
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Tahltan land to be protected in partnership with conservation organizations, Industry and the Province

VICTORIA – A new conservancy to protect the environment and wildlife on Tahltan territory has been created in an area of northwestern B.C. historically known as the Ice Mountain Lands, adjacent to Mount Edziza Provincial Park.

The Tahltan Central Government, the Province, Skeena Resources Limited, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and BC Parks Foundation have worked in partnership to create the conservancy.

"Mount Edziza and the surrounding area has always been sacred to the Tahltan Nation. The obsidian from this portion of our territory provided us with weaponry, tools and trading goods that ensured our Tahltan people could thrive for thousands of years," said Chad Norman Day, President of Tahltan Central Government. "Working alongside Skeena Resources, the Province, BC Parks Foundation, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to provide further protection to this area is an initiative we can all take pride in. I am so relieved and thrilled that Mount Edziza is better protected for our future generations."

The conservancy is the first step in the multi-year Tahltan Stewardship Initiative (TSI). The goal of the TSI is to bring greater self-determination to the Tahltan Nation and support stewardship on Tahltan Territory. Tahltan Central Government plans to rename the area within the conservancy at a future date, to better reflect Tahltan heritage.

"Protecting these lands will preserve the natural environment, help maintain biological diversity, and respect the history and importance of this area for the Tahltan Nation," said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. "Collaboration and shared understanding about stewardship of the lands and waters that sustain us is an important lesson delivered through true reconciliation."

Skeena Resources Limited is returning its mineral tenures for its Spectrum mineral claim, which supports the partnership with the Tahltan to establish the new 3,500 hectare conservancy adjoining the 230,000 hectare Mount Edziza Provincial Park.

"We are very pleased to work with our Tahltan partners to be a part of this historically significant event. Through many open and respectful conversations with Tahltan leaders over the years, we have developed a sincere appreciation of the cultural importance of this area to Tahltan," said Walter Coles, President and CEO of Skeena Resources. "We are deeply

committed to our partnership with the Tahltan Nation and are happy that we can play a role in protecting this area for future generations. This is reconciliation in action and symbolic of our partnership commitment to Tahltan.”

Bruce Ralston, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation said, “This conservancy was created thanks to the unique partnership between the BC Parks Foundation, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Skeena Resources, the Tahltan Central Government and the Province. The genuine participation between all parties to protect these lands for future generations is a real achievement. This partnership fosters long-term relationships between Indigenous Nations and mineral companies.”

The parties have worked together to establish the conservancy with support from the BC Parks Foundation and the Nature Conservancy of Canada as well as the Province.

This initiative was also supported by the Government of Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada’s Nature Fund; the Wyss Foundation; MakeWay; the Wilburforce Foundation; MapleCross Fund; Sitka Foundation; and the Leon Judah Blackmore Foundation.

“It’s encouraging to see governments, Indigenous peoples, industry, philanthropic foundations and conservation groups working together to protect our iconic natural environment in British Columbia and across the country. By collaborating on projects like these, we are making progress toward conserving a quarter of lands in Canada by 2025,” said the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

“Permanently protecting the cultural and ecological values of these lands is a remarkable achievement. We congratulate the Tahltan Central Government on their leadership and vision in making this outcome a reality,” said Nancy Newhouse, BC Region Vice President, Nature Conservancy of Canada. “The unique volcanic landforms, the habitat connectivity for wildlife, and the long history of human relationship to this land all make it an area well worth conserving. This was truly a collaborative project, where partners representing a wide range of interests worked together in the spirit of co-operation.”

The Province and Tahltan Central Government have been working together to advance their shared interests in building an enduring, resilient government-to-government relationship in respect of land and resource use, and community, social and economic development within the Tahltan Territory. While more work remains to be done to advance their shared interests, this agreement is an important step.

“This is a triple win,” said Andy Day, CEO of the BC Parks Foundation. “Together, we’re protecting a huge area for wildlife and nature, we’re advancing reconciliation, and we’re supporting sustainable recreation and use. Big up to the Tahltan, B.C., NCC, and Skeena for getting in the same canoe and paddling in the same direction - it’s a great direction for B.C.”

