open about our food so the non-Native people in the communities know these are Native places. We need to be more public of who we are, normalize it, and protect our ways of life.
- One cohort member shared that people recently bothered her in her community as her family processed a seal because the non-Native people in the community didn't think they could legally harvest seal.
- If we don't practice our ways, we lose them. Example – there's an important place for sockeye near Kazan where we are no longer allowed to beach seine because there is a hatchery king run that the state considers more important than our traditional food.
- We have an opportunity to bring in youth through the training and the professionalization of hunting.

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- A mapping project is underway which includes co-land management and tribal harvesting permits for any type of harvesting that happens on public lands in our territories. Kasaan is using the Haa Aani map and the recent broadband and roads maps and will pass it off to the other communities on Prince of Wales island to include their information.
- We need to present Indigenous knowledge as data that can be used in fish and game management. Feds and states still discount our knowledge. This happened last night at a Regional Advisory Council hearing on moose harvest in Northwest AK.
- Paid Stewards of the land are needed and we could do that in our region.
- All of our places have traditional names and these names carry meaning about the land and water. We can use and restore these traditional names.
- ANSCA and ANILCA are just tools. We need to add to and subtract from them to take care of our communities and ourselves.
- Need to keep an ecosystem approach, which includes the people on the land.

### Exchange 5: Alaska Examples

Joe Nelson, Crystal Nelson, Ralph Wolfe, Ray Paddock, Marco Banda, Sustainable Southeast Partnership, Seacoast Trust, Indigenous Guardians Program

The Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP) was formed in the wake of the “timber wars” by trying to solve problems at the community level with an eye to how people will still be able to live in Southeast 100 years from now. They are a network that has built trust with diverse partners like Tribes, Native corps, conservation and community groups over years of working together on concrete projects in their communities. It was initially started by environmental groups and Indigenized more recently by Tribes, CCTHITA and Sealaska. Using Indigenous values to realize that they've always been here and will always be here.

SSP has Regional Catalysts that focus on systems (food security, energy, etc.), and Community Catalysts that work with communities to set and enact their priorities. This has led to the creation of community forest partnerships in Hoonah and Kake that work on restoration, planning, and more.

In late 2019, the partners took a pivotal exchange trip to British Columbia to learn from the Coast Funds/Great Bear Rainforest. This has accelerated the work, leading to the creation of:

- The Indigenous Guardians program at CCTHITA that has been funded by USFS and is currently under creation;



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- The Seacoast Trust, an endowment to support the SSP that was capitalized by a \$10 million matching commitment from Sealaska. It launched in 2022 with the support of The Nature Conservancy, Rasmuson Foundation, and a handful of other private foundations. The goal is to grow this fund to \$100 million and have it support sustainable community economic development based on the priorities of Tribes in Southeast.
- A healing working group that is seeking to address the trauma inflicted on the people and environment from colonization.

The USDA's Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy just agreed to contribute \$13 million to SSP partners for this work.

### AlexAnna Salmon, Village of Igiugig

Igiugig's traditional lands have been fragmented by the federal and state government. AlexAnna showed a map of all the different jurisdictions that intersect their traditional lands, and it requires an enormous amount of complexity and places a burden on the Tribe as they seek to do anything on their lands.

As an attempt to remedy this situation, Igiugig has created a Tribally Designated Protected Area using a Native allotment. The first allotment took 14 years to establish, the second just one year, and they are in negotiations now for two more. This effort is protecting both nationhood and salmon that the Tribe relies on for food and culture. It is now possible for them to think about thousands of acres and how the Igyararmiut can steward the entire Katmai Preserve, instead of selling a conservation easement to NPS. Igiugig is now creating their own valuation process and other Tribes are coming to ask for help while more allotment owners are coming forward to transition their allotments to the Tribe.

There is historical trauma as a result of what has been done with the land to us, and healing needs to be a part of this work. First it was accepted that the Tribe didn't have any land and had to pay for access. In Bristol Bay, most of the high end lodges are run by non-Native people on Native allotments. Many of them are hurting the fish (over catching rainbows leading to declines, for example) and causing an erosion of sovereignty.

The Village of Igiugig was not given a community site. Instead it is a series of Native allotments. This adds greater importance for them to regain sovereignty over their land.

## VII: Appendices

#07

### A. Design Team

The Design Team that created the program included Karen Evan off from Nondalton, Katya Gray from Nome and the Alaska Nannut Co-Management Council, Ray Paddock from Juneau and the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and Rayn Aaberg from Pedro Bay and The Nature Conservancy. They developed the following questions for the guest speakers to ensure their presentations were honed to the most relevant needs facing Alaska Native people.

1. How did your project move from an idea to becoming law and/or being put into action?
2. What agreements, laws, partnerships, and/or collaborations were needed to be developed to move your ideas into action?
3. What external forces were at play that aided or hindered this?
4. What is the vision for the project and how does it work to help advance stewardship, wellness and sovereignty?
5. If the project impacts different regions, cultures, and communities, how does it adjust to meet these different needs?
6. Now that it is operational, how is it working out for Indigenous people?
7. What are your indicators of success?
8. What did you learn along the way?
9. How is the work funded?
10. What lessons have you learned and/or what advice do you have for Alaska Native leaders that might be embarking on an ambitious project akin to yours?

## B. Program Participants

Mary	Hostetter	Bristol Bay	Igiugig	Native Village of Igiugig
Alexander	Tallekpalek	Bristol Bay	Levelock	Native Village of Levelock
Terry	Mann	Bristol Bay	Dillingham / Kokhanok	Alaska Peninsula Corp
Aaden	Aaberg	Bristol Bay	Pedro Bay	UAF
Francisca	Demoski	Bristol Bay	Togiak	Bristol Bay Native Corp
Kristina	Andrew	Bristol Bay	Dillingham	Bristol Bay Native Association
Gerda	Kosbruk	Bristol Bay	Port Heiden	Native Village of Port Heiden
Michelle	Ravenmoon	Bristol Bay	Pope Vannoy	Native Village of Igiugig
Katya	Gray	Bering Strait	Nome/White Mountain	Alaska Nannut Co-Management Council
Jonella	Larson-White	Bering Strait	Nome /Savoonga	Alaska Venture Fund
Kyle	Newman	Bering Strait	Bethel Area	World Wildlife Fund
Rhonda	Sparks	Bering Strait	Nome	Alaska Nannut Co-Management Council
Tom	Gray	Bering Strait	Nome	Alaska Beluga Whale Committee
Megan	Topkok	Bering Strait	Nome	Kawerak & UAF
Flashman	Noongwuk	Bering Strait	Savoonga	Native Village of Savoonga
George	Noongwook	Bering Strait	Savoonga	Eskimo Whaling Commission
Crystal	Nelson	Southeast	Juneau	The Nature Conservancy
Ray	Paddock	Southeast	Juneau	Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Joe	Nelson	Southeast	Juneau/Yakutat	Sealaska
Marco	Banda	Southeast	Juneau	Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Ralph	Wolfe	Southeast	Yakutat	Sustainable Southeast Partnership

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Marina	Anderson	Southeast	Kasaan	Organized Village of Kasaan
Della	Cheney	Southeast	Juneau/Kake	Elder
Anthony	Lindoff	Southeast	Hoonah	First Alaskans Institute
Shawaan	Jackson Gamble	Southeast	Kake	First Alaskans Institute

