

# NÉ DŪGŪZEDĪTCHĪ - WE ARE TALKING TO EVERYONE ABOUT IT

Official Newsletter of the Dena Kayeh Institute

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## Message from Executive Director

We are pleased to share the latest edition of the Né Dūgūzeditchī Newsletter.

Click on the newsletter  
title to learn how to say it  
in Dene K'éh!

As we reflect on the past year of 2024, we are reminded of the incredible dedication that each of the Kaska communities brings to advancing land stewardship priorities. We offer a big congratulations to the community of Tu Łidlini for successfully signing an MOU to advance their IPCA in the Southeast Yukon. The Kaska Nation should be proud of all the work being done to ensure our lands and waters are protected for future generations.

It is with immense gratitude that I share with you some of the highlights and successes we've achieved together at the Dena Kayeh Institute over the past year, as well as the opportunities ahead of us for 2025. This year, we have seen an increase in community engagement, new partnerships, and impactful programs. These achievements wouldn't have been possible without your unwavering support and commitment to the work we are doing around land stewardship.

Looking ahead, we are energized by the upcoming initiatives, such as the Kaska Land Stewardship Certificate Program, the advancement of the Dene K'éh Kusān IPCA proposal, and our ongoing work to retain and recruit more land guardians in our communities. We are confident that with the collaboration happening in our communities and with our partners, we will be able to create even more meaningful change in our communities and beyond.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey. Together, we are building a brighter future for our Nation, and I look forward to all that we will accomplish in the year ahead.

The Team at DKI wishes you and your families a wonderful holiday season!

**Shówe sénlá' - Corrine Porter - Executive Director**







## Dene K'éh Kusān Update

This fall and early winter, our team has been working hard to move the IPCA proposal forward, particularly through our work with our neighbouring nations. This past October, we hosted an IPCA Elder and Knowledge Keeper Gathering at the Liard River Hotsprings Lodge where representatives from the Fort Nelson First Nation and the Kaska Nation came together to begin the discussions on the interest in and possibility of co-managing Dene K'éh Kusān.

The conversations had at this gathering signalled a great interest from both sides in working together to ensure the creation and ongoing stewardship of Dene K'éh Kusān. The mutual recognition of the shared love for these lands and waters cemented the recommendations to our respective nations to develop a co-management agreement that facilitates collaborative management and governance aspects of the IPCA.



# Dene K'éh Kusān

ALWAYS WILL BE THERE

"I don't know how everyone feels about land but boy, is it sacred to me."

Debbie Groat

"It's got to be done our way"

Dakeli (Hammond) Dick





# Kaska and Fort Nelson First Nation Elder and Knowledge Holders Gathering

To close off the gathering, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and leadership representatives from both communities signed an Expression of Collaboration letter urging their respective leadership to rebuild the relationship between our communities and establish formal protocols to outline our responsibilities to protect the Kaska IPCA.



October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## Kaska Nation

Ross River Dena Council  
Liard First Nation  
Daylu Dena Council  
Dease River First Nation  
Kwadacha Nation

## Treaty 8 Tribal Association

Doig River First Nation  
Fort Nelson First Nation  
Halfway River First Nation  
Prophet River First Nation  
Saulteaux First Nation  
West Moberly First Nation

A letter to our respective Leaders and Elders Councils sharing the discussion of an initial gathering of Elders from the Fort Nelson First Nation and Daylu Dena Council held at the Liard River Hotsprings, October 16-17, 2024, to explore the creation of an effective nation-to-nation working-relationship for joint stewardship and protection of the Dene K'eh Kusān.

## Background

The leaders of the Treaty 8 Nations and the Kaska Dena Nation asked the Fort Nelson First Nation and Daylu Dene Council to represent their respective interests in exploring a formal working relationship between our people for effective joint stewardship of the Kaska proposed Indigenous Protected and Conserved

Area (IPCA) called Dene K'eh Kusān. Both nations worked to secure funding to undertake this work and, over the past year, have been trying to organize an initial meeting of elders to seek guidance on a process to do this work in a good way, respecting important traditions and cultural protocols of each of our Nations.

We had hoped to hold a gathering of our Elders and community members on the land earlier this summer, but events such as the evacuation, elections, and busy schedules made our best attempts at a larger gathering impossible. Still, the relentless impacts of climate change, the demand for the resources of our lands and the existence of growing support for indigenous-led conservation protection efforts spurred us to begin this initiative with a smaller gathering of elders to help us launch important wider meetings among our communities, Elder Councils and Leadership on this important issue of how, as long-time neighbours, we can share and exercise the responsibilities for stewardship of our lands and waters which is central to the ways of our respective Nations.

## Outcome of our Gathering

We were pleased to have the opportunity to come together to discuss our shared vision for the future of our traditional territories at the Liard River Hotsprings for this first meeting and through this letter wish to express our joint desire moving forward to collaborate on stewardship of the Kaska Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) proposal called Dene K'eh Kusān.

Our ancestors were gifted with profound understandings of the land and waters, knowledge which has guided and sustained our people for countless generations. Their governance of our territories preserved the resources and cultural heritage we cherish today. It is with this recognition that we acknowledge the importance of working together to strengthen the historic bonds between our nations and to uphold the vision of our elders as we move forward.

