

Tlingit & Haida, Forest Service sign agreement for Indigenous Guardians Program

ALASKA—Recently, the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska and USDA Forest Service signed a long-term partnership agreement supporting the creation of an Indigenous Guardians program for Southeast Alaska.

The five-year agreement awards up to \$300,000 of federal funding and, through collaboration, will support a variety of projects and programs connecting community-led indigenous stewardship, technical knowledge, conservation science and natural resource management of the National Forest System and adjacent lands throughout Southeast Alaska.



Regional Forester Dave Schmid recently signed a long-term agreement supporting the creation of an Indigenous Guardians program for Southeast Alaska. The agreement is expected to further enhance collaboration and identify priorities to meet the needs of the people in Southeast Alaska communities who depend on forest resources for food security, health and sustainable economies. Photo courtesy Raeanne Holmes, Tlingit & Haida Central Council.



Central Council of Tlingit & Haida President Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson signing the agreement supporting the creation of an Indigenous Guardians program for Southeast Alaska. Photo courtesy Raeanne Holmes, Tlingit & Haida Central Council.

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“We have been inspired for years by the work of the Coast Funds, Coastal First Nations, Coastal Stewardship Network, and Indigenous Guardians programs in the First Nation territory of the north coast of British Columbia and Haida Gwaii,” said Tlingit & Haida President Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson. “This agreement with the Forest Service recognizes the critical role and inherent sovereignty of tribes in all aspects of stewardship of our homelands and waters and importance of a co-management governance structure to monitor, protect, restore and manage our natural and cultural resources to ensure our customary and traditional way of life for our future generations.”

Tlingit & Haida and the Alaska Region Forest Service entered into the agreement to ensure the integration of diverse perspectives into activities and efforts associated with shared stewardship to bring:

- New capacity to watershed restoration efforts;
- Adaptation planning to ensure integration of diverse knowledge into vulnerability assessments and adaptation efforts;
- Assistance in monitoring and protecting heritage sites and resources; and
- Increase information sharing and opportunities for public and tribal involvement related to the Federal Subsistence Management Program.



The USDA Forest Service and Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska conducted a socially distanced in-person signing of a long-term partnership agreement supporting the creation of an Indigenous Guardians program for Southeast Alaska. Left to right: Regional Forester Dave Schmid, regional Tribal Relations program manager Melinda Hernandez Burke, regional Land Management planner Michael Goldstein, and Central Council of Tlingit & Haida President Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson. USDA Forest Service photo by Jacqueline Chandler.

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"We recognized that the tribes are the land's first stewards, conservationists and multiple users of the Tongass National Forest," said Regional Forester Dave Schmid. "Through this agreement, we will continue to enhance our collaboration and identify priorities to meet the needs of the people in our communities who depend on forest resources for food security, health, and sustainable economies."

A network of partners will continue to build the capacity of the Indigenous Guardians program and identify priorities and future visions that promote shared leadership by tribes and other indigenous entities. Current partners under the program include Hoonah Indian Association, Organized Village of Kake, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Sealaska Corporation, Southeast Sustainable Partnership, Spruce Root, Nature Conservancy, Ecotrust and the Alaska Conservation Foundation.

"The agreement represents a significant move toward deepening the partnerships between the Forest Service, tribes, and other members of the Sustainable Southeast Partnership as we work toward deeper, meaningful collaboration across communities and on the land across Southeast Alaska," said Ralph Wolfe, program director, Sustainable Southeast Partnership.

The Forest Service, Tlingit & Haida and the Indigenous Guardians partners look forward to working together to further integrate tribal input and perspectives into land management priorities and activities.

Taken from: [Tlingit & Haida, Forest Service sign agreement for Indigenous Guardians Program | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

Also: check out this Zoom webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MgTu5KckCY>

An Indigenous Guardians Network for Southeast Alaska: A Vision for the Next 100 Years Streamed live on Dec 15, 2020; Audubon Alaska

The Tlingit and Haida peoples of Southeast Alaska have histories of resilient economies that stretch back millennia. Marine and terrestrial assets remain critical cultural components for food security and livelihoods in Southeast Alaska. Current management policies and current market economies in the region don't always favor small-scale, stewardship-minded, local harvesters and Indigenous people.

The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska and the USDA Forest Service, through a regional network called the Sustainable Southeast Partnership, have partnered to support a nascent Indigenous Guardians Network for Southeast Alaska. This network will be dedicated to supporting Alaska Native communities in expressing their inherent sovereignty while creating opportunities for these communities to conserve their homelands and traditional ways of life for future generations.

Panelists:

Richard Peterson, President, The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
David Schmid, Regional Forester, Alaska Region, USDA Forest Service
Dawn Jackson, Executive Director, Organized Village of Kake
Ralph Wolfe, Program Director, Spruce Root, Inc.

Tlingit & Haida and USDA Forest Service Sign Agreement for Indigenous Guardians Program



L-R: Regional Forester David Schmid, Tribal Relations Program Manager Melinda Hernandez Burke, Regional Planner Michael Goldstein and Tlingit & Haida President Richard Peterson

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Tlingit & Haida and the Alaska Region Forest Service entered into the agreement to ensure the integration of diverse perspectives into activities and efforts associated with shared stewardship to bring new capacity to watershed restoration efforts; adaptation planning to ensure integration of diverse knowledge into vulnerability assessments and adaptation efforts; heritage to provide assistance in monitoring and protecting heritage sites and resources; and subsistence to increase information sharing and opportunities for public and tribal involvement related to the Federal Subsistence Management Program.

“We recognized that the tribes are the land’s first stewards, conservationists, and multiple users of the Tongass National Forest,” said Dave Schmid, Alaska Regional Forester. “Through this agreement, we will continue to enhance our collaboration and identify priorities to meet the needs of the people in our communities who depend on forest resources for food security, health, and sustainable economies.”

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- President Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson

