

Indigenous Hunter and Guardian Programs

An Analysis of Economic and Social Benefit

Why These Programs Matter

Indigenous Hunter and Guardian programs are Indigenous-designed, community-led initiatives that address food security, health, cultural continuity, and land stewardship. They are not only cultural and land-based programs – they are smart, strategic public investments that generate economic and social returns for communities and for Canada as a whole. We collaborated with four of these programs to learn more about the economic and social benefits of their activities.



Dechinta
Yellowknife, NT



Imaryuk Monitors
Tuktoyaktuk
and Inuvik, NT



Ni Hat'ni Dene
Łutsël, K'é, NT



Angunasuktiit
Clyde River, NU

Key Outcomes Across Programs



Food Security & Food Sovereignty:

Provide thousands of pounds of country foods annually, offsetting costly store-bought food and sustaining communities during supply chain disruptions.



Health & Wellbeing: Reduce avoidable health system use by improving physical and mental health, increasing life satisfaction, and reducing social isolation.



Ecological Conservation: Provide vital monitoring and early intervention to protect fish stocks, wildlife, and northern infrastructure.



Indigenous-Centred Economic Development: Create stable, meaningful, year-round jobs, strengthen training and education pathways, and generate tax revenues.



Measurable Economic Returns

- **Food Security Gains:** Three programs provided an average of \$614,000 per year in store-bought equivalent food.
- **Health System Savings:** Avoided downstream health costs in Clyde River alone estimated at \$473,000 annually.
- **Labour Market Benefits:** Dechinta graduates generated an estimated \$3.5M in lifetime tax revenue; Angunasuktiit participants an additional \$574,000.
- **Wellbeing Gains:** Improvements in life satisfaction valued at \$676,000 annually across all program staff.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Dechinta

\$2.25 return per \$1 invested,

↑ rising to **\$3.70**
when wellbeing is included.

Angunasuktiit

\$1.43 return per \$1 invested,

↑ rising to **\$5.37**
when wellbeing is included.



Conclusion

Indigenous Hunter and Guardian programs provide food, safety, and health benefits, revitalize language and culture, and strengthen Indigenous economies. They are a proven, high-value investment for governments seeking to reduce costs, improve wellbeing, and build sustainable futures in the North.

Policy Recommendation: Commit to robust, sustained funding for Indigenous Hunter and Guardian programs as essential services and infrastructure for Northern and national prosperity.

Policy Implications

- Reduces public spending by preventing downstream crises.
- Strengthens food systems, health, and community resilience.
- Generates measurable tax revenues and employment.
- Advances reconciliation and self-determination by supporting Indigenous-led economies and land stewardship.

