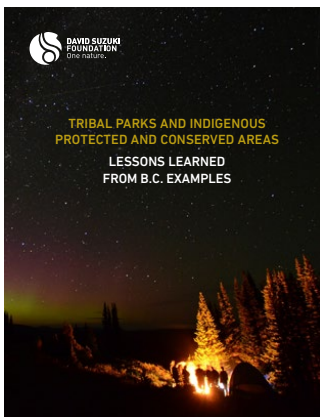


# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DASIQOX TRIBAL PARK, PHOTO RIVER VOICES PRODUCTIONS



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## TRIBAL PARKS AND INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM B.C. EXAMPLES

**INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA** are taking the lead in protecting the places that are essential to them. Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) aim to safeguard Indigenous rights—including the right to exercise free prior and informed consent—while also maintaining biodiversity, and securing a space where communities can actively practice Indigenous ways of life. The initiatives by Indigenous groups in B.C. to establish IPCAs that are profiled in this report provide some excellent examples of Indigenous-led land stewardship and governance.

Experts and Indigenous community knowledge-holders involved in establishing K'ih tsaa?dze, Nexwagweŷ'an – Dasiqox Tribal Park, and Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, as well as advisers from the Canadian Indigenous Circle of Experts, provided interviews and shared stories to inform this report. Their voices are woven throughout it to bring forward a diverse set of themes ranging from the role of elders in creating the vision for IPCAs, to sustainable livelihood initiatives, to the need to restore areas that have been impacted by industrial disturbance.

**The initiatives by Indigenous groups in B.C. to establish IPCAs that are profiled in this report provide some excellent examples of Indigenous-led land stewardship and governance.**



PHOTO RACHEL PLOTKIN

This report builds on some important foundational work from previous studies including the recent work completed by the Canadian Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) titled *We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the Creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the Spirit of Practice and Reconciliation*. The ICE report sets out conceptual recommendations for establishing a system of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas across Canada. Recent changes in government policy contexts have hinted at supporting IPCAs, but legislative tools to secure these areas from development pressures are still not available.

The report explores six key themes that emerged from the interviews and literature review including:

1. Community involvement and engagement;
2. Indigenous governance;
3. Land use and management planning;
4. Management of industrial disturbance;
5. Establishing a healthy economy for sustainable livelihoods; and
6. Operational challenges.

## Key Elements

Some of the lessons learned profiled in the report are important elements in establishing an IPCA.

- **A clear vision and mandate**— Many knowledge holders and leaders emphasized the importance of working with elders and community members to identify a vision for each IPCA, so that all further work is rooted in a strong mandate based on the voices of community members.
- **Utility of land-use planning**— Indigenous land use planning processes can serve as a useful tool, when driven by and tailored to Indigenous communities, for developing the guidelines that leaders, staff, and external agencies need to manage the IPCA.

## DASIQOX

**NAME:** Nexwagwež'an – Dasiqox Tribal Park

**LOCATION:** 300 km north of Vancouver

**BACKGROUND:** In Tsilhqot'in territory, a precursor to the Dasiqox Tribal Park was the Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve, established by the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation in 1989. Tsilhqot'in First Nation established Dasiqox Tribal Park as an expression of its right to govern and manage unceded territory. The motivation to establish the park came directly from elders, who insisted on protecting an area for the continued practice of rights and responsibilities to the land.

**ESTABLISHED:** 2014

**SIZE:** almost 300,000 hectares

**MAP:** [dasiqox.org/about-us/map/](http://dasiqox.org/about-us/map/)

## K'IH TSAA?DZE

**NAME:** K'ih tsaa?dze Tribal Park  
(K'ih tsaa?dze means "old spruce" in the Dane-za, or Beaver, language)

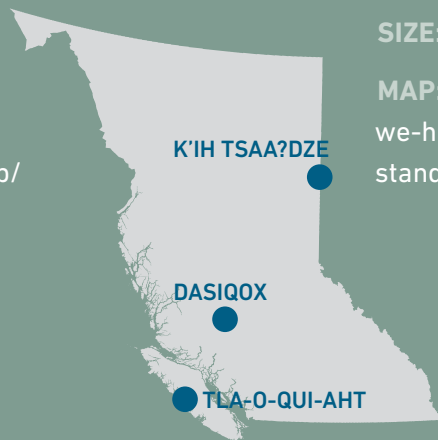
**LOCATION:** Northeastern B.C.,  
Northwestern Alberta

**BACKGROUND:** K'ih tsaa?dze has long been a place of spiritual importance to the community members of Doig River. The nation has negotiated logging deferrals with many of the companies operating within K'ih tsaa?dze's boundaries, and is currently in conversations with the provinces of B.C. and Alberta to explore co-governance models.