We believe this collaboration is essential for fulfilling our traditional responsibilities and honours our rights to self-determination to protect and manage areas like the IPCA and ensuring the well-being of our communities and future generations. The way we protect this land is of paramount importance; for our Indigenous governance to thrive, we must establish collaborative, respectful and effective working relationships as neighbours, moving forward together with strength and friendship to accomplish shared goals.

In this regard, we express our intent and encouragement to our communities and leaders to help rebuild the relationships that have been fractured through colonialism and the artificial boundaries imposed upon our communities. This letter serves as our mutual commitment to a shared vision for the stewardship of our lands and waters. As a small group of Elders from Daylu Dena Council and the Fort Nelson First Nation, we wish to continue and help widen our initial dialogue to include our communities, Elders Councils and Leaders as committed and strong neighbours. Our recommendation to our Nations is together to establish a comprehensive protocol or agreement that outlines our mutual responsibilities and guides our efforts to achieve the protection of the Dene K'eh Kusān IPCA.

The purpose of this future protocol will be to create an overarching framework that facilitates collaborative management and governance. This framework will support shared decision-making and address various aspects of governance related to the stewardship of these lands. Together, we will identify approaches to develop a co-management agreement that respects our traditions and strengthens our roles as caretakers of this vital area.

We are excited about the possibilities this partnership holds and look forward to the important work ahead. Together, we can ensure that our lands and waters are protected for the benefit of our people and the generations to come. Let's action the best of ourselves, our history and our traditions to achieve the best outcomes for the lands and waters of our homelands.

Dated on this 17<sup>th</sup> Date of October 2024

Elders of the Kaska Nation

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Elders of the Fort Nelson First Nation

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KASKA LEADERSHIP

FORT NELSON FIRST NATION LEADERSHIP

*Mr Angus McDonald*  
*Chief Raven Toad*  
*Chief Black fox*  
*Joy Chief of Toad*  
*River BC*





# Community Engagement Sessions on IPCA

In 2024, our communications team has hosted and been involved in many events to inform our membership and the public about the IPCA proposal. This month we hosted our first Dene K'eh Kusān Webinar!

This Webinar Series will cover a variety of topics and allows for our community members to engage with us from the comforts of their own home.

Dena Kayeh Institute





Dene  
K'eh  
Kusān

ALWAYS WILL BE THERE


Dene K'eh Kusān  
Webinar Series




Please fill out our Surveys!

\*for Kaska Citizens Only


Kaska IPCA  
General Survey





Allowable Uses  
Survey

Conservation  
Economy  
Survey







## Dane Nan Yé Dāh Network Update

This year, the Kaska land guardians in Daylu have been busy with meetings, community events, survey work, and training. Here are some of the highlights of this past year!

### Workshops and Training:

- First Nations Climate Leadership Conference (Whitehorse)
- Supporting Wellbeing Training (Yellowknife)
- Guardians Gathering (Vancouver)
- Indigenous Watershed Governance Retreat (Smithers)
- Moose Monitoring Workshop (Via Zoom)
- Caribou Symposium (Dease Lake)
- Yukon Government Lake Monitoring Program Training (Watson Lake, Wheeler Lake, McKenna Lake and Boya Lake)



The Guardians perform a variety of different data collection and survey work.

- Monthly water sampling at the Liard River and placer mining sample locations.
- Quarterly data collection of hot springs temperatures at five different locations and climate station data at Crooked Lake.
- Deployment and data collection of bird acoustic recording units at different locations in Dena Kayeh.
- Ungulate Surveys
  - Sheep Surveys (Cassiar)
  - Bison Collaring (Liard)







Each year youth are hired for a summer term. Two youth were brought on this year and got to take part in a variety of training and community events.

Some of the community events from this year were:

- Collection of Birch Water with Denetia School (April)
- Bristol Bay (Alaska) group visit with Guardian Program (April)
- Moose Hide Tanning Camp (September)
- Ross River Guardians Visit (October)
- Rabbit snaring with Denetia School (December)







## DKI Initiatives

An important DKI initiative our team is excited to highlight is the work we are doing through the Ärramät Project. Through Ärramät, DKI receives funding for our Indigenous-Led place-based project. This project is to create a Kaska Dena Land Stewardship Certificate Program.

We have partnered with Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning to create a five- course certificate program aimed to revitalize Kaska stewardship of our lands and waters by replacing current management systems with one that aligns with Kaska worldview and governance.

To develop this curriculum, we are collaborating with land stewards and Elders to define the course modules, objectives, skills, activities, and resources. At a recent curriculum development workshop our team collaborated with Kaska Elders to ensure the content reflects community needs and traditions and teaches the students about Dena Law, Ethics, and Value Systems. This project ultimately is about empowering future generations of land stewards and creating a training program for Land Guardians that is done by Kaska for Kaska.

To find out more about the project  
Scan the QR Code



## Contact Information

For more information about DKI and the initiatives we support in the Kaska communities, please contact us at: [info@denakayeh.com](mailto:info@denakayeh.com) or at our emails below:

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