

2018/2019 Public Engagement Summary

1. What is Dasiqox Tribal Park?

Dasiqox Tribal Park (DTP) is a proposed land, water and wildlife management area located in T̄silhqot'in territory, about 125 kilometres southwest of Williams Lake, BC. It is an expression of Indigenous governance initiated in 2014 by the Xeni Gwet'in and Yunešit'in Governments in their shared caretaker area, and supported by the T̄silhqot'in National Government.

This area is separate and distinct from the lands the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledged T̄silhqot'in title to in 2014. It is different from conventional provincial or national parks. Dasiqox Tribal Park is a vision for this area that protects the land and revitalizes T̄silhqot'in culture, while also creating opportunities for compatible forms of sustainable economic development for the region—it is guided by Indigenous values, laws and leadership.

“When Xeni Gwet'in and Yunešit'in leadership made the announcement for the Dasiqox Tribal Park, we faced tremendous uncertainty. Having experienced, first, the federal rejection of a copper and gold proposal called New Prosperity, and second, the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledgement of Aboriginal Title—it was a moment of opportunity. Collectively, it was merely a name and an affirmation to do something better. We had to take responsibility. This place is where we belong, places of our eldest origin story. Having been denied, treated as inferior, and marginalized from accessing our homelands by the Crown, the name Nexwagwež'an serves as a reminder that “it is there for us.” It is our responsibility to express what we want to see.”

CHIEF RUSSELL MYERS ROSS, YUNEŠIT'IN GOVERNMENT

In 2017, the Dasiqox Tribal Park Initiative was created to support the implementation of the Tribal Park vision and became a project on the [Tides Canada shared platform](#). The initiative is led by a Steering Committee made up of Xeni Gwet'in and Yunešit'in leadership.

What has been happening so far with the management planning process?

Since announcing their intention to create the Dasiqox Tribal Park in 2014 at a totem pole ceremony at Težtan Biny (Fish Lake), Yunešit'in and Xeni Gwet'in leadership have been hard at work establishing strong foundations for establishing and managing it.

- **2015–2016:** Commissioned an internal strategy report to take stock of the many community-led projects and initiatives done in the area to date and determine priority action areas for establishing the Tribal Park
- **2016:** Released the [Dasiqox Tribal Park position paper](#) to the public, highlighting the three pillars of environmental protection, cultural revitalization and sustainable livelihoods
- **2016–2017:** Conducted interviews, focus groups and feedback sessions with over 70 community members from Yunešit'in and Xeni Gwet'in to create the 90-page Dasiqox Tribal Park Community Vision and Management Goals document
- **2018:** Released the [Community Vision summary](#) for feedback from other T̄silhqot'in communities and the public; held public information sessions & meetings on the proposed Tribal Park

Our work in 2019 and beyond includes working to define—both for the T̓silhqot̓in and the broader community—our proposed management plan for the area. Developing a management approach through community engagement, for an Indigenous protected area in a region where there is no existing model, takes time. In other locations where similar designated areas have been proposed, these kinds of processes have lasted from 10–30 years.¹ For the Dasiqox Tribal Park, this work is still in progress—and while there are a number of variables in the timeline, we hope to have a management approach and action plan completed in the next three to five years.

What were the opportunities to provide feedback to date?

The Community Vision summary document was released to the public for review and feedback from April 2018–September 2018. The document is an expression of the Xeni Gwet̓in and Yunešit̓in aspirations for the Dasiqox Tribal Park. It helps to define, both for the T̓silhqot̓in and the broader community, our proposed vision and goals for the area.

Over the course of 2018 and early 2019, we:

- Hosted tables at the T̓silhqot̓in Governance and National Gatherings and attended community meetings in Xeni Gwet̓in, Yunešit̓in, ʔEsdilagh and Tl'etingox over the summer and into the fall.
- Hosted public information sessions in Williams Lake (June 8), Big Creek (July 13), were invited to present at a Cariboo Regional District meeting (September 4), and have participated in several other stakeholder meetings.
- Presented at the BC-T̓silhqot̓in National Government Working Group, as part of the Nenqay Deni Accord.
- Received over 50 e-mails and messages sent via our social media channels about the summary Community Vision.
- Received over 3,000 pledges of support via an online pledge at dasiqox.org

This work represents a first step at engaging the public on our plans for Dasiqox Tribal Park, and there will be more opportunities in the future to engage. The remainder of this report provides an overview of the feedback received, questions asked and answers given.

