

A Hadza hunter is shown in profile, sitting on a large, reddish-brown rock. He is looking towards the right, where a sunset is visible over a vast, hilly landscape. He is holding a bow and several arrows. He has a feathered headdress and is wearing a dark tank top and patterned shorts. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with the sun low on the horizon. The landscape below is covered in dense green vegetation.

STRONG VOICES, ACTIVE CHOICES

A Global Strategy for Conservation in Partnership
with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

The Nature
Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

Hamesi Hasani a Hadza hunter admires the sunset in the Central Rift Valley of Tanzania. ©Nick Hall

Local Leaders Global Impact

Indigenous peoples and local communities are vital leaders in the pursuit of lasting solutions to the world's most pressing conservation and development challenges. Their rights to and relationship with lands and waters, and longstanding knowledge of natural systems and resources, make them critical and inspirational allies for building a healthy and sustainable future.

Eighteen percent of the world's land is owned by or designated for indigenous peoples and local communities, and at least double that is claimed but not yet legally recognized. With their territories harboring more than 20% of the world's forest carbon, and much of global biodiversity, indigenous peoples and local communities are among the Earth's most important stewards. Their leadership is key to conservation and sustainable



development in their own lands, in the territories surrounding them, and globally.

Growing evidence shows that conservation and development initiatives are more likely to be successful and sustainable if they have the active engagement and leadership of the people with the greatest stake in their outcome, and are guided by their traditional knowledge and values. But, throughout the world, there are many cases of indigenous peoples and local communities being denied the opportunity to participate effectively in the decisions and interventions that impact their lands, waters and livelihoods. They face exclusion and dispossession, and are confronted by development prospects that undermine their cultural and environmental heritage and priorities. This poses a significant threat to people and nature, both locally and globally, that will become only more acute

as pressures on land and resources continue to grow.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is working to remedy this power imbalance by creating and supporting opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities to play a stronger role in natural resource decision-making and management.



Otgonbaatar Tsog, a Mongolian herder (wearing his traditional herdsman dress), spots wildlife at the Carrizo Plain National Monument during a learning exchange trip to California, US, hosted by TNC. ©Mark Godfrey/TNC.

Over the last 10 years, TNC's partnerships with indigenous peoples and local communities have spanned 27 countries, led to the conservation or improved management of more than 235 million acres, and had positive impacts on the well-being of 925,000 people through wealth creation, enhanced security and greater empowerment.

These results have been achieved by dozens of local and regional projects working in partnership with indigenous peoples and local communities. Building on this solid foundation, the Conservancy is launching a Global Strategy for Conservation in Partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities that will amplify, innovate and collaborate to achieve broader, more ambitious outcomes for conservation and sustainable development.



A Lewa herder watches over cattle at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Northern Kenya, part of an innovative economic development strategy to increase sustainability-linked market access. ©Ami Vitale

Stronger Voice, Choice and Action for Healthy Communities, Lands and Waters

Indigenous peoples and local communities face complex challenges to transforming their visions for conservation and healthy communities into reality due to entrenched power imbalances at local, national and global scales. Strengthening these communities' leadership in environment and development decisions and actions is crucial for forging a vibrant, sustainable future, and is a key objective of TNC.

For the purposes of this program, "indigenous peoples and local communities" refers to peoples and communities that possess a profound relationship with their natural landscapes and depend on them for their cultural, religious,

health and economic needs. TNC recognizes the collective rights of indigenous peoples as recognized under international law.

OUR GOAL

The Nature Conservancy will help transform the way land and waters decisions are made by strengthening the voice, choice and action of indigenous peoples and local communities to shape and manage natural territory in ways that improve lives and drive conservation.

A stronger **voice** leads to the inclusion of traditional knowledge and local priorities and values in plans and solutions; the ability to exercise and influence **choice**



The Centennial Pole was carved by local Haida carvers to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Hyدابurg in Alaska, US. © Erika Nortemann/TNC

builds leadership and engagement; **action** means the opportunity for communities to initiate and participate in the implementation of programs and the management of resources that impact their well-being both now and in the future.

2020 Outcomes

An additional 1 million people have measurably improved well-being and 250 million acres are conserved or in improved management as a result of the stronger voice, choice and action of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are driving sustainable solutions for land and waters management through their engagement and partnership with governments, corporations, and other actors in planning and decision-making processes.



Nyikina Mangala rangers perform an early-season controlled burn in Australia's Kimberley Region, Australia. ©David Hinchley

MAIN STRATEGIES

To achieve these outcomes and build pathways to sustainable development, TNC partners with indigenous peoples, local communities and other organizations at the local and global level to pursue four interdependent strategies:

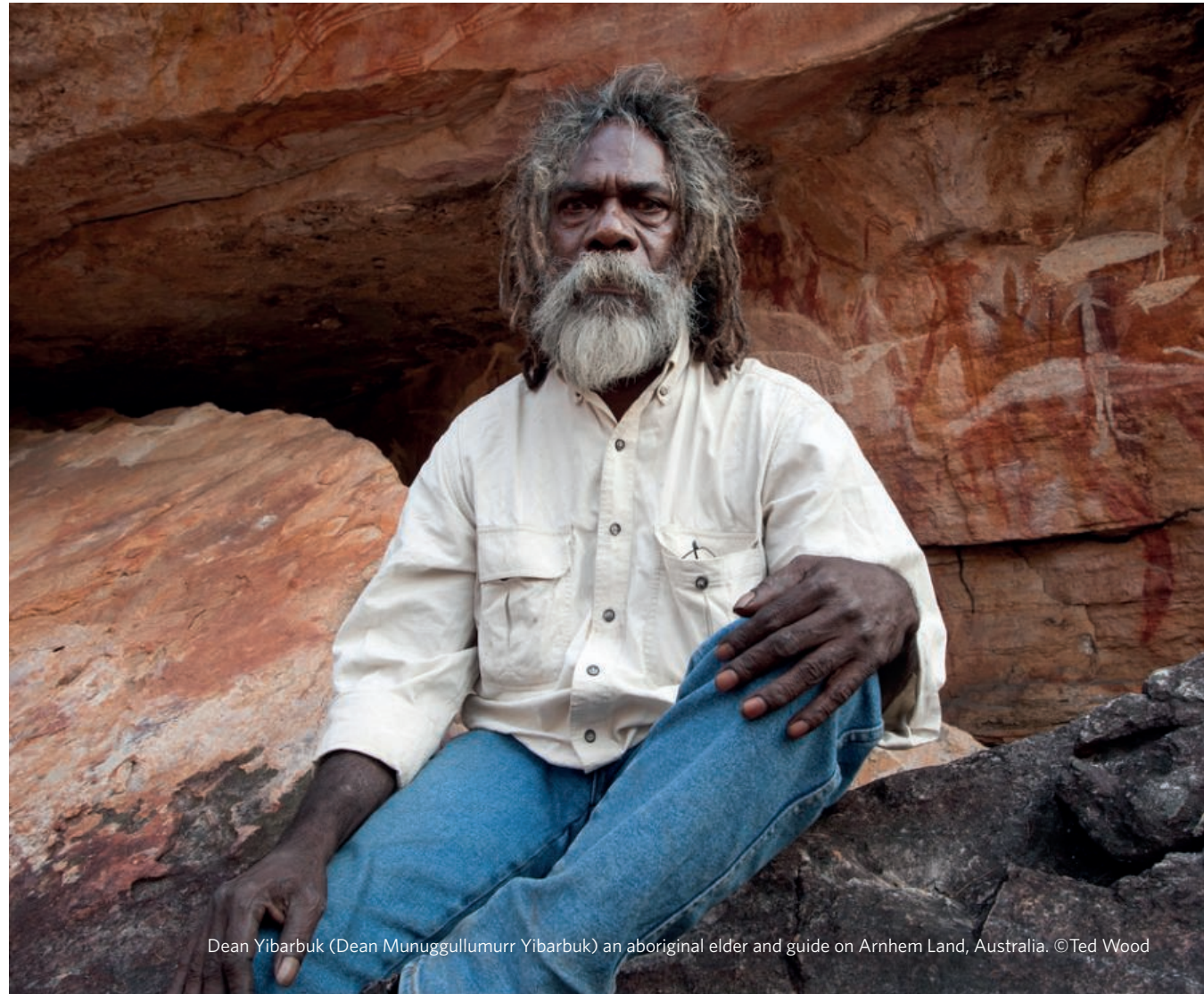
SECURING ACCESS TO RESOURCES:

When indigenous peoples and local communities lack rights to their territories and natural resources, they are unable to assert their interests in conservation and sustainable natural resource use. This strategy focuses on securing resource rights for indigenous peoples and local communities.

STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP:

In addition to legal rights, indigenous peoples and local communities need to have the capacity and effective institutions to exercise their rights over their territory and natural resources. This strategy focuses on strengthening community capacity and leadership

in the planning and management of natural resources by championing the effective local institutions, leaders and planning processes that are key to exercising authority over territory and resources.



Dean Yibarbuk (Dean Munuggullumurr Yibarbuk) an aboriginal elder and guide on Arnhem Land, Australia. ©Ted Wood

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS:

When indigenous peoples and local communities are actively engaged in processes to determine how natural resources will be managed, outcomes for conservation and local well-being will be improved. This strategy focuses on facilitating the engagement of communities in the decision-making processes that impact their natural resources.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WEALTH CREATION:

Limited economic development opportunities constrain the ability of indigenous peoples and local communities to advance their interests in conservation. This strategy focuses on building sustainable economic development trajectories that align with and reinforce conservation and community values by helping create opportunities based on local sustainable resource management, stewardship, entrepreneurship, payments for ecosystem services, and appropriate development.



North America: Fishing guide and Yurok tribal member, Pergish Carlson, Klamath River, northern California, US. ©Kevin Arnold

Innovating. Collaborating. Amplifying.

The Global Strategy will be implemented by a network of TNC centralized and field staff, and partners including indigenous peoples, local communities and other stakeholders. It includes a small number of cross-cutting initiatives and 16 geographically-rooted priority projects in Africa, Asia Pacific, North America and Latin America that have the greatest potential to demonstrate a new generation of conservation driven by the voice, choice and action of indigenous peoples and local communities.

TNC's decades of experience partnering with indigenous peoples and local communities has demonstrated the huge potential for strengthening both conservation and local well-being by changing the distribution of power that in many



Youth from the Wardeken and Djelk lands assist government ecologists with animal traps during a wildlife survey of the indigenous Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory. The Nature Conservancy, working with indigenous groups as well as local government and non-government organizations, is supporting the work of the traditional aboriginal landowners in the preservation and management of their homelands, Australia. ©Ted Wood

cases disadvantages indigenous peoples and local communities in decisions that shape the future of lands and waters. Learning from these experiences — both positive and negative — and augmented by the growing body of literature on socio-ecological systems and social change, this strategy seeks to scale up the impact of TNC's current work in partnership with indigenous

peoples and local communities. This will be accomplished by intentionally creating greater connectivity, catalyzing more innovation, creating opportunities for promising solutions to scale and spread, amplifying successes, and achieving greater and more lasting conservation and sustainable development outcomes through more

lasting and creative collaboration. The 2020 Outcomes will be achieved by the 16 strategically selected place-based projects and three cross-cutting initiatives: effective partnerships; social innovation lab; and community-oriented integrated landscape planning. These three initiatives are outlined in the following pages.



Samuel Brown looks for lions that have been collared at Loisaba Conservancy in Laikipia, northern Kenya, Africa. ©2015 Ami Vitale

“It’s not that we want to necessarily stop development on or near indigenous lands; it’s that we want to be a part of the conversation. We want a certain type of development and to be beneficiaries of it. Many people say, ‘Indigenous peoples don’t want development!’, but they haven’t invited us to be a part of it. If we’re not included, we’re persecuted.”

— *Indigenous peoples’ organization representative.*

Australian Noongar Aboriginal man holding a didgeridoo (The didgeridoo is the unique and ancient instrument of the the Aboriginal peoples of Australia) photographed on aboriginal lands in the Gondwana Link project area of Western Australia.
©Ami Vitale



Priority geographies for the strategy



Initiative One:

Accelerate the efficiency, effectiveness and influence of TNC's partnerships with indigenous peoples and local communities.

In places where TNC is partnering with indigenous peoples and local communities, achieving lasting results depends on the ability of these partners to actively shape positive natural resource outcomes. Here, TNC is working to:

- strengthen indigenous and local community land and natural resources rights;
- support local leadership in natural resource management;
- promote greater and more effective engagement of indigenous and community partners in multi-stakeholder planning and management processes; and
- create economic development

opportunities that reinforce cultural priorities and shared conservation goals.

- **This initiative is aimed at:**
 - i) strengthening the effectiveness of TNC's partnerships with indigenous peoples and local communities to achieve shared conservation and development goals; and
 - ii) elevating the importance of indigenous and local community leadership in natural resource management to inspire and build support for a new generation of conservation that is predicated on solutions-oriented partnerships rooted in local leadership and collaboration.



Tekakro Xikrin fishing on Rio Bacaja near Pot-Kro Village, Brazil. ©Kevin Arnold

Some of the main activities in this initiative include: partnering with indigenous peoples and local communities on shared conservation and development goals; creating the Network for Strong Voice, Choice and Action; facilitating learning exchanges; building the scientific evidence on community leadership and participatory management; strengthening the community-oriented components of conservation strategies; and communicating the importance of indigenous and community voice, choice and action in creating a future in which nature and people thrive.

“From our experience around the world, we know that indigenous peoples and local communities are a major factor in enabling conservation to happen. Without them, we have significant trouble achieving lasting results on the ground. With them, we have a chance.”

