

Images will be available at 12 AM PST via: [this link](#):

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US\$10 million investment to Strengthen Indigenous-Led Conservation and Advance Nature Finance Across Canada

22 January 2026 – Ottawa, ON.

Indigenous Nations across Canada will gain greater access to carbon and nature finance through a major new investment in Indigenous-led conservation. [First 30x30 Canada](#), led by [Nature For Justice](#) in collaboration with [IISAAK OLAM Foundation](#) and [Nature Focus Development](#), will receive a multi-year USD \$10 million (~CAD \$14 million) grant from the [BHP Foundation](#) to help build capacity and turn Nation-led visions for land stewardship into reality.

The grant was announced by the First 30x30 Canada Program's Managing Director Steven Nitah at the annual Estuary to Old Growth Gathering in Parksville, British Columbia, which brought together Nations, governments and communities along the Pacific West Coast to foster relationships, share knowledge, and advance Indigenous-led conservation and cultural revitalization.

This significant investment can accelerate progress towards Canada's pledge to protect 30% of its lands and waters by 2030 under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Indigenous Nations—already at the forefront through stewardship practices and the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)—are vital to achieving this goal.

But conservation at scale requires finance—and many Indigenous Nations continue to face systemic financial and technical barriers in accessing the early-stage funds and long-term revenue pathways needed to sustain their conservation initiatives. Despite growing global commitments, climate finance remains largely out of reach for the communities it is meant to serve. Research from the International Institute for Environment and Development shows that less than 10 percent of international climate funding has been directed to locally led projects (1).

First 30x30 is a step toward addressing this gap by unlocking carbon and nature finance. The program provides upfront funding to support Indigenous governments to design and implement nature-based solution (NbS) projects that reflect their priorities, delivering durable economic and ecological benefits. By centering Indigenous leadership from the outset, it ensures high-integrity projects that inspire investor confidence and long-term sustainability.

Originally designed with seed funding from the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) and Domtar, this new significant boost of funds from the BHP Foundation will allow First 30x30 Canada to rapidly scale the initiative to directly support an initial cohort of Indigenous-led NbS projects across the country. The grant will provide Indigenous Nations with hands-on support and structured services across the NbS project lifecycle, including:

- **Market Opportunity Assessments** to help Nations evaluate carbon and nature finance potential within their traditional territories
- **NbS feasibility studies** and project structuring assistance, for Nations looking to advance a promising NbS / carbon project concept
- **Benefit-sharing advisory services aligned with Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)**, to ensure participating Nations receive fair terms in their negotiations with project investors in advance of NbS / carbon project launch
- **Capacity building, knowledge products, and cross-Nation learning activities**

Quotes

“Canada cannot meet its 30x30 commitments without Indigenous leadership. Indigenous Nations have stewarded lands and waters since time immemorial, guided by their own laws and responsibilities. This program supports Indigenous Nations’ economic independence by building capacity, creating jobs, and advancing Nation-led visions for their lands and waters. Indigenous-led projects are among the most trusted for long-term stewardship and permanence, grounded in intergenerational responsibility. We are grateful for the investment from the BHP Foundation to remove financial and technical barriers and sustain Indigenous-led conservation for generations to come.”

- **Steven Nitah, Managing Director, First 30x30 Canada Program, Nature For Justice**

“This investment recognizes that Indigenous stewardship is not only central to biodiversity protection, but also to building resilient local economies. By supporting Nations to access nature finance on their own terms, we are assisting in the creation of conservation models that are both durable and self-determined. We are grateful for the support the BHP Foundation is providing to the First 30x30 initiative – the corporate philanthropy and private sector operating in Canada has an important role to play in supporting the advancement of Indigenous economic sovereignty, protecting biodiversity, addressing the climate crisis and supporting reconciliation and human rights. We hope that other companies and foundations will follow their lead. “

- **Hank Cauley, CEO & Founder, Nature For Justice**

“First 30x30 Canada recognizes the critical role of Indigenous leadership in shaping the future of conservation and in meeting Canada’s sustainability aspirations. BHP Foundation is proud to be the principal funder to First 30x30 Canada. We hope our investment will encourage others to

help fill the critical nature finance gap in support of First Nations turning their stewardship visions into reality. For 30x30 commitments to truly deliver lasting impact, it must be Indigenous-led and grounded in Indigenous knowledge. That's why Nature For Justice is strongly positioned to lead this work alongside Nations and make these commitments a lasting reality."

- **Kristen Ray, CEO, BHP Foundation**

*The grant will be implemented in collaboration with partner Nations and technical advisors across Canada, with early activities beginning in **Q1 of 2026**.*

About First 30×30 Canada

The First 30×30 Canada program harnesses carbon & nature finance as a catalyst for Indigenous-led conservation. We partner with Indigenous governments, technical experts, and investors to advance Indigenous-led NbS projects that combat climate change, restore ecosystems, and promote Indigenous sovereignty. First 30×30 is led by Nature For Justice, in close collaboration with IISAAK OLAM Foundation and Nature Focus Development. To learn more, visit <https://first30x30.earth/> .

About the BHP Foundation

BHP Foundation is a non-profit organization working with others to address the root causes of sustainability challenges relevant to the resources industry. Created and funded by BHP - a global resources company - the BHP Foundation's investments aim to impact the systems that prevent progress towards a more equitable and sustainable future for people and planet. Its partnerships in Canada, Australia and Chile are primarily focused on support for greater self-determination for Indigenous Peoples and preparing underrepresented young people for the future through education. To learn more, visit www.bhp-foundation.org

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<https://www.bhp-foundation.org>

References:

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