

Art philanthropist looks to save B.C.'s grizzly bears

'I'm in awe of these marvellous creatures and very concerned about their future,' said Michael Audain

By Tina Lovgreen, [CBC News](#) Posted: Sep 08, 2016 3:46 PM PT Last Updated: Sep 08, 2016 3:46 PM PT

Leading Canadian philanthropist Michael Audain is turning his attention to grizzly bears after years protecting and displaying masterpieces of art.

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- [B.C. auditor general to look into grizzly hunt](#)

He was inspired after a close encounter with a sow and three cubs in 2014.

The chairman of Polygon Homes Ltd. announced that his family was creating the Grizzly Bear Foundation — a charity devoted to the protection of grizzly bears — and donated \$500,000 to get things rolling.

"I'm in awe of these marvellous creatures and very concerned about their future," said Audain.

Audain, [who also opened an art museum in Whistler](#), said grizzlies are a symbol of British Columbia's wilderness.

He questions whether the government is doing enough to protect them.

"Do we have a sustainable population of bears? The government says we do. We will be asking the people of the province and we will be asking scientists and we will be asking people from the First Nation community what they think about the bears," he said.

The province estimates there are 15,000 grizzly bears in B.C., a number deemed stable and self-sustaining.

As an opening initiative, the Grizzly Bear Foundation will launch a board of inquiry that will tour B.C., stopping at six communities, to gather public views on how to protect grizzlies in their last stronghold in North America.

The meetings will take place between Sept. 27 and Oct. 20 in Cranbrook, Prince George, Fort St. John, Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Victoria.

"We are interested to learn what the threats to the bears are in the years ahead. Are the threats in the area of climate change? The lack of suitable food sources? Are the threats from economic development activities, urbanization?" he said.

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- [Ending Great Bear Rainforest grizzly hunt will cost First Nations and non-profits millions](#)
- [Sorry, we're closed: activists call off Grizzly hunt in Great Bear Rainforest](#)

Hunting is also on the list, said Audain.

- 230 bears were killed in 2015.
- 267 bears were killed in 2014.

The province collects more than \$7.3 million in license fees annually.

An additional \$2.25 million in surcharges is collected and paid to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.

The foundation's report is expected to be presented to the provincial government by February 2017.

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