

Dene K'éh Kusan

ALWAYS WILL BE THERE

KASKA DENA CONSERVATION ANALYSIS SUMMARY

KASKA DENA & OUR ANCESTRAL TERRITORY

- ✦ The Kaska Dena are Athabaskan speaking First Nations people residing in Northern British Columbia, the Southeast Yukon, and the Southwestern corner of the Northwest Territory.
- ✦ Archaeological sites found within the Kaska Dena Ancestral Territory suggest that the cultural areas in southeast Yukon and northern BC were occupied for at least the last 7,500 years. The earliest peoples in the Kaska Ancestral territory came equipped with tools, and a way of life adapted to hunting and surviving in the cold tundra environment.
- ✦ The entire Kaska Dena population is connected through our language where there is a high degree of mutual intelligibility from our five dialects in the different regions of our ancestral territory. The Kaska have two matrilineal moieties, called Crow and Wolf, often referred to as clans, that guided their kin relations with the surrounding communities.
- ✦ The Kaska Dena First Nations in British Columbia are the Dease River First Nation in Good Hope Lake, the Daylu Dena Council in Lower Post and the Kwadacha First Nation in Fort Ware, while the Yukon Kaska Dena reside in the communities of Ross River administered by the Ross River Dena Council and Watson Lake under the Liard First Nation.



✦ The Kaska Dena Ancestral Territory in British Columbia is vast, and there is a great deal of variation in the landscape. There are barren mountain summits, glaciers, plains, plateaus, thin forests, thick forests, wetlands, water's edge, lakes, rivers and streams, all unevenly distributed over 100,000 km² of northern British Columbia.

✦ The Territory is characterized in the south by the large, flat valley of the Rocky Mountain Trench enclosed by rugged mountains and smaller valleys to the east and west. The landscape of the northern portion of the Territory opens up north of Sifton pass to the Yukon Territory into vast plateaus dissected by large river systems. In the south, the village of Fort Ware (Kwadacha) is situated at the confluence of the Finlay and Fox rivers. The community of Good Hope Lake is located in the northwest part of the Ancestral Territory on the Cassiar Highway (Highway 37), a short distance north of the Dease River. Lower Post (Daylu) is situated at the confluence of the Dease and Liard rivers, just south of the border between the Yukon and British Columbia.

✦ The proximity of the communities to major river systems demonstrates the importance of the rivers for the Kaska people in trade, travel and sustenance.

✦ The Kaska Dena in British Columbia have been engaged in a multitude of planning processes that include:

1. The Muskwa--Kechika Management Area,
2. British Columbia Strategic Land and Resources Management Plans,
3. Community plans that incorporate cultural values and Kaska law.

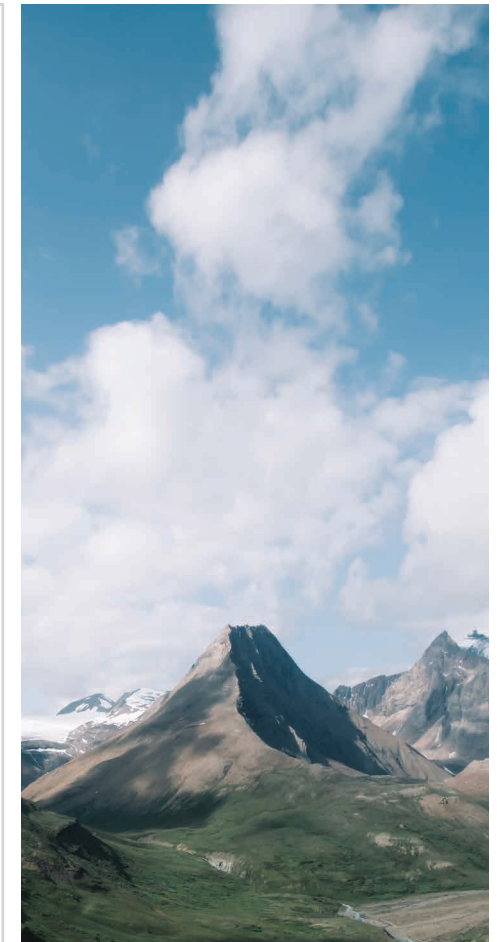
✦ Dene K'éh Kusān, the proposed protected area, has been incorporated around these land use plans and their management direction that allow for the engagement of ecosystem-based management in the extraction of resources on the periphery of Dene K'éh Kusān, where much needed employment is located, while ensuring large, intact, contiguous landscapes are protected from resource extraction.



