

Canada's Newest Indigenous Protected Area/National Wildlife Area

On October 11th, 2018, Dehcho First Nations and the Government of Canada will designate the Edézhíe Protected Area/National Wildlife Area to conserve 14,249 square kilometres of boreal forest—an area more than twice the size of Banff National Park.

Environment Minister Catherine McKenna and Dehcho First Nations leaders will participate in a signing ceremony in Fort Providence, NWT on the 11th.

This announcement marks the first Indigenous Protected Area since Canada mapped out its plan to protect at least 17% of lands and freshwaters by 2020.

Dehcho communities have led the effort to conserve these lands and have worked in partnership with Canada to secure their protection. Edézhíe was named a Dehcho Protected Area by the Dehcho Assembly on July 24, 2018. Now Edézhíe will also be designated as a National Wildlife Area to provide additional conservation measures.

Edézhíe will be managed by a jointly appointed management board which will make decisions by consensus. Dehcho K'éhodi Indigenous Guardians and the Canadian Wildlife Service will draw on Dene culture and western science to carry out on-the-ground monitoring and protection activities. The Dehcho Dene way of life will be promoted and encouraged in Edézhíe.

First Indigenous Protected Area Designated Since Canada Launches Major Conservation Effort

- Canada committed to protecting at least 17% of lands and freshwaters by 2020 as part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Edézhíe is the first Indigenous protected area established since Canada launched the Pathway to Target 1 process to achieve this goal and committed \$1.3 billion in the 2018 federal budget to support collaborative conservation efforts.
- Indigenous protected areas are places where Indigenous Peoples take the lead in conserving and managing important land and waters, often in partnership with Crown governments.
- 74% of Canadians support Indigenous communities creating and managing Indigenous protected areas, according to an Earncliffe poll for the Boreal Songbird Initiative and Schad Foundation.
- Other Indigenous Nations are working to conserve lands and waters, confirming that Indigenous Nations are essential for reaching Canada's international commitment to protect at least 17% of lands by 2020.

"The Land Protects Us and We Will Protect the Land"

- Edézhíe holds great significance for Dehcho culture and identity. It includes many important spiritual sites and figures prominently in Dene stories.
- Elders refer to it as the breadbasket of the Dehcho, because of its richness of wildlife and fish.
- During times of food scarcity in the Mackenzie Valley, the Dehcho relied on Edézhíe as a storehouse for sustenance and survival.
- The Edézhíe Dehcho Protected Area will ensure the Dehcho way of life in Edézhíe will be sustained for both current and future generations.

Abundant Animals, Clean Water and other Hallmarks of Biodiversity

- Edézhíe is home to headwater lakes, mature spruce forests, and vibrant wetlands; this diversity supports 36 mammal species, 197 bird species and 24 species of fish.
- Boreal caribou and wood bison—both species at risk—are year-round residents. Sitting at the northern end of woodland caribou habitat, Edézhíe will be particularly significant for boreal caribou as climate change affects southern ranges.
- Edézhíe supports populations of many bird species recognized as nationally threatened or of special concern including Canada warbler, olive-sided flycatcher, rusty blackbird, common nighthawk, and short-eared owl.
- The Mills Lake region of Edézhíe has been named an “Important Bird Area” and offers a key stopover for waterfowl migrating across the continent. In aerial surveys, researchers counted single-day maximums of 47,000 lesser snow geese and 12,000 tundra swans.
- 34% of Edézhíe is made up of water and wetlands, according to analysis done by Ducks Unlimited Canada. These waterways provide drinking water for communities, habitat for wildlife and large storehouses for carbon that keep it safely locked in the ground.

Managing the Land According to Proven Model of Dene Knowledge and Western Science

- An Indigenous Guardians program known as the Dehcho K'éhodi will manage Edézhíe.
- Indigenous Guardians monitor wildlife, test water quality, preserve cultural sites and welcome visitors. They draw on training in GIS mapping and Western science, as well elders' teachings, Indigenous language and culture.
- Guardians programs empower Indigenous youth and create measurable environmental benefits.
- Researchers found that the Dehcho K'éhodi and another programs in the NWT [generate \\$2.50 in social, economic, cultural, and environmental value](#) for every dollar invested. With further investment, these programs could [generate more than \\$3.70 for every dollar spent](#).

Part of a National Wave of Indigenous-Led Conservation

- Edézhíe is one of many Indigenous protected areas emerging across the country.
- Several Indigenous Nations have already worked with Crown governments to create protected areas, such as Torngat Mountains National Park in Labrador and the Tursujuq Park in Quebec.
- More Indigenous Nations are interested in partnering with Canada on new Indigenous protected areas—places that will help Canada achieve its goals of protecting at least 17% of lands by 2020.
- By investing in Indigenous land use planning and management, the Government of Canada can advance conservation *and* a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples.