

Nia Tero Strategy Preamble

When *Homo sapiens* dispersed across the Earth, a broad diversity of societies emerged, each uniquely interwoven with specific geographies – forests and fens, grasslands and great rivers, high alpine reaches and island-studded oceans. Our homes, values, livelihoods and imaginations were inseparable from nature. Recently, the threads that bind people to place have broken, threatening both the ecological fabric of our planet and connection to our shared histories and collective identity. In many ways, we have forgotten who we are.

Yet some of these threads remain strong. Indigenous peoples, still rooted in their territorial birthplaces, comprise less than 5 percent of the human population but retain 95 percent of humankind's linguistic and cultural diversity. By no coincidence, these societies also uphold many of the planet's healthiest ecosystems, rich in biodiversity and systems essential to global food, climate and freshwater security. The fate of these places, and increasingly the fate of us all, depends on indigenous peoples sustaining and defending thriving territories.

At best, the global community has only marginally supported efforts of indigenous peoples to protect the ecological integrity of their homelands. With the stroke of a pen, a faraway power can threaten forests, waters and living creatures, along with sophisticated systems of customary law, knowledge and land tenure. Without the resources to defend against external pressures, indigenous guardians of the world's most vital ecosystems are losing both place and identity. But there is another way: if indigenous peoples have the recognition and resources to protect their territorial lands and seas, we all gain. Nia Tero exists to make this happen.

Nia Tero partners with indigenous peoples to secure lasting guardianship of large-scale ecosystems. Through just and transparent agreement around mutual obligations and responsibility, we seek to ensure that indigenous peoples have resources available to defend and govern territory, manage and protect natural resources, and pursue livelihoods within healthy ecosystems. This is essential both to indigenous peoples, whose cultures, languages and security are under siege, and also to the rest of humanity, whose lives – though physically far removed – rely inextricably on the integrity of these natural systems and the wellspring of leadership that indigenous peoples provide.

Initially our work will focus on beginning long-term regional engagements across two contrasting geographies – the Pacific Islands and the Guiana Shield. Island peoples of the South Pacific speak one-quarter of the world's languages across territories covering 10% of the earth's surface, containing some of its richest fisheries and vibrant coral reefs. Indigenous Peoples' across the Guiana Shield sustain remarkable cultural narratives and the most extensive tropical forests remaining on the planet. Additionally, to train and demonstrate our approach, we are exploring work in other

settings, including collaborations to safeguard remote territories of uncontacted indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation straddling the Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon as well as parts of Colombia. Far to the north, in the boreal forests of Canada, we are investigating opportunities to support and work with First Nations, who, like many indigenous peoples, view identity and vast territory – home, family, livelihood, landscape, language and wildlife – as intricately interwoven.

Simultaneously, we are developing parallel pathways to recognize indigenous peoples cultural identity and guardianship more broadly. Nia Tero invites our partners to share knowledge and stories, shaped over generations, that can inspire the world to invest in indigenous guardianship to guide solutions for protecting ecosystems essential to the well-being of all people. By amplifying the stories of indigenous peoples and sharing wisdom stemming from interconnection between culture and place, we aim to honor indigenous knowledge of this earth – we look to indigenous storytellers to help positively transform our collective world view.

Nia Tero also seeks a world where the bleeding-edge of technology, policy and financial innovation is not simply delivered to indigenous peoples, but is inspired by their leadership, vision and movements. To this end, we will collaborate with educators and technologists to strengthen and expand platforms for curating, sharing and providing quick and deep dives into the many knowledge arenas that can reciprocally benefit from, inform and inspire indigenous peoples' efforts to secure culture and territory. Policy, financing, enterprise design and development, as well as scientific monitoring and infrastructure breakthroughs, are examples of knowledge systems that can reciprocally gain from enhanced indigenous peoples access.

Finally, we will seek partners who share Nia Tero's commitment to indigenous guardianship of our shared earth, and will develop fellowships, grants and other mechanisms to support both partners and communities. We will not strictly limit our grants to indigenous peoples, and will identify like-minded individual, organizational, government and business partners whose involvement and expertise can further the societal transformations that we seek.