Kaska Dena Traditional Knowledge

The designation of the Dene K'éh Kusān does not preclude or constrain continued resource development in the Kaska Ancestral Territory in British Columbia. Forestry, mining, and oil and gas sectors continue to have access to viable surface and subsurface land base to generate revenue for the Kaska and non-Kaska people.

“ It is the information, wisdom and practices (knowledge) necessary to support the community and its culture, based on a deep and inseparable relationship between the land and the people. This includes knowledge about the environment (water, land, air), as well as personal histories, stories and legends, as well as the belief systems that guided and continue to guide the culture.”





Kaska Dena Adhere to Guiding Principles for Land and Resource Management:

- ❖ Recognition of Kaska Dena’s rights, title, and decision-making powers in our ancestral territory.
- ❖ Recognition of Kaska Dena members continuing to harvest and rely upon the land and water within their Ancestral Territory to sustain our integral way of life as northern indigenous peoples. This way of life is perpetuated by transmitting their traditional knowledge on to future generations.
- ❖ Respect of sacred laws – āī and application for land and resource management.
- ❖ Kaska Dena ownership of intellectual property rights to Traditional Knowledge.
- ❖ Maintain ecological processes, which sustain biological diversity.
- ❖ Decision-making based on all sources of knowledge (western science, local, and traditional knowledge).



- ❖ Recognition of federal and provincial indigenous initiatives, policies, and commitments to implementation of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC); Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action; and related court decisions.
- ❖ Non-conflict and consistency with federal and provincial laws and policies.
- ❖ Consistency with court decisions and case law.
- ❖ Accountability and transparency for all parties, in the decision process.
- ❖ Acknowledging the role of existing statutory decision makers with consent-based decisions by Kaska Dena, BC, and Canada.
- ❖ Ensuring social, educational, and economic benefits and legacies occur for Kaska Dena communities and members; and
- ❖ Incorporating comprehensive monitoring through capacity development (e.g., land guardian programs or compliance officer programs), collaborative approaches, economic ventures, and delegated regulatory authorities.



Location and Significance

- ❖ Dene K'éh Kusān in the Kaska language means "Always Will be There". Measuring approximately 40,000 km² (~4,000,000 ha) in the core of the Kaska Ancestral Territory in British Columbia, it is situated wholly within the Makenzie River Basin and includes portions of 5 ecoregions, 13 ecosections, 10 major watersheds, 4 biogeoclimatic zones, and provides connectivity to 14 provincial protected areas.
- ❖ Dene K'éh Kusān represents the spiritual and cultural core of the Ancestral Territory of the Kaska Dena in British Columbia. The traditional knowledge and science-based Conservation Analysis provides a biological and cultural justification for the protection of Dene K'éh Kusān.
- ❖ The protection of Dene K'éh Kusān is based on the need to conserve ecosystem services, preserve the Kaska way of life, protect special, and sensitive ecological sites; ancient, historical, and cultural sites; spiritual, social, and economic areas; and revive our customary laws and our role as Kaska land stewards.
- ❖ Boundaries have been established to focus the proposed area within the exclusive use area of the Ancestral Territory to reduce potential concerns with neighbouring First Nations
- ❖ It also has been developed recognizing existing and potential resource development, and the boundaries were developed to reduce conflicts with these sectors.