Quick Facts:

- There are 157 conservancies in B.C., ranging in size from 11 to 322,020 hectares.
- The last conservancy established was Tsaa Nuna Conservancy in 2021.
- Conservancies allow a wider range of low-impact, compatible economic opportunities than Class A parks. However, commercial logging, mining and hydroelectric power generation, other than local run-of-the-river projects, are prohibited.
- Parks and protected areas are dedicated to preserving the natural environment and providing outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities. Places of special ecological importance are designated as ecological reserves for scientific research and educational purposes.

Learn more:

Map of the conservancy: <https://bcparks.ca/conservancies/mount-edziza/>

Information about the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act can be found here: www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

Information about the conservancy, park and partners

History on the conservancy:

The Cassiar Iskut-Stikine Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), which was developed in 2000 and encompasses 5.2 million hectares, recommended the establishment of several new protected areas in northwestern B.C. The LRMP also recommended that if the mineral tenures in an area next to Mount Edziza Provincial Park became inactive, the area should be added to the park.

Rather than adding the Ice Mountain area to the existing Mount Edziza Park, recent government-to-government discussions with the Tahltan recommended the area be designated as a conservancy. Conservancies are established to explicitly recognize the importance of an area to First Nations for social, ceremonial and cultural uses. They also enable the continuation of traditional Aboriginal uses and provide flexibility to ensure opportunities for low impact, compatible economic activities. The first conservancies in B.C. were designated in 2006 following government-to-government negotiations with First Nations on land use plans for the central and north coast.

Mount Edziza Provincial Park:

Mount Edziza Provincial Park was established in 1972 and spans more than 230,000 hectares of the Tahltan Highlands. The remote park, which can only be accessed by trails or a float plane, showcases a spectacular volcanic landscape that includes lava flows, basalt plateaus, cinder fields and cinder cones.

The Mount Edziza area has been a major source of obsidian for Indigenous people for the last 9,000 to 10,000 years and is highly valued by the Tahltan people. Obsidian is a volcanic glass-like rock that has many uses including arrowheads and various types of knives. Obsidian quarries and workshops have been found in several areas around Mount Edziza with 112 sites documented in the park. Many additional sites have recently been found by Tahltan Land Claim and Traditional Use research.

About the Tahltan Nation:

The Tahltan Central Government (TCG) is the administrative governing body of the Tahltan Nation. The Iskut Band and the Tahltan Band continue to govern Tahltan interests with respect to the Indian Act in the communities of Iskut, Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek. The TCG is the representative government of the Tahltan Nation with respect to the inherent and collective Aboriginal title and rights shared by all Tahltan people.

The Tahltan Nation's Territory spans 95,933 square km of northwest British Columbia or the equivalent of 11 per cent of the province. Tahltan Territory includes 70 per cent of BC's Golden Triangle – a world-class mining jurisdiction with a thriving mineral exploration sector. To learn more visit: www.tahltan.org

About the BC Parks Foundation:

The BC Parks Foundation is the official charitable partner of BC's world class parks system. It is helping create the best park system in the world by working with British Columbians to protect, enhance and sustain B.C.'s parks, while inspiring and connecting people to them. To learn more, visit: www.bcparksfoundation.ca

About the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC):

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is the nation's leading not-for-profit, private land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect 14 million hectares (35 million acres), coast to coast to coast. To learn more, visit www.natureconservancy.ca

The Government of Canada's Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is a unique public-private partnership to support new protected and conserved areas by securing private lands and private interests in lands. The program is managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Federal funds invested in the program are matched with contributions raised by NCC and its partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the country's land trust community.

About Skeena Resources Limited:

Skeena Resources Limited is a Canadian mining exploration company focused on revitalizing the past-producing Eskay Creek gold-silver mine located in Tahltan Territory in the Golden Triangle of northwest British Columbia, Canada. The Company released a robust Preliminary Economic Assessment in late 2019 and is currently focused on infill and exploration drilling to advance Eskay Creek to full feasibility by the end of 2021. Additionally, Skeena continues exploration programs at the past-producing Snip gold mine. To learn more, visit: www.skeenaresources.com

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