**ESTABLISHED:** 2011

**SIZE:** 90,000 hectares

**MAP:** [thenarwhal.ca/it-s-last-place-we-have-our-people-doig-river-s-last-stand-amidst-fracking-boom/](http://thenarwhal.ca/it-s-last-place-we-have-our-people-doig-river-s-last-stand-amidst-fracking-boom/)



## TLA-O-QUI-AHT

**NAME:** Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks – Wahnah'juss Hilth'hoo'iss (Meares Island) Tribal Park

**LOCATION:** At the heart of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve on the west coast of Vancouver Island

**BACKGROUND:** Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Park (otherwise known as Meares Island) was declared a Tribal Park by Ha'wiih (hereditary chiefs) in 1984 in response to unsustainable logging practices that were impinging on traditional territories. Since then, the Tla-o-qui-aht have established three additional tribal parks: Ha'uukmin (Kennedy Lake Watershed), Tranquil Tribal Park and Esowista Tribal Park.

**ESTABLISHED:** 1984

**SIZE:** ~ 21,249 hectares

**MAP:** [wildernesscommittee.org/sites/all/files/publications/2013\\_tla-o-qui-aht\\_Paper-Web-2.pdf](http://wildernesscommittee.org/sites/all/files/publications/2013_tla-o-qui-aht_Paper-Web-2.pdf)s

## The work of Indigenous communities in establishing IPCAs clearly points to the need for a transformative shift in the way that conservation areas are approached in Canada.

- **Interim protection**—A key theme is the critical need for interim measures to protect Indigenous territories while communities go through the process of management planning and negotiations.
- **Proactive and strategic communications**—Taking a proactive approach to communications about an IPCA was highlighted as a key aspect of the work in securing IPCAs. This point includes open communications between community members and leadership, as well as taking the lead in messaging to the broader public, other governments, and interest groups.
- **Internal cooperation**—Some leaders highlighted the importance of nurturing internal cooperation among and between Indigenous communities and leaders, in order to effectively negotiate for, and manage, IPCAs within their territories.
- **Relationships with other governments**—Declaring an IPCA and governing it means that Indigenous governments face decisions about how they want to relate to other governments on all matters pertaining to the new jurisdictional declaration.
- **Role for restoration**—IPCA are generally in areas that face impacts from a variety of sources (e.g., industrial activity, forest fires, road-building, motorized vehicle use), and Indigenous peoples often place a high priority on healing or restoring the land and people, together.
- **The importance of culture and language in IPCA establishment**—Indigenous protected areas are as much about practising ways of life and holding space for peoples' cultural relationships, as they are about the land. Culture and language revitalization are central to IPCAs.

The report includes a checklist of tools for those initiating work on IPCA establishment.

The work of Indigenous communities in establishing IPCAs clearly points to the need for a transformative shift in the way that conservation areas are approached in Canada. This shift will require that resources be directed to Indigenous peoples and nations for planning, capacity-building, and nation-building. It will also require a re-examination of protected area jurisdiction and management at all levels of government.

Ultimately, IPCAs in B.C. and Canada are rooted in the exercise of constitutionally upheld Indigenous rights in accordance with Indigenous laws. Exercising agency in how these lands are managed and protecting and conserving space to practise Indigenous preferred livelihoods on the land may seem “new,” but these practices are much older than our current governance structures and land jurisdiction.

We must work together to change the structures that govern how lands are managed so that Indigenous communities are empowered with capacity, tools and a supportive regulatory landscape to successfully establish and govern IPCAs.



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