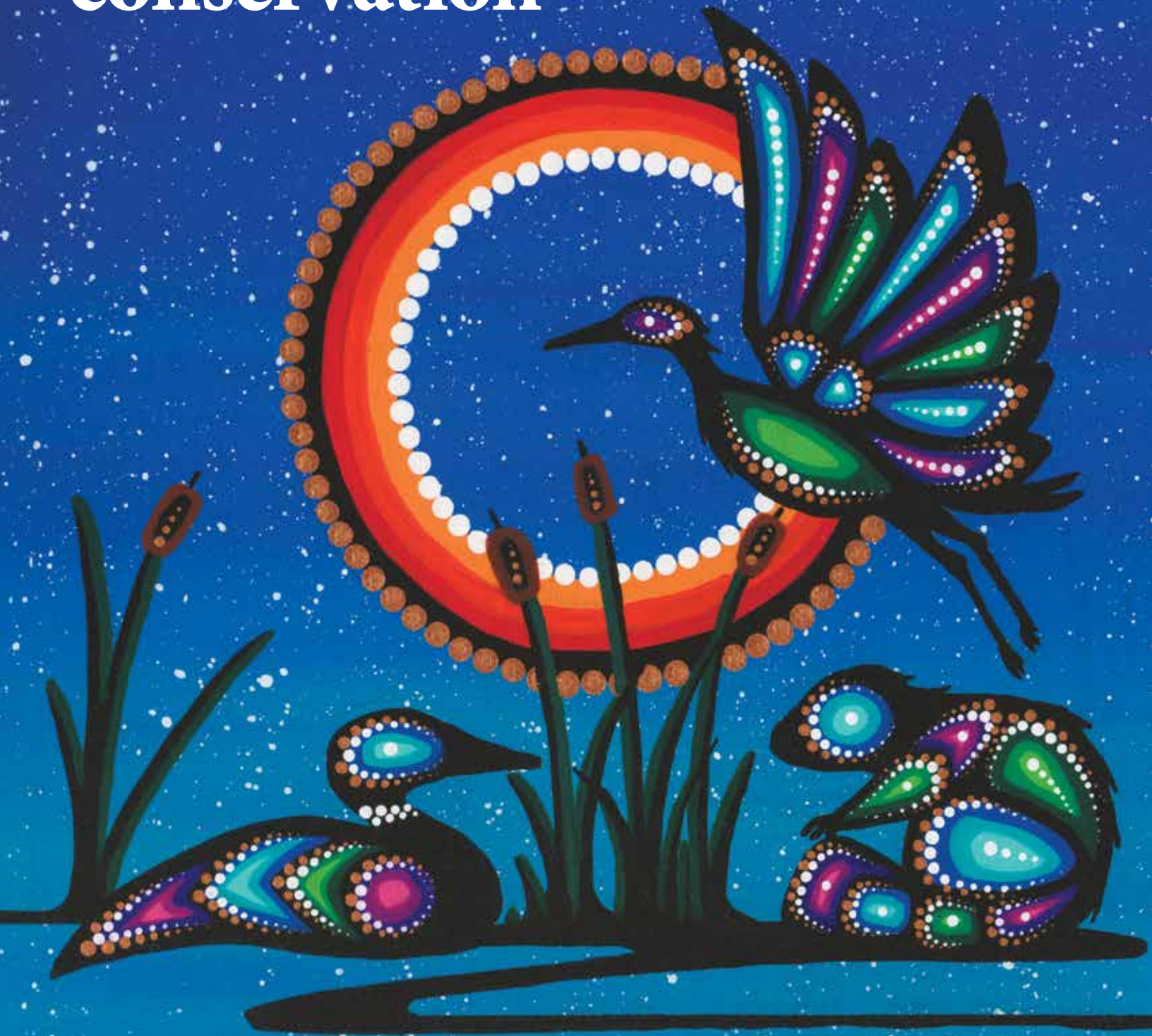


Supporting Indigenous-led conservation



Indigenous Peoples are leading conservation efforts across Canada and beyond, making enormous gains towards protecting biodiversity, Indigenous cultures and relationships for future generations. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has been privileged to learn from and assist in some of these initiatives, using our skills, experience and relationships to support resilient landscapes for nature and people to thrive.