— *Industry representative.*



Willibrors Djoka (on right), The Nature Conservancy's Protected Area management team member for Wehea and Lesan in the Kalimantan region of Borneo, Indonesia, talks with village leader Ledgie Taq at the village of Nehas Liah Bing. ©Bridget Besaw

Initiative Two:

Indigenous Social Innovation Lab: collaboration and innovation to develop solutions to complex sustainable development challenges on indigenous peoples' and local communities' territories.

The Indigenous Social Innovation Lab will bring together diverse leaders to understand, co-create, prototype and scale sustainable, intergenerational and multi-sectoral solutions to complex challenges of natural resource management and economic development on indigenous and community territory.

Limited economic opportunities and non-inclusive decision-making and planning on territories controlled and impacted by indigenous peoples and local communities are a major threat to conservation. They can trap communities in a vulnerable position, unable to either drive development outcomes that fit their needs or prevent destructive projects from taking place. Decades



Members of the Haida tribe perform fish surveys on streams at Keat's Inlet on Prince of Wales Island. Streams that provide proof as good salmon habitat can be protected at the highest level by the state of Alaska, US. ©Erika Nortemann/TNC

of effort and billions of dollars have clearly demonstrated that this is not a problem we can simply plan or analyze our way out of. The way forward is for key actors in the system to collaboratively develop and implement solutions that address deep-rooted causes and forge a fundamentally different future. That is what the Indigenous Social Innovation Lab seeks to do.

The Indigenous Social Innovation Lab will engage deeply committed indigenous and local community leaders from four to six countries to design a structured process to bring together diverse actors – including leaders from indigenous and local communities, select NGOs, government and private sector (e.g. from forestry, mining, hydropower, fisheries) – to explore different possible futures and collaboratively test solutions to natural resource and economic development challenges on indigenous and community territory. The Indigenous Social Innovations Lab will create

space for relationship-building, experimentation, design, co-creation and implementation.

This initiative is underpinned by the principle that lasting solutions are aligned with and reinforce the values and leadership of indigenous peoples and local communities. It is based on the precepts that the power of solutions lies in the people who believe in and own them, but that multifaceted, entrenched problems have no single root cause, and therefore cannot be overcome by any one stakeholder group acting alone. Many actors, with influence over a range of domains, must work together beyond the scope of what could ever be possible alone to reach solutions that they can all embrace.

Establishing the Indigenous Social Innovations Lab builds on TNC's ability to bring diverse actors together and catalyze ideas that fuel real systemic change.



Daughter of ranger Ganbond in the Mongolia grasslands.
© Tuguldur Enkhsetseg.



“TNC has the power to convene...to ignite ideas that cause things to happen. The people have the solutions. There is a need to bring thought groups together.”

— Indigenous peoples' organization representative.

Initiative Three:

Incorporation of participatory planning and community priorities into integrated landscape planning.

This initiative leverages two of TNC's strengths: broad experience in community-based territorial planning, and Development by Design (DbD) – a strategy for advancing conservation and development goals in ways that safeguard lands and waters that are important for people, wildlife, and carbon sequestration.

Under this initiative, TNC will develop a new model for DbD that better incorporates social and cultural values, as defined and prioritized by indigenous peoples and local communities. The goal is to support smarter, participatory decision-making for development and conservation that puts indigenous peoples and local communities at the center

of natural resource management and development decision-making. Model approaches will be established in places where development pressure on community and indigenous lands is increasing, including Mongolia, Indonesia, Northern Australia, Peru and the Emerald Edge (British Columbia Canada and Washington/Alaska U.S.).

The work will include participatory planning, integrating social and cultural priorities into landscape planning, assessing development risks on indigenous and community lands, and supporting a stronger platform for indigenous peoples and local communities to plan for and decide on the future of their lands and waters.



Xikrin woman gathering papayas and bananas near Pot-Kro Village, Rio Bacaja, Brazil. © Kevin Arnold

The world is facing unprecedented threats to lands, waters and natural resources from development and climate change. It is more urgent than ever that indigenous peoples and local communities' knowledge and unique natural systems perspectives play a lead role in shaping a future in which nature and people thrive.

With this Global Strategy for Conservation in Partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, The Nature Conservancy is supporting and creating opportunities for these communities to lead positive solutions to the challenges that impact their territories and well beyond.

A young boy on horseback minding his family's herd of goats in the grassland steppe of Eastern Mongolia's Tosonhulstai Nature Reserve. © Nick Hall





Global Strategy for Conservation in Partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

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Gisèle Martin, a member of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, a territory of more than 250,000 acres in Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island, Canada.