



TAKU RIVER TLINGIT First Nation



PRESS RELEASE

TAKU RIVER TLINGIT MAKE A HISTORIC DECLARATION TO PROTECT LINGÍT KUSTEEYÍ (Tlingit Way of Living) & THE TAKU WATERSHED BY ESTABLISHING AN INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREA

January 21, 2023 – At a series of community meetings held in Atlin, BC and Whitehorse, YK this week, the Tak’hu (Taku) River Tlingit celebrated the declaration of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) within their traditional Territory.

The Taku watershed covers 1.8 million hectares and is the largest watershed on the Pacific Coast of North America that is inaccessible by road. It is a biodiverse ecosystem that includes all five species of pacific salmon and supports large mammal predator-prey relationships from the inland boreal forest and glacier-fed streams to coastal transition zones. The Taku’s size, diversity, and intact network of life provide a foundation for its resilience to climate change, supporting a future for all who depend upon it.

The Tak’hu (Taku) River Tlingit Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area fulfills the ambitious direction set out in the nation’s 2009 Tlatsini (Places That Make Us Strong) Vision, which states, “Protection of Tlatsini lands is necessary to ensure *Lingít kusteeyí* — **Tlingit Way of Living** – while providing for opportunities for ourselves, as well as others, who pursue the land-based life we all value in the Atlin-Taku region... Within the Tlatsini lands, our intent is to maintain functioning ecosystems over large, connected landscapes necessary to sustain effective wildlife and fisheries populations that are so vital to our health and cultural wellbeing.”

Jinik (Charmaine Thom), Spokesperson for the Tak’hu (Taku) River Tlingit, says “Tak’hu (Taku) River Tlingit have a sacred relationship with our territory, reflected in the concept of *Lingít Kusteeyí* (Tlingit Way of Living), which encompasses caring for all life. The declaration of the IPCA is an extension of this commitment to forever care for the fish, wildlife, waters, and all other life and spirits within Tak’hu (Taku) River Tlingit Territory.”

“The new IPCA establishes a fair, responsible and respectful framework for indigenous leadership, reconciliation, economic certainty, environmental protection, climate resilience, and wild salmon conservation and restoration. The mapped vision for the T’akú Tlatsini Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (T’akú IPCA) represents generations of knowledge and decades of work,” says Jinik. (see attached Map).

The T'akú IPCA protects critical landscapes while providing for a diversified economic future. 60% of the T'akú watershed is protected through the IPCA to preserve salmon rivers and spawning areas, and landscapes needed for wildlife, for clean water, and *Lingít Kusteeyí*. These landscapes are appropriate for a diversity of non-extractive uses, such as tourism, research and restoration.

The remaining 40% of the T'akú watershed is identified as specially managed landscapes. These specially managed areas include zones with high mineral potential, where the T'akú IPCA provides opportunities for respectful, clean mineral extraction and other uses that support a low carbon economy.

The Tak'hu (Taku) River Tlingit have historically been miners, and this IPCA provides a path forward that values and considers all aspects of their cultural heritage while supporting Canada's need for critical minerals. The IPCA supports Tlingit laws, standards, and protocols to guide the use and harvest of Tlingit resources in sustainable and honourable ways to ensure a shared and thriving future. The Tak'hu (Taku) River Tlingit welcomes collaboration to foster clean economic opportunities that align with their cultural values.

As changing climate exacerbates existing challenges and health stressors for Indigenous peoples in Canada— such as wildfires, permafrost thaw and glacier retreat, changing wildlife patterns, diminishing access to traditional food sources and flooding— it is increasingly important to protect climate resilient landscapes. Large, intact ecosystems such as the Taku watershed provide species with the necessary space and genetic diversity needed to adapt to environmental change.

