

NI HAT'NI DENE

LUTSEL K'E DENE FIRST NATION

DENE WATCHERS OF THE LAND

*Protecting the land of our ancestors and the
land of our future generations*



Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation



ABOUT

NI HAT'NI DENE

LUTSEL K'E DENE FIRST NATION

Thaidene Nene (the “Land of the Ancestors”), is the sacred homeland of the Lutsel K’e Denesoline. While this traditional territory remains pristine, it is surrounded by increasing pressures and industrial development. Consequently, the Lutsel K’e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) has proposed Thaidene Nene as a protected area and has established the Ni hat’ni Dene (the “Dene Watching the Land”) program with the broad mandate of promoting stewardship and watching over this sacred land.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND VISION

The LKDFN envisions a network of Ni hat'ni Dene located throughout Thaidene Nene, working “on-the-ground” in all seasons as the stewards of the land. Since its inception in 2008, the Ni hat'ni Dene program has expanded its monitoring activities to three culturally significant and strategic areas: Kache (Reliance), the heart of Thaidene Nene, as well as Kaldele (Talthelei Narrows) and Pekatanui Point, the gateways to Thaidene Nene. These three places have served as basecamps out of which two crews of Ni Hat'ni Dene Rangers keep watch over the land by:

- ◆ Monitoring environmental indicators using traditional knowledge and science;
- ◆ Maintaining the integrity of cultural sites and natural beauty within Thaidene Nene;
- ◆ Communicating to visitors the significance of Thaidene Nene and administer visitor surveys;
- ◆ Hosting and providing interpretive tours for visitors in the area;
- ◆ Transmitting cultural and scientific knowledge to younger generations.

SUMMER MONITORING ACTIVITIES

Summer monitoring activities take place primarily throughout the months of July and August. Each crew, composed of experienced leaders and youth from the community, work on alternating one week rotations to monitor either MacLeod Bay or Christie Bay by motorboat. Rotations consist of travelling to a basecamp, followed by daily monitoring patrols throughout the week. The summer monitoring program focuses on the following:



WATER QUALITY

At the beginning of the season, two SONDE (remote sensing devices) are deployed at two sites of great significance (Taltheili Narrows and the Lockhart River), providing a record of water quality data. This data will allow the LKDFN to establish pre-development baselines of water temperature, specific conductivity, acidity, dissolved oxygen as well as blue-green algae and chlorophyll content.





FISH HEALTH AND POPULATIONS

Fish population and abundance surveys are conducted at important sites using gillnets. Information on net measurements, set time, and number of each species caught are recorded in the field, allowing the program to track changes in fish abundance and diversity over time. Otoliths and fin samples are also collected to send for further lab analysis of age and stable isotopes. These data will be used to examine for ontogenetic changes and trophic influences in contaminant uptake.



BIRD POPULATIONS

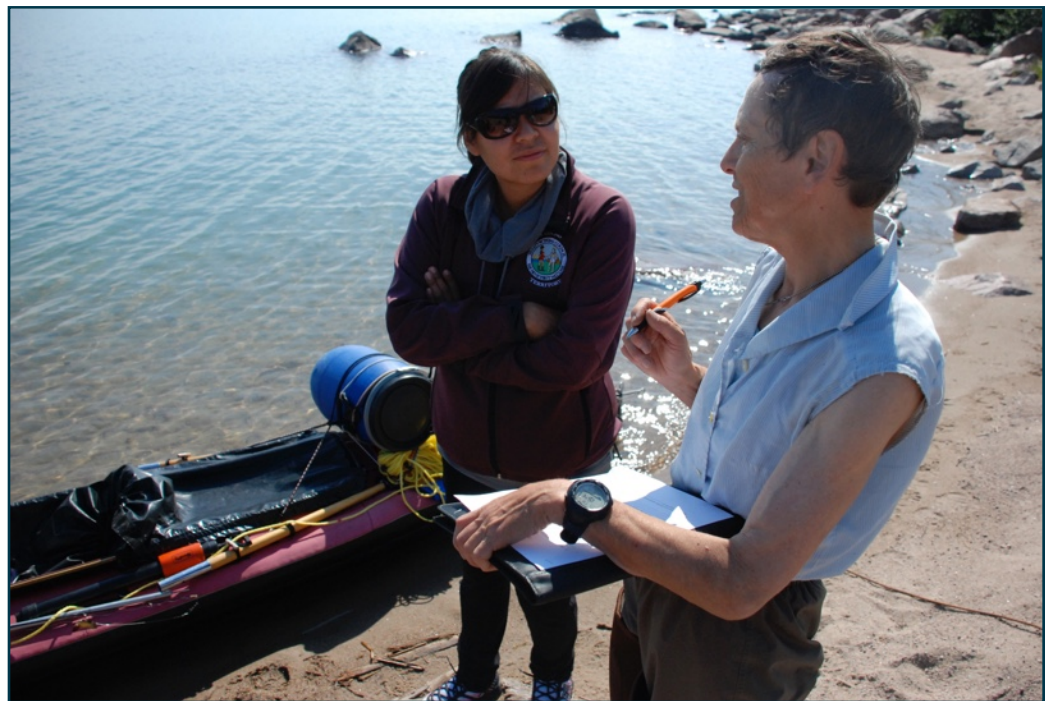
In 2016, the crew deployed a bioacoustics recorder unit to record song birds in Taltheili Narrows throughout the summer. This data will be used to characterize the diversity of bird species within Thaidene Nene and will serve as a baseline to track changes in the bird communities over time.





