

News Release
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Public comment wanted on proposed Vision and Guiding Principles for Kusawa Park

Whitehorse –The Kusawa Park Steering Committee invites Yukoners to help them move forward on a comprehensive and cooperative management plan for one of the Yukon's favourite and most accessible wilderness recreation areas.

Public consultation begins today on the Vision and Guiding Principles that form the basis for developing the Kusawa Park management plan, which in turn will guide development and operation of the park. Do the Vision and Guiding Principles reflect what you want to see as the future of Kusawa Park? What would you change? Why?

The proposed vision sees Kusawa Park as a place of many hearts and hands working together to tend a special place where all are welcomed. The six proposed Guiding Principles include respect for the ecological integrity of the area as well as acknowledging the economic benefits and opportunities that may come.

This is the second opportunity for public input in what is expected to be a two-year-long planning process. The deadline for comments on the Vision and/or the Guiding Principles is June 30, 2009. Comments should be sent to the Steering Committee Secretariat (info below).

Both the proposed Vision and the Guiding Principles are based on analysis and consideration of the input received from the committee's first round of public consultation in March as well as research data, and recorded historical and traditional knowledge.

Land for Kusawa Park was set aside in 2005 under the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Carcross/Tagish First Nation final agreements. The park falls within the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish, Kwanlin Dun, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. For this reason, the Steering Committee, established in 2008, has a representative from each of those First Nations, as well as three representatives from the Yukon government (YG).

The members of the Steering Committee are: Lawrence Joe, Champagne Aishihik First Nation; Bill Barrett, Carcross Tagish First Nation; Tom Beaudoin; Kwanlin Dun First Nation; Bruce Downie, Yukon Parks, YG; Karen Clyde, Fish and Wildlife Branch, YG; and Cathryn Paish, Yukon Tourism, YG.

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Backgrounder attached: Proposed Vision and Guiding Principles

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Vision:

A Dall sheep dozes on a steep mountainside while on the lake below a kayaker pushes off the shore, seeking the solitude and the splendor of the lake's southern waters. Around a campfire, a woman shares her grandmother's stories about the caribou that once covered these mountains; their tools found on the moutaintop ice patches so well preserved, they look as though they might have been dropped yesterday.

Kusawa immerses visitors in a sense of escape and opportunity – close to Whitehorse but worlds away. Steep mountains and narrow valleys carved by glaciers; the long, twisting lake at its heart. This valley connects the Yukon interior to the Pacific coast and the past to present. Rich in history, the park honours the heritage and cultures of the Carcross Tagish, Champagne and Aishihik, and Kwanlin Dun peoples.

Kusawa Park continues a tradition of co-operation and respect – for the land, the plants and animals, and for each other. As Nùł'átà once welcomed his neighbors to gather at Nekh̄, today 3 First Nations and Yukon Government share responsibility for managing this special place. Many hearts and hands working together – tending a campfire to which all are welcomed.

Guiding Principles:

Kusawa Park will be managed in adherence with the following guiding principles. These principles will guide management and decision-making in achieving the objectives of the plan.

1. Inclusive Engagement and Management

The management of Kusawa Park, as led by the Parties, is inclusive, transparent and uses innovative strategies. There are clear and meaningful opportunities for people to learn about and contribute to the management processes.

2. Ecological Integrity

The management of Kusawa Park ensures ecological integrity. The wellbeing of ecosystems, biodiversity, fish and wildlife populations is considered in all management decisions.

3. First Nation Homeland

First Nation people pursue traditional activities, honour sites and remnants from the past, and experience First Nation values, culture and language.

4. User Experiences

Kusawa Park respects and sustains opportunities for Park users to experience the natural beauty and cultural resources of the area. While the appreciation and enjoyment of the park is encouraged, the principles of Ecological Integrity and First Nation Homeland take precedence and are not compromised.

5. Two ways of knowing

Kusawa Park management embraces two ways of knowing. It integrates modern and traditional approaches to research, knowledge, learning and communicating about the Park environment, history and culture.

6. Economic Benefits and Opportunities

Kusawa Park provides economic benefits and opportunities. Park management supports First Nations people to participate in these benefits and opportunities.