



- [Close Window](#)
- [Print This Page](#)
- [Expand All](#) | [Collapse All](#)

Dene K'éh Kusān – Land Guardian Network

Application Date	5/31/2024		
Applying Organization	Dena Kayeh Institute	Grant Type	Member Directed
Requested Amount	\$50,000.00	Project Name	Dene K'éh Kusān – Land Guardian Network
Contact Name	Corrine Porter	Project Location (State or Territory)	BC
Contact Title	Executive Director	Project State/Province	BC
Contact Email Address	denakayeh@gmail.com	Project Multiple Locations	
Notes		Status	Submitted
		Created By	Gillian Staveley, 5/31/2024, 4:56 PM

Organization Details

Organization Name	Dena Kayeh Institute	Annual Operating Budget	\$1,500,000.00
Applying Contact	Gillian Staveley	Tax Status/Organization Type	Canadian Registered Charity
Staff Size	5	Main Phone	867-335-4667
Total Membership	4	Website Address	https://denakayeh.com/
BIPOC-led	Yes	Address	PO Box 76 Lower Post British Columbia V0C 1W0 Canada
C-Suite Staff	100% of Staff and 75% of the Board is Indigenous		

Proposal Questions

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</p> <p>The Dena Kayeh Institute is a non-profit society and charitable organization that was established in 2004 and created to empower, preserve, and protect the Kaska Dena language, oral traditions, history, culture, and traditional knowledge. For over 20 years, the focus of DKI has been to help the Kaska Dena reclaim our role as land stewards in our ancestral territory and develop the long-term capacity to promote and implement</p> | <p>2. Final Success</p> <p>That Dene K'éh Kusān remains intact so that our Indigenous community's material, cultural, and spiritual lives remain strong and sustainable within our proposed world-class protected area of 40,000 square kilometers (3.9 Million Hectares).</p> |
|---|---|

our Kaska land ethic. The institute's overall mission is to use the tools of Traditional Knowledge and Western Science to protect the ecological integrity of our lands and waters and enhance the cultural heritage and socio-economic well-being of our people.

3. Location Details

The area that DKI is trying to protect is four times the size of Yellowstone National Park and is predominately free of roads, power lines and resource development. There are over 18,000 cultural sites within this landscape where our communities have called these lands and waters home for thousands of years. It is a globally significant landscape, one of North America's last prominent intact places stretched over 40,000 sq km in Northern British Columbia. DKI is working with our nation to protect this landscape by creating an indigenous protect and conserved area that will be an important conservation corridor for our vulnerable species at risk and will also help make a significant contribution to the country's climate targets to address global biodiversity loss.

Most importantly, this conservation area will allow the underrepresented people who are the original land stewards of this region to take on the much-needed role of managing this land as we have done since time immemorial. We are proposing to create and manage this protected area through a co-governance arrangement with our neighbouring First Nations communities and with crown governments. Reclaiming our rights and responsibilities and establishing a world-class protected area is the most significant part of our nation's reconciliation efforts.

Traditionally our people have been overlooked as being leaders in conservation, but with the advancement of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas initiatives in Canada, our community-led mandate to protect key cultural and ecological places in our traditional territory is being seen and understood. From the boreal forest to sacred headwaters to key habitat areas in the Northern Rockies, our protected area proposal has the opportunity to create a conservation area that is the missing link in the connectivity efforts being led through the Yukon to Yellowstone region and provides an essential missing piece to allow for wildlife to move freely throughout the land base.

Our vision is for us to see various knowledge sources come together as one to protect our land and our people so that we can all thrive together in a conservation-based economy focused on

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

Our ultimate goal in our work is Indigenous-led conservation in which the Kaska can use their inherent right to manage the land, where Kaska laws are recognized, and where effective Kaska governance over our proposed IPCA is (re) established through Kaska governance institutions. Our objective is Kaska-led conservation management within the proposed 40,000 km² area in the core ancestral territory of the Kaska Dena in British Columbia.

Since 2018, we have been making progress in these goals and objectives through our promotion of the work both regionally and nationally. In the spring of 2023, we received a government mandate to create a joint modernized land use planning table with the Province of British Columbia to advance our work on the IPCA and other land use planning priorities within the Kaska Dena traditional territory. Since then, we have co-developed a process agreement that outlines our joint commitments to each other in this work. The first important step we are undertaking is securing interim legal protection of this area through a 'no registration reserve' while we negotiate an establishment agreement for the IPCA.

Our strategy over the next year after interim protections are in place for the IPCA is to continue to embark upon the following:

- Work with our neighbouring nations to co-design a governance and management structure that works for our kinship-based ties to these lands.
- Engage with the public and stakeholders in the area regarding our aligned interests in stewardship within this region.
- Pursue partners who can work with us to support the long-term conservation financing needed to provide the ongoing stewardship of this region, including activities such as our Kaska lang guardian programs.
- Develop a conservation economy within the IPCA through ecosystem services and tourism development.
- Work with the Province of BC to finalize an establishment agreement for the IPCA using crown law and Kaska law. Through this work, one of the big outcomes that the Kaska Dena expects is for us to be able to implement a joint management approach with the provincial government and proponents in

equity and sustainability, where all people will be welcome to come to experience this beautiful and pristine area that we call our lands – Dena Kayeh.

land and resource management that provides new opportunities for economic development while respecting and recognizing Kaska Dena's rights, titles, and interests. There will be important social, cultural and economic impacts if the Kaska secure Dene K'éh Kusān as an indigenous protected and conserved area and these opportunities will not just be for Kaska members but also for many regional stakeholders who have businesses in the region that focus on recreation and tourism.

One way we believe there will be the most positive impact is through revitalizing stewardship responsibilities for our people within the IPCA. Stewarding the lands and waters of our traditional territory is central to preserving our unique identity and vibrant Kaska culture. By building Kaska guardian expertise, we can expand the stewardship activities within the Dene Keh Kusān. To achieve the success needed for the management of this region, we will develop a holistic recruitment and training plan that addresses key barriers to Kaska citizens fully benefitting from a career as a Land Guardian. Our intent is to build a plan that allows for individual career building so we can assemble a team with expertise in health, education and on-the-land training. We see the increase of guardian presence on the land as a critical strategy for the success of Dene K'éh Kusān and is the prime example of the positive economic opportunities that can come from this work.

5. Key Decision Makers

To create Dene K'éh Kusān as a Kaskaled conservation initiative, we need the support of various governments and interest holders. Each group requires a different engagement strategy, and we have made great progress in gaining the support needed to see our IPCA approved and implemented.

Crown Governments: Our engagement with the Province of BC is being done through our established GTG table, which is supported by a process agreement that outlines our commitments to each other. The Provincial government is the number one key decision maker beyond our own Nation, and we have secured their support and developed our approach to jointly developing this initiative with them to ensure its success.

Neighbouring Nations: Our next biggest decision maker is Indigenous nations, which share territorial areas with us. We have secured their initial support and commitment to collaborating on how we can jointly manage this region through our traditional kinship principles.

Land-Based Stakeholders: We are also engaging with organizations that represent tenure holders in the area as

6. Elevate Voices

DKI is working with the historically underrepresented group known as the Kaska Nation. Our work is based on our nation's grassroots movement to begin the collective action needed to implement our land stewardship vision for our traditional territory. The initiative we are working on with our Nation is Indigenous led, which means it was created by the people, for the people and with the people. Our people, the Kaska Dena, are one of the largest Indigenous Nations in Canada by Geography. Unfortunately, our communities have been historically and racially marginalized based on our colonial history. The oppression that was caused and is still seen is significant, and to help combat that ostracism and reclaim our connection to the land, DKI is trying to secure the most critical place for us to protect: the core part of our traditional territory in northern British Columbia an area where our people lived, thrived, and created a culture. Our project is elevating the voices of our Elders, Youth, and Local Land Stewards, which promotes the collective voices of people in North America who are working on Indigenous-led Conservation measures. This

well as the tenure holders themselves to demonstrate to them the certainty that land use planning in this area can be provided to all parties. We have received various support letters from mineral tenure holders and guide outfitters, and through a variety of engagement methods, we anticipate we will secure the support of many of these interest holders.

perspective of land and water-based protection is very much needed in our country as it is rooted in the values of the original people who created land ethics for these areas. That knowledge is sacred for places to be safeguarded and for underrepresented people to be part of the needed protected initiatives that will ensure these places do not suffer the harmful effects of climate change and biodiversity loss that we see across British Columbia, Canada and the world.

7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

The measurable outcomes we hope to accomplish over the next year as it relates to this proposal are as follows:

- Develop a land guardian recruitment and retention strategy that will allow us to develop the careers needed for guardians to steward the land base.
- Work with our communities to determine a co-management framework for our land guardians to implement.
- Host events for people to learn about conservation economy opportunities in the IPCA area
- Develop a social media presence for our Land Guardian Network known as Dene Nan Yedah, which means people protecting the land.

8. Evaluate Your Progress

We will evaluate the progress and success of this proposal's outcomes by using SMART goals—simple, meaningful, actionable, realistic, and trackable. This will allow us to ensure that we achieve the short—and long-term goals of how we intend to utilize the funding through specific milestones and tasks. For example, to ensure that we retain land guardians, we will need to make sure we are creating a work plan and budget that is reasonable for us to achieve this goal through the needed resources, capacity, and expertise. We will record these successes over the course of the grant timeframe and beyond to see where we are succeeding and also to identify areas we may need to focus on in the future.

9. TCA Funding Plan

We plan to develop our management regime for our IPCA further and create a recruitment and retention strategy for our land guardians, who are our eyes and ears on the ground and will enforce the stewardship values of our IPCA. Developing a strategy for evolving this important career within the management of this protected area is important. A protected Dene K'éh Kusān means healthy communities, national building, as well as cultural and conservation economic opportunities. We want to create jobs and important sustainable opportunities for our nation and our neighbours, and our land guardian programs can help do that.

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

DKI's journey to uphold our Indigenous nation's values has been an important one, and it hasn't been without challenges. Over the past 20 years, the institute has worked to address equity and inclusion of our people's knowledge and understanding of the land and waters we call home. On a daily basis, we embody inclusion and equity by working with elders, youth and land stewards to ensure that our people's collective knowledge is safeguarded and that all people within our community are part of the work needed to protect our lands so that these places do not suffer the harmful effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. When we bring voice and action to the issues that our communities care about, it allows us to influence policy and processes for how our lands are managed and governed and that diversity of knowledge allows for better decision-making to occur.

11. Confidential Items

Our proposal is still being actively negotiated, and parts of it are currently under an NDA with the Province of British Columbia. Many elements of Questions 4 and 5 speak to this, and we ask that those be kept confidential as we move forward to successfully announce our work to the general public in the summer of 2024.

Other Relevant Application Details