

NÉ DŪGŪZEDĪTCHĪ - WE ARE TALKING TO EVERYONE ABOUT IT

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

Official Newsletter of the Dena Kayeh Institute

Message from Executive Director

I am pleased to be writing on a day that feels increasingly like spring is finally arriving. For those of us at the Dena Kayeh Institute — as I suspect it is for everyone — we are more than ready for it.

It has been a busy winter, as you will see from the articles included in this newsletter. I hope you will read it with pleasure and know that each of you is part of this work in some way or another — and deserves a pat on the back for the progress we are making together, especially in protecting our lands and building opportunities for the future.

Let me again congratulate the newly elected Chief and Council of Kwadacha First Nation. I look forward to working with Chief Councillor Angela Hocken, Deputy Chief Councillor Braedon Abou, Councillor Bradley Seymour, Councillor Diane McCook, and Councillor Shawna Case. I hope very much that together you will engage with us in making the recognition of our Indigenous-led protected area, Dene K'éh Kusān, a key priority for Kwadacha and the Kaska Nation — and an achievement we can all celebrate in the very near future.

As you will see in this newsletter, our work and negotiations with BC toward recognition of the DKK as a protected area continue apace. We are listening carefully as stakeholders share their views on our proposed IPCA, and we continue to consider necessary accommodations as we meet with many interested organizations and mining interests to advance the Kaska vision. We are all aware that these are challenging times for governments everywhere — and the BC government, with its slim majority, is not immune to the anxiety weighing on the voting public. That said, we also know that Kaska efforts to build support for DKK are landing well, and we do not intend to take our foot off the gas as we head into a busy spring. The strong and vocal support from our communities is so important and deeply appreciated.

I look forward to meeting with our leaders very soon to review where we stand and confirm the direction for the coming months — including an initial Draft Plan for DKK and updates to the Land Use Plans across our traditional territory — with a view to having Final Recommendations ready for Kaska and BC Cabinet approval by year's end.

For those truly challenging moments in this work — which we as a team do our best to keep few and far between — the go-to for me and for the whole team is to watch our DKK film again <https://youtu.be/4mXmudP52T4?si=hWsZApImGtVwUMFR> It works as a tonic every time. The energy and optimism return. I invite you all to do the same. Simply put, and with all my heart: the DKK is worth fighting for.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter and, as always, please do not hesitate to reach out with your questions, praise, criticism, and ideas.

Shówe sénlá'

Corrine Porter - Executive Director

[To Sign Up for Our Newsletters Please Visit our Website!](#)

Contact Information

For more information about DKK and the initiatives we support in the Kaska communities, please contact us at: info@denakayeh.com or at our emails below:

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**Kanané' Ledānehdi' Wūtie
Nédzúdá Dowa**

*"We Must Protect Our Land So We Can
Live Well"*



A SHOUT OUT to the team at DKI for their unrelenting hard work, endless good cheer, dedication and support and in this Issue, I would like to extend a special...

THANK YOU to GILLIAN STAVEVELY, who has taken a senior position with another organization to continue using her many talents in advancing Indigenous issues, opportunities, and priorities, with a focus on our neighbours in the Yukon. We really miss her. Beyond her tremendous contribution to the work of DKI, Gillian has a special way about her — bringing joy and celebration to every task she mastered, every initiative she led, and always adding her razor-focused vision to our work for the Nation, no matter the frustrations or challenges along the way. The good news is she is not far, and we wish her well knowing her very big heart and her support are with us every step of the way.



WELCOME to the multi-talented MICHELLE MILLER to the position of DKI's Director of Culture and Land Stewardship. Michelle is familiar to many of you who know and appreciate the importance she places on reconnecting, learning and contributing to the protection of Kaska lands and cultural heritage. And she is off to a roaring start — already navigating an overloaded meeting schedule, making connections, and looking forward to a spring round of community visits with Bill Lux for DKK update briefings. She has also made time for a well-received interview for the article "BC Rethinks Conservation Goals after Mining Industry Push," recently published in The Narwhal. <https://thenarwhal.ca/mining-lobbying-bc-conservation-targets/>



CONGRATULATIONS to LACEY JOHNNY, who has accepted the position of Coordinator for the Kaska National Elders Council. With her dedication and experience, I can think of no one better suited to help the Council find its footing and create much-needed opportunities for our Kaska Elders to meet, be heard, and bring their wisdom and energy to the work of Kaska nation-building across all our communities. We wish Lacey every success with this important role with our Elders .





Dene K'éh Kusān Update

What's Been Happening

Since the fall, the Kaska Team has been actively engaging with stakeholders, neighbouring Nations, Kaska leadership, and community members regarding the Dene K'éh Kusān (DKK).

Through these conversations, we have been sharing the importance of DKK—highlighting its role in protecting Kaska cultural landscapes and critical wildlife habitats—while advancing a proposed boundary that respects existing economic activities and safeguards areas essential to culture, ecology, and future generations.

Key Activities

- **Stakeholder Engagement:**

In partnership with the BC Land Use Planning Team, we have held three stakeholder engagement sessions with British Columbians—providing information, answering questions, and building understanding of the DKK.

- **Neighbouring Nations Collaboration:**

We have met, and continue to meet, with neighbouring Nations to discuss the DKK and opportunities for shared governance.

- **Governance Development:**

Ongoing work to advance a draft governance framework that supports shared decision-making and consensus-based co-governance.

- **Kaska Leadership Engagement:**

Monthly Zoom meetings with Leadership to keep them updated on the Process.

- **Storytelling & Outreach:**

Video interviews with stakeholders are underway to share perspectives on the DKK.

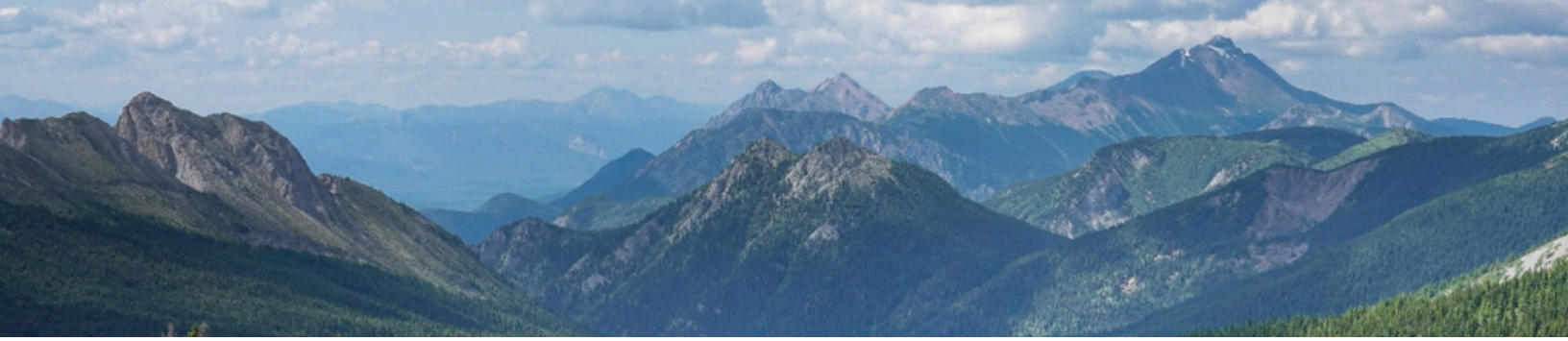
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Additional interviews are planned for April.

**Kanané' Kak'éh
K'idzedah
“On our land we follow
our ways”**



Dene K'éh Kusān
ALWAYS WILL BE THERE

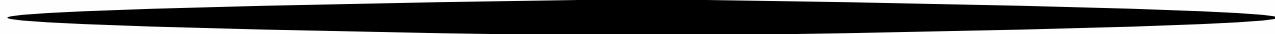


What's Next

Over the coming months, the focus will be on continued engagement with Kaska members, neighbouring Nations, and stakeholders, alongside refining the land use planning process as we move toward final recommendations in fall 2026.

We will also be sharing updated materials and summaries to support understanding of proposed changes and ensure everyone has the opportunity to stay informed and provide input.

For those looking to learn more or revisit key information about DKK, we encourage you to explore resources available on our website.



Kaska – Dene K'éh Kusān Reception

A reception was held in Victoria on November 13th to connect with allies and decision makers about Dene K'éh Kusān (DKK). Over 50 people attended the reception and spoke in support of the Kaska vision for the DKK and the conservation economy, including our amazing Taku River Tlingit neighbours who are working to advance their own conservation areas. Kaska Elder, Emil McCook and Daylu Dena Council Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling travelled from Kwadacha and Lower Post to speak to those in attendance about Kaska Kaska's vision for the Dene K'eh Kusan and the conservation economy and were joined by many of the guests who also expressed support. It was a heartening experience to witness our inclusive vision for the conservation economy gain such broad support.



KASKA LAND STEWARSHIP PROGRAM

Dena Kēyeh Sōgadze'ī (We are Caring for Dena Country): Kaska Stewardship Training Program

The Kaska Land Stewardship Certificate pilot program continues to build strong capacity for land stewardship across Kaska Dena Kēyeh. The last 2 courses, of the 5-course certificate, will take place at Finalyson Lake (Łegāenjōji / Tetl'ānejōji) from April 14-23rd.

Guided by Elders and supported by the Dena Kayeh Institute and the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, this program is preparing the next generation of Kaska Land Guardians. Information on recruitment for the second cohort will be shared soon and coordinated through the Dechinta–UNBC partnership.



From **April 14-23rd** the final two courses of the five-course program will take place at Finlayson Lake (Łegāenjōji / Tetl'ānejōji).

These courses are:

Course 4: Clashing Systems of Land Relations: Resource Extraction in Kaska Dena Kēyeh

Course 5: Kaska Dena Futures and Indigenous Protected Areas Introduction





WE ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE THREE LOWER POST RESIDENTS—LISA HORSEY, PAM MOON, AND ROBIN KIRK—WHO RECENTLY COMPLETED THE COMMUNITY SAFETY GUARDIAN TRAINING THROUGH YUKON UNIVERSITY AND HOUSE OF WOLF.

GROUNDING IN CULTURE AND GUIDED BY ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS, THE TRAINING REFLECTS THE VALUES AND STRENGTHS OF THE COMMUNITY.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LISA, PAM, AND ROBIN ON THIS ACHIEVEMENT. THEIR DEDICATION HELPS STRENGTHEN SAFETY, RESILIENCE, AND WELL-BEING ACROSS THE COMMUNITY.



**THIS SIX-MONTH PROGRAM
BUILDS CAPACITY AND
SUPPORTS WELLNESS IN FIRST
NATION COMMUNITIES BY
TEACHING:**

- ✔ CONFLICT DE-ESCALATION
- ✔ REMOTE FIRST AID
- ✔ EMERGENCY RESPONSE
- ✔ WINTER SURVIVAL





Dane Nan Yé Dāh Network Update

SMART ICE PROJECT FEB 9-11, 2026

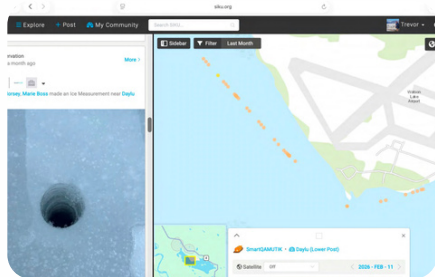
THE LAND GUARDIAN PROGRAM HAS SECURED FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT SMART ICE TECHNOLOGY, ALLOWING FOR REAL-TIME MONITORING OF ICE THICKNESS ON TRADITIONAL TRAVEL ROUTES. GUARDIANS COMPLETED TRAINING IN FEBRUARY AND ARE NOW USING THIS EQUIPMENT ALONGSIDE ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS TO COMBINE SCIENTIFIC DATA WITH TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE.

WOLF TRAPPING INITIATIVE MARCH 13-16TH, 2026

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DAYLU DENA COUNCIL WOLF TRAPPING TRAINING WAS HOSTED IN LOWER POST. THE TRAINING FOCUSED ON WOLF ECOLOGY, SAFE AND HUMANE TRAPPING, AND RESPONSIBLE HARVESTING PRACTICES.

DATA MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH

GUARDIANS ARE WORKING WITH UNIVERSITY PARTNERS TO ANALYZE LONG-TERM WATER MONITORING DATA. RESULTS WILL BE SHARED THROUGH ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY TOOLS, INCLUDING A WEBSITE AND INFOGRAPHICS.



**14 PARTICIPANTS
COMPLETED THE COURSE
OVER A PERIOD OF 4
DAYS**





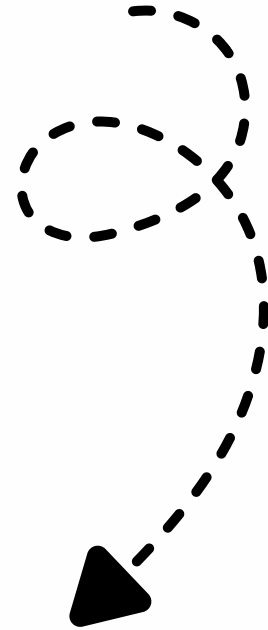
DENETIA SCHOOL – NATURE PARK PROJECT

GUARDIANS ARE SUPPORTING DENETIA SCHOOL IN DEVELOPING A NATURE PARK—AN OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACE FEATURING NATIVE PLANTS, GROWING AREAS, AND CULTURAL LEARNING ELEMENTS.

THIS PROJECT WILL ALSO INCLUDE:
A MOTUS WILDLIFE TRACKING STATION
A WEATHER STATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

TIMELINE:

SPRING/SUMMER 2026: **SITE PREPARATION AND INSTALLATIONS**
SUMMER 2026: **INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL**
FALL 2026: **ORDERING NATIVE PLANTS**
SPRING 2027: **PLANTING AND COMPLETION**



INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT (2025)
THE LAND GUARDIAN TEAM EXPANDED INVASIVE PLANT SURVEYS ALONG THE ALASKA HIGHWAY AND CONTINUED REMOVAL EFFORTS IN KEY AREAS.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- WATCH FOR INVASIVE SPECIES SUCH AS YELLOW HAWKWEED
- AVOID SPREADING SEEDS BY DRIVING THROUGH AFFECTED AREAS
- SHARE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

A COMMUNITY GATHERING IS PLANNED FOR SEPTEMBER TO REMOVE THE TARPS AND PLANT THE AREA WITH NATIVE PLANTS.



WE CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD GROUNDED IN KASKA VALUES, STRENGTHENING STEWARDSHIP, AND BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE OUR LANDS, CULTURES, AND COMMUNITIES THRIVE TOGETHER.



Indigenous Stewardship Project Management Certificate – Program Completion

We're pleased to share that Tanya Ball recently completed the Indigenous Stewardship Project Management Certificate program, which began in October 2025.

This program supports Indigenous practitioners in strengthening the skills needed to lead stewardship initiatives grounded in community values, knowledge systems, and long-term sustainability. Throughout the program, participants built practical capacity in project planning and delivery, financial management and grant administration, and effective engagement with governments, industry, funders, and communities.

The program also emphasized monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement, alongside opportunities for knowledge sharing through peer collaboration, case studies, and expert presentations.

Tanya's participation reflects a continued commitment to advancing Indigenous-led stewardship and strengthening the capacity needed to support meaningful, community-driven land and resource management.

The University of British Columbia Sauder School of Business and
the Spitz Centre for Indigenous Business Education

congratulate

Tanya Ball

on the successful completion of the

**Indigenous Stewardship
Project Management Program**

Darren Dahl
Dean, UBC Sauder School of Business
Innovate BC Professor

Dennis Thomas - Whonoak
Executive Director, Spitz Centre for Indigenous Business
Education, UBC Sauder School of Business

UBC SAUDER
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Ch'nook