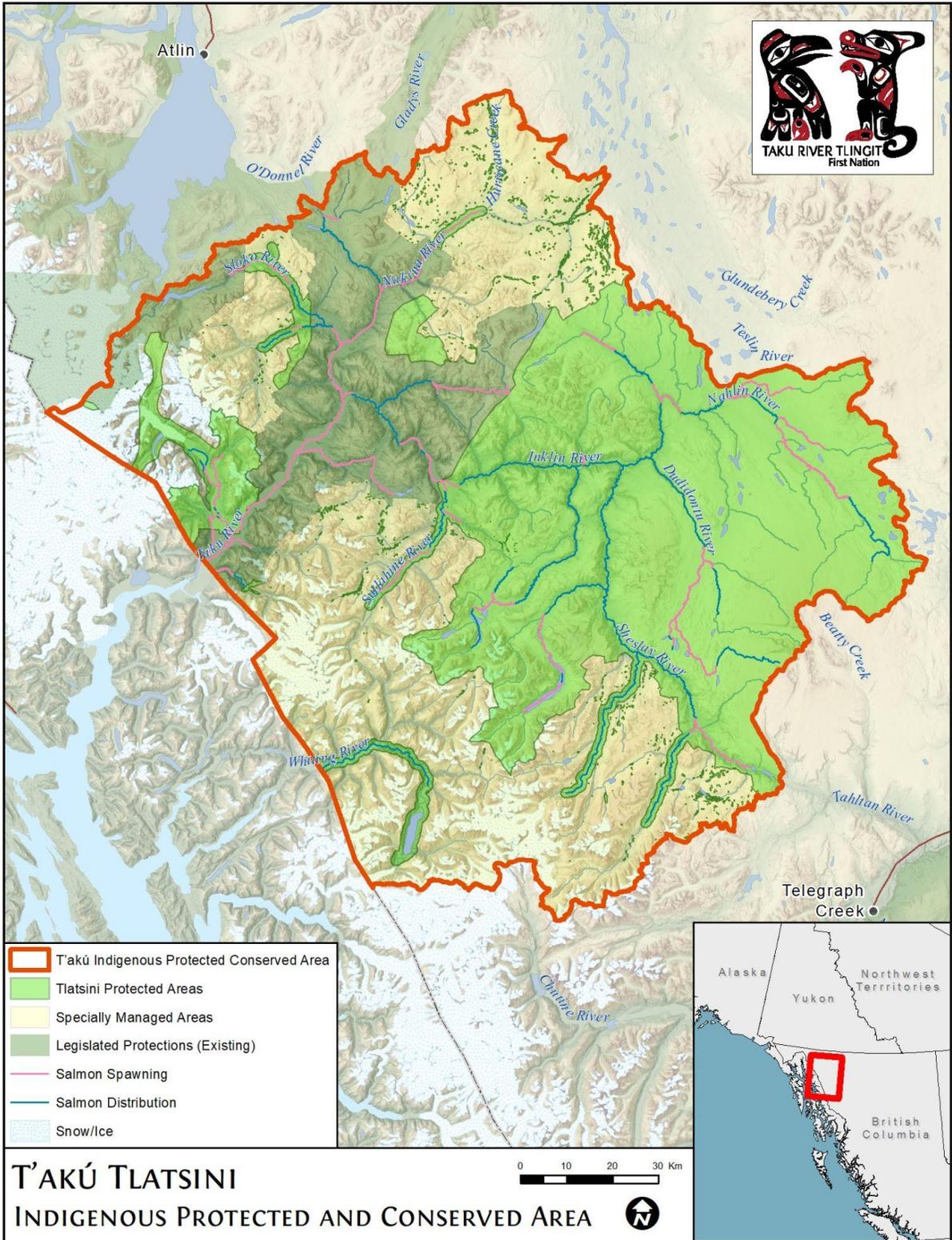
The Tak'hu (Taku) River Tlingit First Nation looks forward to implementing the IPCA with the continued support of the Government of British Columbia, the Government of Canada, neighbouring first nations, the community, responsible businesses, and local partners.

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MEDIA RESOURCES

- **Declaration** <https://trtfn.com/tipca/>
- **Map** (page 3)
- **Backgrounder** (page 4)
- **Visual Assets** Photos & Video assets available for publication. Download [Dropbox](#)
- **Biography of Jinik, Charmaine Thom**, Spokesperson of the TRTFN (attached)



BACKGROUND



The Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN) is located in Atlin, BC, a small remote community of approximately 400 people. Taku River Tlingit Territory covers over 40,000 sq/km and includes what is now known as British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska/US. This territory contains high coastal mountains and glaciers, expansive forests rich with wildlife and salmon filled wild rivers. As responsible decision makers, TRTFN is embarking on a course necessary to ensure the preservation of our wildlife and fisheries.

What is an IPCA?

Within Canada, IPCAs are a modern application of Indigenous values, laws and knowledge systems to the sustainable use and management of traditional territories. They can be a foundation for local Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies and an exercise in cultural continuity on the lands and waters. They also provide opportunities to connect to the lands and waters and are places of healing.

The creation of IPCAs provides opportunities for reconciliation to take place, both between people and between society and the lands and waters. IPCAs acknowledge international laws and commitments, such as Canada's treaties, UNDRIP, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and other commitments. They can be designated under provincial or federal laws — in addition to Indigenous laws — or remain unilateral in designation.

IPCA's play an important role in Canada's commitment to 30x30, a movement to conserve at least 30 percent of the country's lands and waters by 2030.

Government of Canada Support for Indigenous-led Area Based Conservation

In December 2022, as delegates from around the world gathered in Montréal for the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Canadian Government affirmed its role as a leader in nature conservation. On behalf of the Government, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change committed to continue to support Indigenous-led efforts to conserve nature and biodiversity, protect Indigenous cultures and ways of life, and build a healthy future for generations to come, while making significant progress toward meeting Canada's conservation goals.

Government of BC support for IPCAs

In December 2022, the B.C. government committed to protecting 30 percent of the province's land by 2030, including through the creation of new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs).

Mandate letters called on Ministers to ensure that BC is operating on the land in a way that ensures sustainability for future generations. These directives included specific measures in addition to the creation of IPCAs.

- Lead cross-government work to improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic development, housing and infrastructure while maintaining high levels of environmental protection.
- Continue to transform the management and stewardship of our waters, lands and resources, together with First Nations, and work toward modern land use plans and permitting processes rooted in science and Indigenous knowledge that consider new and cumulative impacts to the land base.
- With support from the Ministers of Forests and Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, develop a new conservation financing mechanism to support protection of biodiverse areas.

The Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship was very clear —

"We have seen the impacts of short-term thinking on the British Columbia land base – exhausted forests, poisoned water, and contaminated sites. These impacts don't just cost the public money to clean up and rehabilitate, they threaten the ability of entire communities to survive.

By planning carefully, we can ensure our province enjoys the best of economic development while conserving wild spaces. Indigenous partners in this critical work can bring their expertise, knowledge, and priorities to the table to ensure this effort lasts for generations.

Working with business and industry, along with local communities, First Nations, and other key stakeholders, we will be able to ensure the reasons we're all proud to be British Columbians – our rugged nature, remarkable outdoor spaces, our wildlife and ecosystems – continue to survive and thrive for the enjoyment and sustainability of countless future generations of British Columbians."