Conservation Economy and Jobs

- ❖ Dene K'éh Kusān will provide an opportunity to pursue a green economy, to build capacity, expand our knowledge of the environment, our heritage, and offset the potential effects of climate change, as well as help revive our languages.
- ❖ The three First Nations Woodland Licenses will provide jobs in sustainable forestry.
- ❖ In regard to subsurface development (e.g., mineral development and oil and gas development), the boundaries were designed to capture the largest contiguous core area of the territory while avoiding or minimizing overlap with existing dispositions.
- ❖ In addressing fee simple lands or leases, the parcels identified will be netted out due to exemptions to Right of Ways and proximity to settlement areas.
- ❖ The Kaska Dena are supportive of the existing guide outfitting territories and recognize it has been an activity providing long-term economic opportunities for Kaska members, communities, and non-Kaska communities and families for generations. It is our approach to have guide outfitting infrastructure, activities, and authorizations included as an ongoing activity with renewable authorizations.
- ❖ The long-term approximate assessment of guide outfitting in this region means that over a thirty-year window close to \$150 - 200 million dollars could have been generated in today's dollars.
- ❖ It is with this same view that Adventure Tourism, and Registered Traplines for the commercial sale of fur are incorporated into the management of Dene K'éh Kusān.

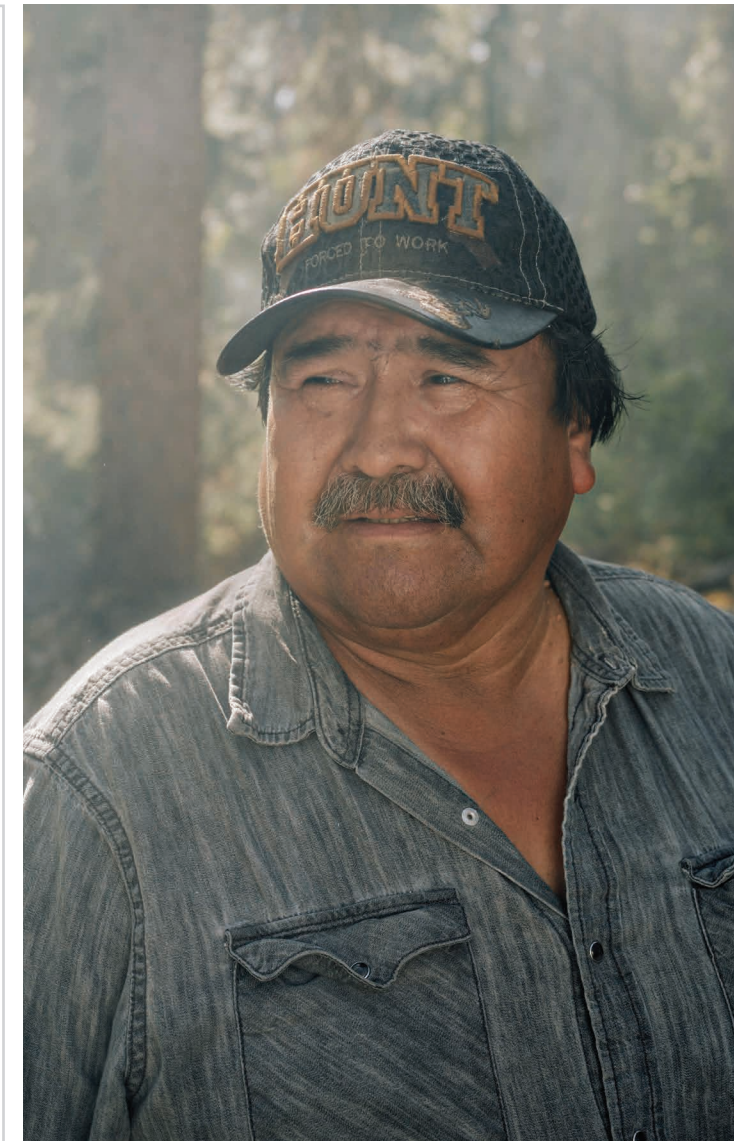
Conservation Analysis

- ✦ Dr. J. Weaver, Senior Conservation Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Society has completed a conservation assessment that was supported by the Kaska Dena on the Greater Muskwa-Kechika Area which encompasses Dene K'éh Kusān. It is systematic analysis of the Greater Muskwa-Kechika Area based on conservation biology.
- ✦ Weaver's Conservation Assessment will be used to provide additional information for support of the KIPCA and be a supporting document on the development of monitoring plans, public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and as an independent western science technical document.
- ✦ Dr. J. Weaver's Assessment has determined that Dene K'éh Kusān has very high conservation values.