2. What we heard

We received many questions, comments and feedback over the course of 2018 and early 2019. Below are some of the main themes that emerged:

Relationship building & communication

- A strong desire to build relationships between T̓silhqot̓in and non-T̓silhqot̓in neighbours through the Tribal Park process, as well as on many other issues, and a desire from non-T̓silhqot̓in to be invited into discussions, to work together on shared projects and solutions.
- Requests for continued open and regular communication, including information sessions/meetings, dialogue, learning and information sharing.
- Due to ongoing uncertainty and absence of information, rumors and concerns have been circulating, without being addressed. Concerns were shared about uncertainty, potential impacts on forest and mining industry operations, and current Tribal Park boundaries. Further dialogue is needed to work through these issues.

“We want to be invited into the discussion, to be able to share information about [the Tribal Park initiative] with people who live there, to be able to collaborate—we need more collaboration, so we can move forward as a collective, build bridges, build relationships.” PARTICIPANT, CARIBOO REGIONAL DISTRICT MEETING (SEPTEMBER 2018)

“Many issues [that affect local non-T̓silhqot̓in residents]—wildlife, predators, wildfire—require further information, we want to be included in discussions.” PARTICIPANT, BIG CREEK INFORMATION SESSION (JULY 2018)

¹ [Edézhzié IPCA in the Northwest Territories, Duu Guusud Haida Heritage Site and Conservancy on Haida Gwaii, Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks on Vancouver Island](#)

Reconciliation

- Recognition that there are wounds to be healed between T̓silhqot'in and non-T̓silhqot'in communities, that moving forward needs to be done together, and there are existing relationships to build on.
- This work presents many questions and challenges in reconciling the differences in T̓silhqot'in and non-T̓silhqot'in approaches to land management, and there is a need for mutual benefit.

"I appreciate that in your document you talk of the restoration of your land, culture and people but also include an opportunity for the non-Indigenous community to witness and experience the beauty and bounty of your land." E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE (MAY 2018)

"This is the first time a First Nation has come to [our] table and presented an idea. It is a huge step for us and for you guys. I appreciate that you want to hear our feedback—I can't say we support 100% until there is more information available, but we all want sustainability." PARTICIPANT, CARIBOO REGIONAL DISTRICT MEETING (SEPTEMBER 2018)

Common interests & concerns

- Enthusiastic support for the Dasiqox Tribal Park vision, with people sharing their appreciation for its fresh approach, wisdom and foresight,

and commending Yunešit'in and Xeni Gwet'in on their work.

- People expressed that this initiative is an opportunity to work together towards common goals of sustainability, issues of common concern raised include (in no particular order): water protection, prioritizing forest health, reintroducing active fire management into the landscape, predator management, overharvesting of wildlife by hunters, landscape restoration, respectful use of land by visitors and residents, and wildlife protection (including Grizzly bears and salmon).
- We also heard that naming it a "park" is confusing, as it's associated with traditional approaches to conservation.

"[I'm walking away with a] sense of hope and encouragement, and that we need to be more responsible for the land." PARTICIPANT, WILLIAMS LAKE INFORMATION SESSION (JUNE 2018)

"We need to find a way to work together, so land can sustain us all in the future." PARTICIPANT, CARIBOO REGIONAL DISTRICT MEETING (SEPT 2018)

"Human health is connected to the health of the land—we forget this. The health [of everyone] is tied to projects like this." PARTICIPANT, WILLIAMS LAKE INFORMATION SESSION (JUNE 2018)



Williams Lake Information Session

3. Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

We heard many questions about the Tribal Park over the course of 2018 and early 2019. Below is a list of those most frequently asked, along with the answers available from Yunešit'in Government and Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government at this stage.

1. How will the rights of existing property or tenure holders be addressed and managed?

We recognize there are a number of Crown tenures that overlap with the DTP, although the BC government did not take into account T̄silhqot'in territorial rights and jurisdiction when allocating these tenures. This is an area that requires further work, and we are still at the very beginning of those discussions. **We are aware that maintaining range rights for ranch lands is an issue of importance to local ranchers.**

The Nenqay Deni Accord guides the government-to-government process for the T̄silhqot'in National Government and the Province of BC to address questions of land and jurisdiction, and will play a part in addressing this issue.

2. Will the land base be available for economic development, including, but not limited to tourism, trapping, guiding and resource extraction?

Yes—provided that the economic activities in question are compatible with the overall vision and principles guiding land use and management for the area. Sustainable economic livelihoods is one of the three pillars of Dasiqox Tribal Park. We place a high priority on building a local economy that is based in a long-term relationship with local lands and resources. T̄silhqot'in people have a long history of living with the land and using it to thrive—and will continue to do so in ways that help to sustain it for future generations, rather than degrading it.

While the area is not open for resource use or extraction activities that are unsustainable, or that damage the long-term well-being of ecosystems or the people that live in the Dasiqox Tribal Park, there is plenty of room to build capacity for a local economy. This includes, but is not limited to, cultural and ecological tourism, green energy, opportunities

for value-added economic initiatives for sustainable forestry, trapping, guide outfitters/guiding, developing carbon credit programs, land monitors (e.g. Guardian programming) and educational programs and/or facilities. More research, feasibility work, community engagement and support is needed to develop these ideas—but there is great potential.

“Sustainability is really huge to us. Some of you might come and go, but there will always be Xeni Gwet'in.” COUNCILLOR DAVID SETAH, XENI GWET'IN FIRST NATIONS GOVERNMENT (CARIBOO REGIONAL DISTRICT, SEPT 4)

3. How will the proposed park be governed? How will it be operated?

This is an ongoing conversation. The Dasiqox Tribal Park is an Indigenous-led protected area and stewardship initiative. While the long-term governance structure is still developing and will undoubtedly be led by T̄silhqot'in, there is openness to having representatives from neighbouring non-T̄silhqot'in communities and governments to participate once there is a formal process in place. Given current capacity and resources, it is too early to know what the eventual governance structure will be. We are working to develop a governance plan based in T̄silhqot'in law, and will be reaching out to the Province and Cariboo Regional District, as part of government-to-government engagement, as we continue to develop the structure.

4. Will there be any restrictions on who can enjoy the park? Will anyone be allowed to hunt, fish, or gather in the proposed park?

First and foremost, we are guided by T̄silhqot'in laws—it is our responsibility to steward the land, water, fish, and wildlife for the long term. All activities in the area must put sustainability/environmental protection front and centre.

It is too early in the planning process for us to go into any greater detail at this time. One relevant example is the [Dechen Ts'ededilhtan \(T̄silhqot'in Nation Emergency Moose Law\)](#), enacted in August 2018 that prohibits the provincially authorized Limited Entry Hunt to hunt or kill moose within the T̄silhqot'in nen (territory).



5. There is already the South Chilcotin Land Use Plan, and the Cariboo Chilcotin Land Use Plan—why is another, different management plan needed for the Tribal Park? How does this relate to the Nenqay Deni Accord?

Previous land use planning processes led by the provincial government of BC either did not include the T̓silhqot̓'in, or did not sufficiently account for T̓silhqot̓'in people, communities, and relationships with the land. Our communities, and non-T̓silhqot̓'in residents in the area, have witnessed the mismanagement of forests and grasslands for many years, with forests and wildlife declining as a result. The plan for Dasiqox Tribal Park incorporates T̓silhqot̓'in values, and will operate using modern technology and traditional knowledge together—it was always our desire and intention for our communities to articulate a plan that reflects their desired future that protects the lands, waters and wildlife. Dasiqox Tribal Park is a proactive management planning initiative that addresses essential pieces missing from earlier land use plans and serves as a complementary update.

The Nenqay Deni Accord is a framework for government-to-government negotiation, and Dasiqox Tribal Park is one of many initiatives being discussed at that table.

6. As a non-Indigenous resident, how do I fit in with the Dasiqox Tribal Park?

Dasiqox Tribal Park is an opportunity for the T̓silhqot̓'in communities to address the historic imbalance in land use planning in the region, setting up a future where the land sustains local communities in the long term. Ultimately, we take a relationship-based approach with all residents, neighbours and visitors; we look for shared values and mutual respect between all parties. We have a long history of good relationships with many long-term non-T̓silhqot̓'in residents in the area, and we look forward to continuing to build on these.

We ask that non-T̓silhqot̓'in residents keep an open mind and reach out to us with any questions—we believe in open communication. Dasiqox Tribal Park is a long-term endeavor and relationship between people and the land, and we look forward to sharing more as it progresses.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come to the Dasiqox Tribal Park meetings, submit their comments and feedback, and pledge their support — sechanalyagh. We have had some insightful and challenging conversations. The Tribal Park concept can spark a lot of strong feelings and touches on contentious topics, and while much of the feedback has been positive, some has also been fractious and at times disrespectful; it is important that we find ways to create respectful interactions moving forward.

As the Dasiqox Tribal Park continues to evolve and grow, the dialogue will continue. For more information, contact us at info@dasiqox.org or join our mailing list at dasiqox.org for updates.



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(250) 394-4041



**Xeni Gwet'in First Nations
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Dasiqox.org

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