VISITORS AND INTERPRETATION

Visitors intercepted during patrols are greeted, welcomed to Thaidene Nene, provided with a brief history of the area, and invited to visit one of the old village sites. They are also asked to complete a brief visitor survey to record where they are from, why they came to Thaidene Nene, where they have camped, what wildlife they've seen, how many fish they caught, and what suggestions they have to improve visitor experiences.



Ni hat'ni Dene crews play an important in search and rescue activities, visitor safety and observing and reporting unauthorized activities within Thaidene Nene.



WINTER MONITORING ACTIVITIES



WINTER CARIBOU MONITORING ACTIVITIES

During the winter , two crews alternate caribou monitoring activities on one-week cross shifts. Based out of cabins at Kache and ?edacho Tue, each crew features an experienced hunter and a youth, and they follow hunting parties throughout Thaidene Nene while on patrol. They record harvest locations, numbers, gender, and general condition for all animals

harvested.

Information collected include number of caribou shot, sex and estimated age, exact date and location, and herd assignment based on known satellite collar distribution. Information is added and maintained to a central database in LKDFN.



IMPORTANCE OF NI HAT'NI FOR LUTSEL K'E DENE FIRST NATION

Given the ongoing negotiations to protect Thaidene Nene as a National Park Reserve co-managed by LKDFN and Parks Canada, the Ni Hat'ni Dene program has allowed the community of Lutsel K'e to prepare for this transition in many ways.

Cultural Heritage: As the traditional territory of the Lutsel K'e Denesoline, Thaidene Nene is rich in history and important cultural heritage sites. Some of these sites were surveyed to catalogue