Co-Management and Stewardship

- ✦ As a means to protect Dene K'éh Kusān, the Kaska Dena of British Columbia will institute a law called the Kaska Protected Area Law, a subset of sacred laws - āī, to protect their Aboriginal Rights, and the area within Dene K'éh Kusān to govern the relationship between the Kaska Dena and their lands and waters.
- ✦ The structure of co-management is envisioned to be through existing government to government agreements. It is with this view that the Kaska are working towards the designation of the proposed area as a Conservancy under the provincial protected areas legislation
- ✦ Dene K'éh Kusān is an area which supports the criteria of Title as laid out by the Supreme Court of Canada.



Dane Nan Ye Dāh (Kaska Guardians)

- ✦ The Kaska Guardians program within our communities is in various stages of development.
- ✦ We are training the next generation of land managers who will be the ones implementing our co-management and governance models.
- ✦ Guardians are trained to work in the areas of wildlife, forestry, mining management, ecosystem monitoring, archeology, climate change, water management, and include the incorporation of traditional knowledge into all of our work.
- ✦ The Guardians program represents important connections between the social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being of the Kaska Dena.



Protection of Intact Ecosystems and Sensitive Species

- ✦ Dene K'éh Kusān represents a significant refugia for intact boreal ecosystems and their animals and plants, providing the benefits associated as mitigations for climate change.
- ✦ For the Kaska Dena Ancestral Territory in British Columbia, the annual temperature has increased from 1.0–1.6°C (MOE 2016; Data Range 1900–2013). Other climate changes expected to occur include changes in total precipitation amounts and types of precipitation (rain vs. snow), changes to water peak and low flows, and a higher pace of changes occurring in the Ancestral Territory versus southern Canada. Climate change is expected to cause changes in the distribution and abundance of vegetation, fish, and wildlife.
- ✦ The Kaska Dena see the importance of expansive contiguous remote wilderness as benchmarks for resilient forests, carbon sequestration, and protected ecosystems. Some of the key climate change strategies for protected areas are the maintenance of functioning ecosystems and ensuring the movements of species within and outside of protected areas.
- ✦ Dene K'éh Kusān will provide additional protection for wilderness, intact ecosystems and sensitive species.

NORTHERN MOUNTAIN POPULATION WOODLAND CARIBOU HERDS

- 24% of the Muskwa Herd Range
- 86% of the Rabbit Herd Range
- 53% of the Gataga Herd Range
- 84% of the Frog Herd Range
- 49% of the Horseranch Herd Range
- 4% of the Finlay Herd Range
- 39% of the Liard Plateau Herd Range

ECOREGIONS

- 38% of the Northern Canadian Rocky Mountains
- 52% of the Liard Basin
- 38 % of the Hyland Highland
- 16% of the Boreal Mountains and Plateau
- 1 % of the Muskwa Plateau

MAJOR WATERSHEDS

- 35% of the Liard River
- 18% of the Beaver River
- 24% of the Dease River
- 66% of the Kechika River
- 0.6% of the Fort Nelson River
- 99% of the Rabbit River
- 68% of the Toad River
- 0.01% of the Stikine River
- 0.5% of the Pitman River
- 19% of the Finlay River

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Species at Risk in Dene K'éh Kusān

There are a number of species at risk which have the potential to be found within the KIPCA and these include (SC = Special Concern | T = Threatened | E = Endangered):

- ✦ **Bull Trout** SC (2019)
- ✦ **Short-eared Owl** SC (2012)
- ✦ **Wood Bison** T (2003)
- ✦ **Canada Warbler** T (2010)
- ✦ **Olive-sided Flycatcher** T (2010)
- ✦ **Rusty Blackbird** SC (2009)
- ✦ **Peregrine Falcon, Anatum Subspecies** SC (2012)
- ✦ **Wolverine, Luscus Subspecies** SC (2018)
- ✦ **Porsild's Bryum** T (2011)
- ✦ **Barn Swallow** T (2017)
- ✦ **Northern Myotis** E (2014)
- ✦ **Collared Pika** SC (2017)
- ✦ **Cutthroat Trout, Lewisi Subspecies** SC (2010)
- ✦ **Hotwater Physa** E (2003)
- ✦ **Woodland Caribou (Northern Mountain Population)** SC (2005)
- ✦ **Grizzly Bear** SC (2018)