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge the significant rights and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples to conserve and steward their traditional lands. Through collaboration we can support and live in reciprocity with a network of healthy landscapes for future generations.

Direct action

Transferring private land or private rights in land

Qat'muk

The Ktunaxa have lived in their homelands since time immemorial and have a deep spiritual connection to the animal world. In particular, the Grizzly Bear Spirit is an important source of guidance, strength, protection and spirituality for the Ktunaxa. A very special place to the Grizzly Bear Spirit is an area known as Qat'muk. The Ktunaxa have a stewardship responsibility to the Grizzly Bear Spirit and to Qat'muk.

For 30 years, a large-scale recreational development had been proposed for the Jumbo Valley, which falls within the larger area of Qat'muk. In 2020, NCC was invited by the Ktunaxa Nation to support the extinguishment of the commercial recreational tenure within the Jumbo Valley.

ktunaxa.org

Kwesawe'k

Located in northwestern Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island), the sand dunes of Pitumkek form one of the most ecologically and culturally significant coastal dune ecosystems in Eastern Canada. The Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq and NCC have been working together to care for nearby conservation areas since 2009.

In 2022, NCC acquired a large coastal island that serves as the western anchor of Pitumkek, known as Kwesawe'k (Oulton's Island). At 202 hectares, Kwesawe'k provides important habitat for small animals like snowshoe hare and red squirrel. It is also home to nesting sites for great blue herons, double-crested cormorants and bald eagles.

In 2027, NCC will return Kwesawe'k to the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq, the original land stewards, to be part of their vision for Pitumkek. NCC is proud to share in the commitment to conserve Pitumkek for all of Epekwitk.

Inuey.ca



Technical support

Conservation planning for protected areas establishment

Eeyou Istchee

Eeyou Istchee (The Peoples Land) is the territory and homeland of the Cree Nation in Quebec. It is roughly 40 million hectares, stretching inland from the eastern shores of James Bay and Hudson Bay.

The Cree Regional Conservation Strategy is a Cree Nation initiative, developed in 2015. It outlines a Cree vision for the development of conservation and protected areas initiatives in Eeyou Istchee. The strategy also ensures Cree leadership in the protection of lands, waters and resources for today and tomorrow.

Together, the Cree Nation Government (CNG) and NCC applied leading-edge technologies within a Cree context to explore candidate protected areas that would enable Cree visions for conservation in Eeyou Istchee. Results of this work informed the establishment of 3.9 million hectares of new protected areas, jointly announced by the CNG and the Government of Quebec in 2020.

NCC continues to work with the CNG to activate the Cree Regional Conservation Strategy to achieve conservation area goals to 2030 and 2035.

eeyouconservation.ca



It's not necessarily giving the land back to us per se, but it's actually letting the land become itself again. Not one of us owned a piece of land; it was actually part of us. It's not only for us but it's for everybody else.

Robert Joseph

2022 Pitumkek Pathfinder



Shared responsibilities

Caring for the land together

Gámdas Tlagée

In 2010, a portion of the Kumdis Estuary on Haida Gwaii was illegally logged, causing significant damage to riparian areas and associated salmon habitat, cultural heritage features, wetlands and old-growth coastal temperate rainforest. As restitution for this destruction, the BC Provincial Court approved an option to transfer the land to be held in trust for conservation. NCC and the Council of the Haida Nation (CHN) received the transfer and entered a partnership to co-own and co-manage Gámdas Tlagée.

Since 2018, the CHN and NCC have been working in partnership to manage and restore this land, including in-stream habitat restoration, cedar planting and management. Building on the success of the partnership at Gámdas Tlagée, CHN and NCC have identified shared objectives for conservation and have agreed to a process that sets the conditions necessary to jointly pursue opportunities in support of CHN's values and land use vision.

haidanation.ca

Wabano Aki

On the banks of the Assiniboine River lies a 305-hectare area of land named Wabano Aki (meaning "Tomorrows Land," in Anishinaabemowin).

Over the past five years, local Anishinaabe representatives, the Beddome family and NCC, collectively known as the Stewards of Wabano Aki, have worked together to build relations, trust and understanding to jointly steward and monitor this land.

The stewards are working collectively to conserve the land and species that grow on and live there sustainably into the future, hand in hand with the human community that depends on it. They will continue to embrace agriculture, conservation and ceremonial practices on the land.

A plan for managing the land includes collaborative approaches to access and land use, informed by Indigenous knowledge and conservation science.

natureconservancy.ca/wabanoaki

Connected collaborators

Alliance and partnership development

Teetl'it Gwinjik

Signed in 1992, the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claims Agreement* granted the Gwich'in large land blocks and site-specific parcels of fee-simple land within the Gwich'in Settlement Region — an area of nearly 9 million hectares spanning both the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

The Teetl'it Gwinjik (Peel River) region of the Yukon is described as the "Heart of the Tetlit Gwich'in Cultural Landscape," as demonstrated by high concentrations of archaeological sites. It continues to be used extensively by the Gwich'in for subsistence hunting and fishing, and is critical for the maintenance of Gwich'in culture and traditional economies.

Since 2020, NCC has supported the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) in identifying funding opportunities, evaluating the suitability of land protection measures and creating connections to advance Gwich'in conservation objectives. In 2024, an outcome of this partnership included the GTC jointly announcing with Parks Canada and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun the launch of a feasibility study to explore the establishment of a new national park in the Teetl'it Gwinjik watershed region of the Yukon.

gwichintribal.ca

The collaboration with NCC has helped establish a direct dialogue channel with Parks Canada's executive office, facilitating Gwich'in leadership in the Teetl'it Gwinjik National Park process. Through our collaboration, GTC and NCC are establishing new benchmarks for fostering relationships that enhance conservation and land protection initiatives in the North, leveraging our combined expertise to drive success together.

Kanda Kola Gnama
Transboundary Specialist,
Gwich'in Tribal Council



Nature makes it possible

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) welcomes and celebrates the changing dynamics of conservation in Canada and around the world. Indigenous leadership is inspiring us all to work differently together and restore healthy relationships with the land to build resilient landscapes for nature and people to thrive.

As a leading conservation organization, NCC also has a unique opportunity to share our skills and capacity to assist Indigenous communities and Nations to achieve their conservation and stewardship goals. Working with individuals, communities, organizations and governments at all levels, NCC delivers on-the-ground results in landscapes across Canada.

The initiatives and achievements in the preceding pages are possible because of the leadership, persistence, creativity and commitment of Indigenous Peoples. NCC celebrates these achievements and acknowledges there is still much for us to do to rebalance our relationships with nature.

We invite you to learn more about Indigenous-led conservation and about the potential roles of NCC as a trusted delivery partner. Please share this publication with others and connect with us if you think NCC may have a role to play to support work or unlock solutions.

We care deeply about the land and our collective responsibilities to nature. Let's find ways to work together so we can achieve more!

natureconservancy.ca

“The Nature Conservancy of Canada was really one of the key partners in this process. They contributed by being present... [and] really tried to understand what our lens was... They also opened up a lot of doors for us... Bringing us into spaces where our voice maybe wouldn't have been heard.”

Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty,
Cree Nation Government



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jessica Mamakeesick (Robinson) is an Oji-Cree woman with roots in KeeWayWin and Sandylake Ontario. In 2021 Jessica woke up feeling inspired after a dream of creating Indigenous art. Since then she has changed career path and now operates her own business called Mamakeesick Roots.