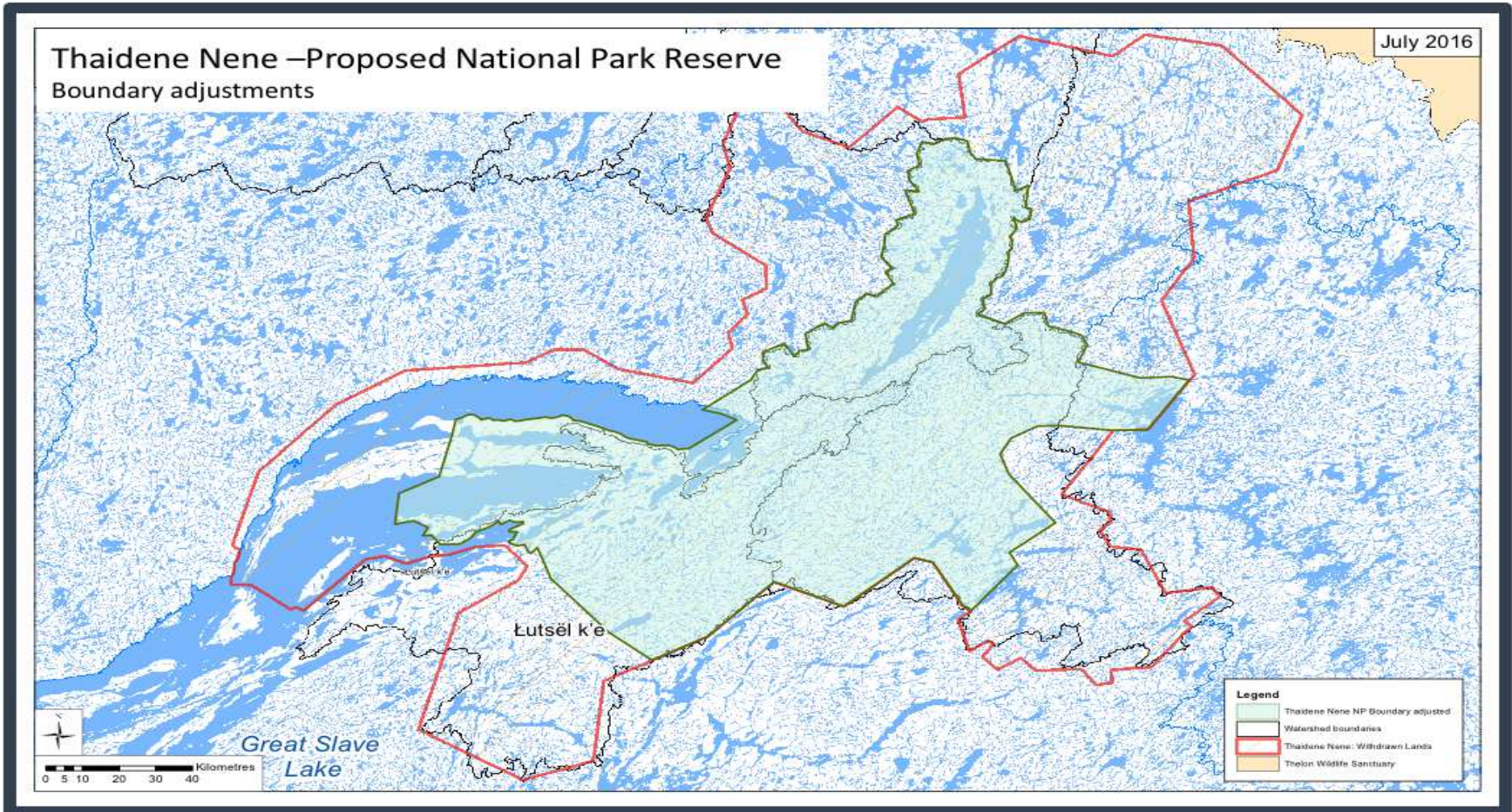
cultural artefacts, and stories were collected through interviews with elders to shape interpretive tours of the sites. These efforts, along with the collection of traditional knowledge by the Ni Hat'ni Dene during their monitoring activities, contribute to the preservation of Denesoline culture and history for future generations. The program also contributes to the transmission and continuation of Denesoline language and cultural practices by pairing experienced leaders and youth to foster traditional activities during patrols.

Communication and Education: A large part of Ni Hat'ni Dene mission is to serve as ambassadors of Lutsel K'e, both within the community and to visitors of Thaidene Nene. As such, youth within the program keep regular journals of their activities while out on the land and write stories about their experience. These stories serve to communicate the purpose of the program and inspire youth within the community to become Ni Hat'ni Dene Rangers in the future.

Employment and Training: Beyond providing employment opportunities for the youth in the community, the Ni Hat'ni Dene program also trains youth with hard skills related to field work and research, boat safety and marine navigation, emergency first aid, non-restricted firearm safety as well as visitor hospitality. These skills increase the employability of youth in the community and insure that community members will play a central role in the monitoring and patrolling Thaidene Nene well into the future.

Economic Opportunities: With the creation of the Thaidene Nene, economic opportunities related to tourism and National Park management will become available to the community. The Ni Hat'ni Dene program plays an instrumental part in training community members for skills required in park-based sustainable economy.





OUR PARTNERS



As the program evolved over the years, various partners have contributed to costs of infrastructure development, investment in equipment, and training of staff:

- ◆ Akaitcho Aquatic Monitoring Program
- ◆ Parks Canada
- ◆ Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy)
- ◆ Government of the Northwest Territories - Environment and Natural Resources
- ◆ University of Saskatchewan – Environment Canada
- ◆ The Nature Conservancy Canada



LUTSEL K'É DENE FIRST NATION NI HAT'NI DENE



Dene Watchers Of The Land



Our vision is a prosperous future, with sustainable livelihoods for our people grounded in our rich heritage and stewardship responsibilities.



CONTACT

For more information visit :

www.landoftheancestors.com

Or email:

tdndepartment@gmail.com



Lutsel K'É Dene First Nation