

# Frequently Asked Questions about Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

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## Overview

As the recognition and advancement of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas or IPCAs increases across what is now known as Canada, several questions are being asked about their creation, development, and management.

To help address this, [the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership](#) (CRP) and [IISAAK OLAM Foundation](#) produced a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list. This FAQ is a living document.

We strive to regularly update this document with new questions, responses, and examples. Responses to these frequently asked questions are informed by the [Indigenous Circle of Experts'](#) groundbreaking 2018 report, [We Rise Together](#) and publicly available academic literature, websites from Indigenous Nations, governments, organizations, IPCA initiatives, and research reports developed by the CRP. A list of resources can be found within this document [here](#). Where possible, responses were additionally vetted and fact-checked by practitioners, subject matter experts and members of the CRP Leadership Circle.

IPCAs are as unique and diverse as the Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments establishing them. We have included examples of IPCAs from across the country, yet many more exist that are not highlighted.

The Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship movement continues to gain momentum and the journeys of IPCAs are evolving. We want to emphasize that IPCAs symbolize not only what has been accomplished and what currently exists, but also what is possible with Indigenous Nations, communities, and/or governments and communities leading the way.

We look forward to including additional pathways of Indigenous conservation leadership as we update this document.

### **A note on language:**

We use the word "Indigenous" to include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. When we refer to specific First Nations or Indigenous governments we use their preferred names when known.

# Indigenous-led Conservation and Stewardship

## What is Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship?

Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship is a new way of describing a range of practices, knowledge, skills, and laws Indigenous Peoples have developed, refined, and shared across generations to care for and govern their territories.

Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship is an expression of Indigenous Nationhood. Through Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship, Indigenous Nations and their communities uphold reciprocal responsibilities to lands, waters, and other non-human relations.

Indigenous-led approaches to conservation are diverse. They are defined, articulated, and practiced by Indigenous Peoples in accordance with the knowledge, governance, legal and ecological systems of each Nation, community and/or region ([Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018, pg. 34](#)).

## What is the difference between Indigenous conservation and stewardship and Western approaches to conservation?

Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship generally focus on maintaining good relationships with the natural world and consider community wellbeing. By contrast, Western “[fortress](#)” style conservation has focused on isolating nature and removing or limiting human influence to protect ecosystems. This approach has resulted in the [forced removal](#) of Indigenous Peoples from their territories in [Canada](#) and worldwide.

- Indigenous-led approaches to conservation and stewardship vary and are place-based. Generally, Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship encourages respectful and reciprocal relationships with lands, waters, plants, humans and animals for the health and well-being of current and future generations ([Indigenous Circle of Experts, pg. 34](#)). These interactions may include traditional practices (harvesting, medicine gathering, controlled burns), language development and revitalization, land-based learning, ecotourism, and sustainable resource development (e.g. conservation-based economies).

- Mainstream Western conservation approaches are based on a European idea of [“wilderness”](#) which originated around the time of the Enlightenment. This philosophy sees humans as separate from nature and therefore rationalizes a [“fines and fences”](#) model for protected areas.

## How effective are Indigenous approaches to conservation and stewardship compared to state-led approaches?

[Increasing evidence](#) shows that Indigenous and community-based approaches to conservation and stewardship *are as or more effective* than state-led approaches in protecting and advancing biodiversity.

- [Biodiversity is often higher or equal](#) in Indigenous-managed lands than in state-led parks in Canada and beyond. There is [growing international evidence](#) that Indigenous-managed areas are more effective in achieving positive ecological outcomes than state-controlled protected and conserved areas.
- Indigenous Peoples hold [in-depth knowledge of and connections](#) to their traditional territories that have been developed and refined over millennia.

## Definition and Origin of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

### What are Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)?

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are defined by the Indigenous Circle of Experts (2018, p. 5) as “lands and waters where Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems. Culture and language are the heart and soul of an IPCA.”

