

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Łingít Kusteeyí (Tlingit Way of Life): Revitalizing Tlingit Law for Land and Wildlife

Since 2019, T'akhu Tlèn Conservancy (TAC) has been administering the Łingít Kusteeyí project in partnership with Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN) and West Coast Environmental Law (WCEL). The project aims to reclaim and articulate Łingit laws and apply these laws to decision-making in order to rebuild relationships between wildlife and humans in the Taku River Tlingit First Nation traditional territory. Since its genesis, this Indigenous-led project has sought to advance Indigenous conservation through developing and applying an innovative approach to decolonized research on laws related to land and wildlife. The Taku River Tlingit community's priorities and needs for self-determination have shaped this research process and centered all aspects of this work on outcomes that lead to direct on-the-ground change.

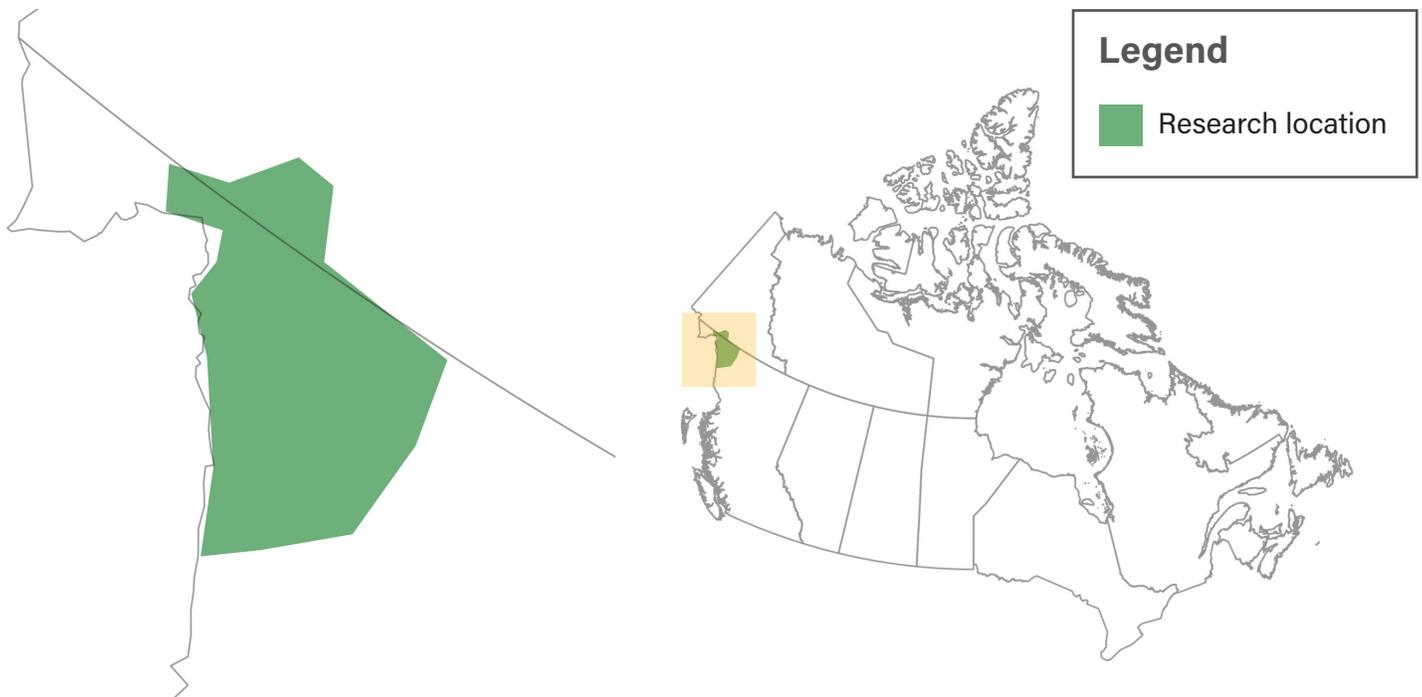
Principal Investigator: Aimee Schmidt, T'akhu Â Tlèn Conservancy

Program Manager: Shirley Jack, T'akhu Â Tlèn Conservancy

Steering Committee Members: K'eduka Jack, Neilatóo.atsien Allan, Watsait (Bryan) Jack, Joan Jack, Daas.ooxh (Rise) Kirby

Trainees K'eduka Jack, Shawna Smith, Anna Schmidt, T'akhu Â Tlèn Conservancy

Collaborators: Shawn Smith & Gavin Smith, West Coast Environmental Law



Project Partners



T'akhu Â Tlèn Conservancy



TAKU RIVER TLINGIT
First Nation



WEST COAST
Environmental Law

Children of the
Taku Society

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Objectives

1. To ensure Taku River Tlingit people are experts in their own Indigenous laws and that they are living these laws in such a way that they are being transferred to the next generation and;
2. To empower Taku River Tlingit people to assert Tlingit laws through decision-making and governance of their Łingit Ani (traditional territory) in such a way that maintains respectful relationship with the land, the animals, and all the people.

Research Plan

Scholars including John Borrows, Matthew Fletcher, Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland have studied how to articulate Indigenous law. Friedland and Napoleon (2016) outline a way of analyzing indigenous stories in order to draw out legal principles. In this methodology, the community starts by creating a research question, followed by analyzing the stories using a process called case briefing that outlines the problems, facts, decisions and resolutions that exist within the stories. Once the stories have been analyzed, the principles are put into a synthesis, which is a written articulation of the laws. Finally, the law is applied to the modern context.

Key Outcomes & Impact

Over the course of this project, we have become better at adapting the research to meet the needs of the community, thereby, making sure the end project will be more valuable and useful to the Taku River Tlingit people. Our timeline shifted and changed as the research evolved and our path took more turns than we originally anticipated but overall, this has strengthened and deepened the project.

More than 400 quotes pertaining to Łingit laws have been identified through the course of this project, and have been grouped in such a way that the community can engage with the teachings embedded in these laws. A significant finding related to this aspect of the project was that there is strong consistency between Łingit laws embedded in traditional stories and Elder's interviews and in the words of younger Tlingit people. This suggests that despite the impacts of colonization Łingit laws remain strong within the community. This finding emphasizes the importance of carrying on the work of articulating these laws so they can be applied more formally to support governance and decision-making.

The key impacts of this work have been at a community level. Knowledge mobilization has been locally focused but has significantly impacted Taku River Tlingit community members by increasing their understanding of the value and strength of articulating Łingit laws.



Contacts:

Project contact: Principal Investigator Aimee Schmidt at takhuatlened@gmail.com

CMN contact: CMN Executive Director, Monique Dubé at monique@cmn-rcm.ca