- In the Canadian context and according to the Indigenous Circle of Experts (2018, p. 5-6), IPCAs represent:

- A modern application of traditional values, Indigenous laws, and knowledge systems;
  - An exercise in cultural continuity on the land and waters;
  - A foundation for local, Indigenous-led economies;
  - Opportunities to reconnect to the land and heal both the land and Indigenous Peoples;
  - An acknowledgement of international law, such as Canada's Treaties, [the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP), [the Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD) and other relevant commitments;
  - An opportunity for true reconciliation to take place between Indigenous and settler societies, and between broader Canadian society and the land and waters, including relationships in pre-existing parks and protected areas; and
  - An innovative expression of [Section 35 \(Constitution Act 1982\)](#) which enshrines Indigenous rights in the Canadian constitution.
- The [Indigenous Circle of Experts](#), through their engagement process and research, found that IPCAs vary in terms of their governance and management approaches. At a minimum, IPCAs:
    - Are Indigenous-led (i.e. Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments play a lead role in establishing and maintaining them);
    - Represent a long-term commitment to conservation and stewardship; and
    - Centre Indigenous rights and responsibilities to the lands, waters, and future generations.

## **Where did the name 'Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area', or 'IPCA', come from?**

**The Indigenous Circle of Experts adopted the term 'IPCA' to describe the initiatives of Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments to assert their rights, governance, and sovereignty within their territories in the Canadian context. They defined IPCAs in their 2018 report, [We Rise Together](#).**

- Indigenous Peoples have been caretakers of the lands, waters, and ice since time immemorial. The principles behind IPCAs are not new, but the name is.
- In Canada, some Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments use other names such as '[Tribal Park](#)', '[Indigenous Protected Area](#)', '[Indigenous Sovereignty and Protected Area](#)', and others. IPCA is an umbrella term that includes different kinds of Indigenous-led protected areas.
- Internationally, the term '[Indigenous and Community Conserved Area \(ICCA\)](#)' is used. However, communities establishing ICCAs are not necessarily Indigenous. "Territories of Life" is another variation of the term ICCA. '[Indigenous Protected Areas](#)' is the term most commonly used in Australia.
- The [Indigenous Circle of Experts](#) was an Indigenous-led advisory group tasked with making recommendations to the Government of Canada on how Canada could increase protected area coverage while advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. A description of the Indigenous Circle of Experts is offered in [this section](#).

## Who were the Indigenous Circle of Experts?

The [Indigenous Circle of Experts](#) was an Indigenous-led advisory group tasked with making recommendations to the Government of Canada on how it could increase protected areas while also advancing reconciliation.

- The group had representation from First Nations from across the country as well as Métis leaders and some Canadian government staff.
- They held four regional gatherings across Canada to engage with Indigenous Peoples across the country.
- Their final report, [We Rise Together](#), includes 28 recommendations to Canadian governments and the conservation sector on how they can support Indigenous-led conservation, stewardship, and IPCAs.
- They were active between 2017 and 2018 and transferred their final report to the Government of Canada in 2018 in ceremony.



- Four core members of the Indigenous Circle of Experts joined the [Leadership Circle of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership](#). In this capacity, members have supported the uptake of their recommendations in collaboration with a network of Indigenous and Canadian governments and organizations, environmental non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and researchers.

## Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) Creation

### Who can establish an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)?

**Any Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) Nation, community, and/or government can establish an IPCA based on their own priorities and visions for their territories and communities. IPCAs can also be established through collaboration among several Indigenous governments and/or with Canadian governments. It is not necessary for IPCAs to collaborate with any Canadian governments.**

- IPCAs are Indigenous-led.
- IPCAs are [modern expressions](#) of the inherent rights, responsibilities and relationships to lands, waters, and ice that Indigenous Peoples have been exercising for millennia.
- While more than 50 IPCAs have been supported in different ways with funding from the Canadian Government ([Environment and Climate Change Canada](#)), they **are not** an initiative or program of any Canadian government and **do not** require federal recognition or funding to be established.

## Why are Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) created?

Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments may wish to create and maintain IPCAs for many [reasons](#). These reasons can include:

- **Repairing and/or nurturing relationships with the lands, waters, or ice;**
- **Revitalizing and/or maintaining culture and language;**
- **Protecting culturally significant species;**
- **Providing an alternative vision for the territories;**
- **Increasing the visibility of Indigenous jurisdiction and authority;**
- **Supporting decision-making; and**
- **Asserting their rights and responsibilities in their territories.**

Additional reasons to create an IPCA can include, but are not limited to:

- Providing and/or increasing access to traditional foods and medicines.
- Advancing emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical health and well-being. (For example, see the [.OO.C.+ Árramät project](#)).
- Promoting intergenerational and land-based learning.
- Cultivating sustainable local economies.
- Protecting ecosystems for future generations.
- Protecting threatened cultural keystone species, for example:
  - Caribou: [West Moberly First Nation and Sauteau First Nation](#)
  - Blueberries: [Kettle Hills Blueberry Patch IPCA](#)
  - Grizzly Bears: [Qat'muk](#)

## How does an Indigenous Nation, community, and/or government establish an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)?

**There is no single pathway for establishing an IPCA. Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments choose their own pathways for establishment based on their distinct priorities, values, and legal, governance, and knowledge systems.**

The [IPCA Creation Guide](#) offers some guidance and key considerations for Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments interested in creating an IPCA. This guide includes lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples from coast to coast and at various phases of creating an IPCA.

- In IPCA creation, Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments may consider their vision and values, laws, revenue streams, governance and decision-making models, partnerships, operations and stewardship models, communication and relationship-building and land-relationship planning.
- For many Indigenous Nations and/or governments, IPCA establishment has involved sharing a public declaration, creating a management planning process, establishing a governance body, raising funds, involving Guardians or establishing a Guardians program, and connecting other special projects and initiatives related to the IPCA.
- Some Indigenous Nations and/or governments pursue parallel protected area designations in collaboration with the provinces or territories in which they are situated, or with the Government of Canada. Others do not. Some Indigenous Nations and/or governments partner with Canadian governments on management, others do not.
- Many Indigenous Nations and/or governments conduct extensive community engagement before establishing an IPCA to ensure there is community and leadership support.

For example:

- In the establishment of [Thaidene Nënë](#), Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation held several information sessions to discuss draft [Establishment Agreements](#) and held a community referendum before proceeding with establishment.
- In the establishment of Dasiqox-Nexwagwez?an IPCA, the [Xeni Gwet'in First Nations and Yunešit'in Governments](#) held several public information

sessions, released regular communications materials and received feedback from community members while determining their vision for their IPCA.

- The [Manitoba Métis Federation](#) is involving their Citizens and other collaborators through workshops, meetings and surveys to incorporate their priorities and insights into [Kettle Hills Blueberry Patch and Thompson Region IPCAs](#) (Red River IPCAs).
- The [Seal River Watershed Alliance](#) is documenting its [community engagement meetings](#) to establish the vision, formal agreements and decision-making processes for the Seal River Watershed Indigenous Protected Area Initiative.
- The [Unama'ki Institute for Natural Resources](#) examined best practices and tools related to IPCAs and [held extensive discussions](#) with the five Mi'kmaq communities in Unama'ki territory (Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q) to inform the creation of a decision-making framework for IPCAs.

## **Where can Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) be established?**

**IPCAs can be declared anywhere within the territory of Indigenous Nation and/or government(s) and/or community(ies). This includes, but is not limited to, shared territories, designated reserve lands, rural areas, cities and towns, and watersheds.**

- The location and size of IPCAs are determined by the Indigenous Nation and/or governments establishing IPCAs in their territories.
- IPCAs can include lands and waters or a mix of both.
- IPCAs may also include lands where Canadian governments have asserted jurisdiction (for example, crown or public lands and provincial or territorial parks and protected areas), as well as private lands. For example:
  - [Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks](#) includes all of Tla-o-qui-aht territory and the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.
  - The [Sespite'tmnej Kmitkinu Conservancy](#) includes crown land, provincial protected land and private land donated by individuals.

- The [SGáan Kínghlas-Bowie Seamount Marine Protected Area \(SK-B MPA\)](#) includes areas with federal jurisdiction of offshore waters.
- While many IPCAs are established in rural areas with low population density, this is not a requirement.
  - There are no known IPCAs in Canadian cities or towns yet, but [efforts to create space](#) for Indigenous languages, knowledge systems, and practices are happening, often in collaboration with federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments.
  - Several researchers and partners in the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership found that there is great potential for Indigenous rights, responsibilities, knowledge systems and biocultural priorities to be realized through the creation of Urban Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (UIPCAs) (see: [The potential for Indigenous-led conservation in urbanized landscapes in Canada](#)).

## **Does the establishment of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) require political and legal recognition from Canadian federal, provincial, or territorial governments?**

**No. Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments hold the inherent right to designate IPCAs in their territories. They do not require permission, support, or recognition from Canadian federal, provincial, or territorial governments to do so.**

- Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments have the primary role in determining the objectives, boundaries, management plans and governance structures for IPCAs as part of their exercise of self-determination.
- For example:
  - [Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks](#) have [never been formally recognized](#) by federal and provincial governments and have not sought formal designation under Canadian laws.

- Grassy Narrows First Nation [declared](#) their entire Traditional Land Use Area an Indigenous Protected and Sovereignty Area (ISPA, a form of IPCA) to assert and enforce their sovereignty over their territory, including banning industrial activities.
- The [Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected and Conserved Area](#) declaration reaffirms the inherent sovereignty and responsibility of the sməłqmíx community to protect and care for their lands in accordance with sməłqmíx / Syilx law.
- The Ktunaxa Nation declared [the Qat'muk IPCA](#) in 2010 after a 30-year effort to protect their traditional territory from a proposed ski resort. The vision for the Qat'muk IPCA includes stewardship principles grounded in Ktunaxa Law.

## **Do Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments have to give away lands, waters, and/or ice to Canadian governments to create an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)?**

**No. Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments do not have to give away lands, waters, and/or ice to Canadian governments (federal, provincial, and /or territorial) to create an IPCA, even when they choose to collaborate with Canadian governments. Questions about underlying rights and titles do not need to be resolved between Indigenous and Canadian governments to establish an IPCA.**

- IPCAs are a mechanism for Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty to exercise their rights and responsibilities to their lands, waters, and/or ice.
- Even in cases where Indigenous Nations and/or governments choose to co-manage their IPCAs with Canadian governments (or choose to have their IPCAs designated as protected areas under Canadian legal systems), they are not required to cede their territories to the government of Canada (see: [Indigenous Laws in the Context of Conservation](#)).

- One of the early examples of IPCA implementation in Canada is the [1993 Gwaii Haanas Agreement](#), in which the Haida Nation and Government of Canada each set out their own views of their jurisdictions and authorities, but agreed to work together to protect the area despite those differences.

## **Can Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) protect marine areas?**

**Yes, IPCAs can include lands, waters, and ice. A Marine Protected Area or MPA is an area containing ocean waters (including sea floors) that are designated for conservation and stewardship.**

- **Similar to land-based protected areas, [MPAs can](#):**
  - **Protect coastal areas and species.**
  - **Support food security.**
  - **Protect and/or generate local economies.**
  - **Keep ecosystems productive and resilient.**

**There are several Indigenous-led and co-governed or co-managed Marine Protected Areas in Canada.**

- For example:
  - The Mushkegowuk Nations are working to establish a [National Marine Conservation Area \(NMCA\)](#) to protect Weeneebeg (James Bay) and Washaybeyoh (Hudson Bay).
  - [Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area](#) (along the northern coast of Labrador) was formally established in 2024 by the Nunatsiavut Government and through the signing of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement with the Government of Canada.
  - The Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation declared the [Gitdisdzu Lugyeks Marine Protected Area](#) in early 2022 under Kitasoo Xai'xais laws, customs, principles and values.

- The Council of the Haida Nation and the Government of Canada (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) have jointly designated the [SGáan Kínghlas-Bowie Seamount](#) in 2018 as a Marine Protected Area. SGaan Kinghlas is an underwater mountain located 180 km off the shores of Haida Gwaii (British Columbia).
- The Council of the Haida Nation and the Government of Canada (Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Parks Canada) cooperatively manage the [Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve](#) and protect the area's "natural and cultural heritage from mountain top to sea floor."
- Seventeen First Nations on the Pacific Coast are working with the Government of Canada and the government of British Columbia to lead the development of a [Marine Protected Area Network](#) for the Northern Shelf Bioregion. This network will include a collection of marine protected areas from the top of Vancouver Island (Quadra Island / Bute Inlet) and to the Canada-Alaska border.

## **What are the benefits of establishing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)?**

There are many ecological, socio-cultural, and economic benefits of establishing IPCAs. In their report, [We Rise Together](#), the Indigenous Circle of Experts outlines the following benefits of IPCAs:

- **Elevation and restoration of Indigenous rights and responsibilities.**
- **Ecological health protection and restoration, primarily through [Guardians Programs](#) or similar initiatives.**
- **Cultural regeneration through healing.**
- **Intergenerational learning, language revitalization, and land-based learning.**
- **Conservation economies, or social and economic benefits that are experienced from restoring ecosystems, rather than depleting them.**
  - For example, an [evaluation](#) of two Guardians programs in the Northwest Territories found every \$1 invested generates \$2.50 in social, cultural, and economic value.



- Reconciliation and healing within Indigenous communities, between Indigenous Peoples, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

## Legal Considerations for Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

**Is there any specific legislation in Canada that enables the legal designation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) under Canadian laws?**

As of the end of 2023, there is no specific legislation for IPCAs under Canadian law. However, there are several legal pathways for recognizing Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives under federal, provincial, and territorial laws. Some Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments may wish to layer federal, provincial, and/or territorial laws in addition to their own laws for additional protections.

For more information about legal pathways for recognizing Indigenous-led conservation initiatives under federal, provincial and territorial laws see [A Review of Crown Legislation for Protected and Conserved Areas in Canada: A Guide for Indigenous Leadership](#).

- In the vast majority of Canada (including provinces and territories) new protected area legislation has not been put into place, nor has existing protected area legislation been amended, to include IPCAs.
- In most of Canada, Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments who wish to protect their IPCAs under Canadian laws have to use existing protected area designations such as national, provincial, or territorial parks, which many Indigenous Nations and/or governments find limiting.
- In 2021, the Province of Quebec amended its [Natural Heritage Conservation Act](#) to include “Aboriginal-led protected areas.”

- In 2014, the Province of Manitoba amended its [Provincial Parks Act](#) to enable Indigenous Peoples to propose “Indigenous Traditional Use Parks” and “Indigenous heritage land use” sites.
- In 2019, the Northwest Territories enacted its [Protected Areas Act](#), which was developed collaboratively with Indigenous Nations and/or governments in the territory. Although the act does not explicitly enable the protection of IPCAs, it supports the collaborative establishment and co-governance of new protected areas with Indigenous Nations and/or governments. There is also a legal mechanism by which Indigenous Nations and/or governments can suggest protected areas.

## Can Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) help elevate Aboriginal and Treaty rights?

**Yes, IPCAs can help elevate Aboriginal and Treaty rights. IPCAs are “modern expressions of the inherent authority of Indigenous nations and exist whether or not the Canadian state recognizes them.” ([West Coast Environmental Law, 2023](#))**

- How Indigenous rights, responsibilities and relationships are exercised within individual IPCAs depends on the IPCA’s vision, objectives, and governance arrangements, including any arrangements or agreements with federal, provincial, or territorial governments.
- For example:
  - [Thaidene Nëné](#) Indigenous Protected Area’s [strategic plan](#) supports the implementation of the [treaty of 1900 \(Treaty 8\)](#). The strategic plan also outlines shared decision-making and management processes between Indigenous Nations and/or governments, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the federal government.
  - The [Eeyou Istchee Protected Area Network](#) protects Cree rights and fulfills Cree responsibilities to protect the lands, waters and wildlife in the territory. The [Cree Regional Conservation Strategy](#), a framework for establishing protected areas in the territory, was designed to ensure respect for Cree rights enshrined in Cree law, values and customs. This also includes rights under the [United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#), [Section 35](#) of the Canadian Constitution, and rights that stem from several agreements and treaties between the Cree and the governments of Québec and Canada.

# Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) Funding and Management

## How are Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) funded?

IPCAs can be funded in a variety of ways depending on the wishes and requirements of Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments. IPCAs do not require funding from Canadian federal, provincial, and/or territorial governments.

- Several methods have been used to fund IPCAs, including but not limited to:
  - Indigenous-led funding initiatives (such as the [Northwest Territories Project for Finance Permanence](#)).
  - First Nations-focused funding initiatives (such as [Coast Funds](#)).
  - Ecotourism (for example, [Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation](#)).
  - Trust funds (such as the [Thaidene Nënë Fund](#)).
  - Ecosystem services fees (for example, the [Tribal Park Allies program](#)).
  - Philanthropic partnerships or contributions (for example, the [Seal River Watershed Initiative](#)).
  - Development projects and joint ventures (such as the [Tla-o-qui-aht Canoe Creek Hydro Project](#) of Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks).
  - Carbon offsets (for example, the [Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative](#)).
  - Provincial/territorial/federal grants (such as the [Canada Target 1 Challenge](#) and the [Climate Action Awareness Fund](#)).
  - Private donations from individuals.
- Environment and Climate Change Canada has [provided funding](#) to more than 50 Indigenous communities to financially support various aspects or phases of IPCA initiatives and/or Guardians Programs.

- While the Canadian government [recognizes](#) that Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship is vital to reach its conservation goals, sustainable, long-term funding is [not keeping pace](#) with the growing momentum of IPCA creation. This poses a significant barrier for Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments wishing to realize their conservation and stewardship visions.

## **How are Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) governed?**

**How an IPCA is governed is determined by the Indigenous Nation(s), their communities, and/or government(s) that create them. The governance and decision-making process will vary depending on their priorities, values, knowledge systems and legal systems and whether they wish to collaborate with Canadian governments.**

- The Indigenous Circle of Experts has identified four broad models of governance for IPCAs ([Indigenous Circle of Experts, pg. 45](#)). These are listed below. To date, most IPCAs are governed solely by the Indigenous Nation/s establishing them, or in partnership with Canadian governments. There are no known IPCAs that have been established with municipal governments to date.

### **1. Solely Indigenous-led**

In IPCAs that are solely Indigenous-led and managed, Indigenous authorities assert their inherent rights and jurisdiction over their territories without formal recognition from federal, provincial, and/or territorial governments.

### **2. Indigenous-Crown**

The IPCA is governed primarily by the Indigenous Nations and/or government(s) in partnership with crown government(s) (e.g. federal, provincial, territorial). IPCAs with shared decision-making systems are generally based on mutual respect, collaboration, equal authority, and shared objectives. This can involve a jointly established governance board with at least equal representation by the Indigenous Nation(s) and/or government(s).

### **3. Indigenous-NGO**

The IPCA is governed primarily by the Indigenous Nation(s), their communities, and/or government(s) in partnership with a non-governmental organization (NGO).

#### **4. Hybrid**

The IPCA is governed primarily by Indigenous Nation(s), their communities, and/or government(s) in partnership with a mix of Canadian government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

**See the following resources for some examples of IPCA governance models:**

- [IPCA Governance Models: A Snapshot of Existing Conservation Governance Agreements](#)
- [Indigenous Laws in the Context of Conservation.](#)

### **What role do Guardians play within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) initiatives?**

**Guardians play an important and formal role in monitoring and enforcing the protection and care of lands, waters, and ice within IPCAs. As trained experts on the ground, Guardians are reporting on and finding innovative solutions to the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change.**

To learn more about Guardians and Guardians Programs, visit [Land Needs Guardians](#) and the [First Nations National Guardians Network](#).

### **Visiting and Supporting Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)**

#### **Are non-Indigenous people allowed to enter or visit Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)?**

**Generally, IPCAs are open to the public for eco-tourism, recreational and learning opportunities – so long as visitors are respectful and abide by the rules and laws of the respective Nation(s), their communities, and/or government(s). It is advisable to check public communications from Indigenous Nations or governments, such as websites, to find guidance on how to respectfully visit an IPCA.**

Here are some examples of visitor guides and codes of conduct:

- [The Thaidene Nënë Visitor Code of Conduct.](#)
- [Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected and Conserved Area Frequently Asked Questions.](#)
- [The Haida Gwaii Pledge.](#)

Some key considerations when visiting an IPCA are:

- Do your research. Look for the initiative's website or other public communications before considering a visit.
- Abide by the governance, laws, and protocols of the IPCA as set out in the IPCA's visitor's guide, website, or other communications.
- Be respectful of cultural and sacred sites. Follow respective leadership, guides, and trails. Do not enter areas or sites that are restricted.
- Respect the lands, waters, ice, animals, and peoples of the IPCA.
- Respect the harvesting rights and practices of the community within the IPCA. For example, do not interfere with hunting, fishing, trapping, cultural burning, and other subsistence practices.
- Take the opportunity to learn more about the IPCA. Many IPCAs host ecotours and other opportunities for visitors to learn more about historical and current relationships with the territory, for example: [Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks](#); [Spirit Bear Lodge](#) of Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation; [Haida Gwaii](#); [Thaidene Nënë](#); and [Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected and Conserved Area](#).
- Take the opportunity to learn more about reconciliation and healing.
- Leave a small footprint; take only photographs. Pack out what you bring in (do not litter). Do not take anything unless given.
- Ask permission before taking photographs and videos of community members.
- Find opportunities to reciprocate. Compensate tour guides fairly, consider donating to the IPCAs or Indigenous Nation, community, and/or government, etc.

## **Are camping, hiking, hunting, tourism development, etc., allowed in Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)?**

**It depends. Indigenous Nations, their communities, and/or governments have the primary role in deciding what activities are permitted, and how visitors can respectfully visit IPCAs. It is highly encouraged to learn more about the territory or initiative before you plan your visit.**

- Generally speaking, Indigenous approaches to conservation and stewardship emphasize reconnecting people with nature, instead of separating them. Indigenous Nations and/or governments will make decisions on how to uphold their relationships and responsibilities to their territories within IPCAs, and may establish guidelines around what human activities are permitted and prohibited, and how visitors can respectfully enter and interact with the IPCA.
- Human activities that are upheld and respected within IPCAs could include recreational activities (e.g. hiking, camping, canoeing, kayaking), subsistence activities (e.g. Harvesting, fishing, gathering, and gardening) and cultural activities (e.g. ceremonies, gatherings, etc.). Permitted activities will vary within each IPCA. There may be areas within the IPCA where certain activities are limited or prohibited, such as within sacred areas or at culturally significant times of the year.

For some examples of permitted and prohibited activities in select IPCAs, please visit the following:

- [Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected and Conserved Area Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area, and Haida Heritage Site Restricted Activities](#)
- [Thaidene Nënë Rules and Regulations](#)

## **How can non-Indigenous Canadians support Indigenous-led conservation, stewardship, and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)?**

**Individuals can get involved in and/or support individual IPCAs and/or the wider Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship movement by listening and learning, contributing informational and financial resources and taking action. For more information, click on the resources listed below.**

The responsibility of taking care of our only home (Mother Earth) lies with everyone, and everyone's responsibilities are different. Indigenous Peoples are leading the way and the responsibility of conservation agencies and organizations, academic institutions, funders, and private citizens is to listen, learn and unlearn and support through action.

### **Learn and Unlearn**

- [Beyond Conservation: A Toolkit for Respectful Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples](#). The Indigenous Knowledge Circle of the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium.
- [Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper](#).
- [Cash Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper](#).
- [Indigenous-led Conservation Reading List](#). Compiled by Megan Youdelis, Kim Tran, and Elizabeth Lunstrum.

### **Engage and Contribute:**

- [IPCA Knowledge Basket](#): a digital space created to honour, celebrate and catalyze Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship pathways in Canada, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). Connect, engage, and submit resources on this community-driven knowledge-sharing platform.
- [Land Needs Guardians Campaign](#): Learn more and join the movement.



**Listen:**

- [Building Ethical Partnerships for Indigenous-led Conservation](#). Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership Virtual Campfire Series.
- [Organizational Change and Reconciliation within ENGOS](#). Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership Virtual Campfire Series.
- [What is Land Back?](#) .David Suzuki Foundation.

**Act:**

- Donate to IPCAs or Indigenous-led organizations. Many have a 'donate' page on their websites. For example:
  - [Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks](#)
  - [IISAAK OLAM Foundation](#)
- Learn how to be an ally for Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship efforts:
  - [How to Be an Ally for Indigenous-led Conservation](#). Indigenous Leadership Initiative and Land Needs Guardians.
  - [Ally Toolkit](#). Wolastoqey Nation.
  - [Resources for White Allies](#). First Light.

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