

# Qat'muk Declaration

We, the Ktunaxa, have lived in our territory since time immemorial and have a deep spiritual connection to the animal world and, in particular, to the grizzly bear. Qat'muk is a very special place where Kławła Tukłwakʔis, the Grizzly Bear Spirit, was born, goes to heal itself, and returns to the spirit world. The Grizzly Bear Spirit is an important source of guidance, strength, protection and spirituality for the Ktunaxa. Qat'muk's importance for the Grizzly Bear Spirit is inextricably interlinked with its importance for living grizzly bears now and in the future. The Ktunaxa have a stewardship obligation and duty to the Grizzly Bear Spirit and Qat'muk.

Given the importance of Qat'muk, the Ktunaxa Nation Council, on behalf of the Ktunaxa Nation:

*Affirms* that having been created in interdependence with the land, its living things, and the spirit world, the Ktunaxa possess and are entitled to enjoy our inherent and preexisting sovereignty over our land and our lives thereon;

*Affirms* that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples supports the Ktunaxa Nation's right to: (a) manifest, practice, develop and teach our spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies and to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to our religious and cultural sites [Article 12]; and (b) maintain and strengthen our distinctive spiritual relationship with our traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and other resources and to uphold our responsibilities to future generations in this regard [Article 25];

*Emphasizes* that the Ktunaxa have never consented to the developments and desecrations that have occurred within Qat'muk;

*Asserts* that we will not agree to any further development or sale of land associated with Qat'muk that would result in irreparable and irreversible harm to this sacred place and our spiritual connection with it;

*Affirms* that the Creator gave the Ktunaxa covenants, one of which is to protect, honour, and celebrate what the Creator has given us;

*Reaffirms* that our Law, ʔaknumuʔtiti, requires the protection of our sacred places for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren;

*Recognizes* that the Ktunaxa language does not translate well into other languages and consequently our spiritual relationship with Qat'muk may not be fully understood by others;

*Affirms* that we are strong, as we have maintained our cultural connection to our land, language, and spirituality;

*Reaffirms* that we are of one heart and one mind to protect Qat'muk from desecration;

*Insists* that we will strengthen and revitalize the Ktunaxa Nation through our spiritual connection to Qat'muk;

*Invites* other governments, non-governmental organizations, business proponents, local communities, and others to support and respect our spiritual traditions and practices linked to Qat'muk, and to help protect it against desecration and destruction.

## Proclamation

*The Ktunaxa Nation Council, on behalf of the Ktunaxa Nation, hereby proclaims, on this date:*

That Qat'muk is the home of the Grizzly Bear Spirit and is the unique and proper place to celebrate and honour this spirit;

That Qat'muk includes the entirety of the Toby-Jumbo watershed and the uppermost parts of the South Fork Glacier Creek, Horsethief Creek and Farnham Creek watersheds;

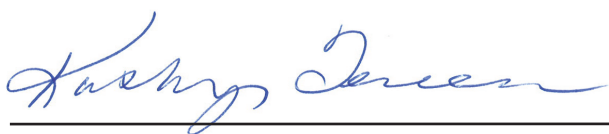
That, to fully protect the most sacred core of the Qat'muk area, a *refuge area* consisting of the upper part of the Jumbo valley is hereby established;

That a *buffer area* consisting of the remainder of the Jumbo watershed is hereby established so that the Grizzly Bear Spirit, as well as grizzly bears, can thrive within and around Qat'muk;

That the Ktunaxa Nation will share Qat'muk with non-Ktunaxa when such use is respectful of Ktunaxa spiritual values and consistent with our *Qat'muk Stewardship Principles*; and

That the Ktunaxa Nation Council will prepare a management plan for the refuge and buffer areas based on the *Qat'muk Stewardship Principles* and in consultation with other governments and stakeholders.

November 15, 2010



Kathryn Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation Council Chair  
on behalf of the Ktunaxa Nation Executive Council



# Qat'muk Stewardship Principles

The Ktunaxa creation story states that Ktunaxa people were created in our territory, where we will remain as keepers of the land. The creation story also speaks to our obligation to care for and respect the land and all things on it, living and non-living. These teachings come together in Ktunaxa law.

## Ktunaxa Law

?aknumuɕtitit is our word for the law given to the Ktunaxa by the Creator. It is a powerful word and speaks to why we were put on this land. We were born into this land and someday we will return through death. The Creator put us here for a reason and that purpose is to take care of the land and its resources.

The law of the land, ?aknumuɕtitit, is the law for survival. The law protects the values inherent in the land. The land gives us the resources to survive, and in return, we uphold our covenant with the Creator to protect and not overuse the land.

The law is grounded in the fact that all things are connected and must be kept in balance. It is also the foundation of our spirituality – that of being humble in our limited understanding and of being respectful of our role within nature and with other creatures, as well as being respectful and acknowledging the Creator and our ancestors.

## Stewardship Philosophy: The Ktunaxa Relationship with the Land

The foundation of the Ktunaxa's philosophy of stewardship of lands and resources is our recognition that we are part of the land. Our understanding of our connectedness requires that we have respect for all things as anything that affects one affects everything else.

The Ktunaxa have terms that address the natural world and how people are a part of it. ?akuk'pukam speaks to anything that gets life from the earth through roots. ?akuk'pukamnam adds the human dimension whereby the earth's life is translated into human life. That is, the Ktunaxa have roots that tie them to the territory, and that we are of the earth. In other words, what we do to the earth, we do to ourselves.

The Ktunaxa phrase that captures the interconnectedness and the stewardship concepts applicable to land management is *Yaqał Hankatititki na ?amak*. This phrase translates to “our people care for the land, the land cares for our people.” It is about our relationship with the land.

## Stewardship Principles

Ktunaxa stewardship values will:

- Contribute to the betterment of future generations;
- Balance the economic use of land with cultural and spiritual values;
- Follow natural law of taking only what is needed;
- Ensure that long-term sustainability and ecological integrity take precedence;
- Ensure access to, and protection of, traditional foods, medicines, resources, and spiritual sites;
- Maintain, protect, manage and restore healthy and diverse ecosystems;
- Ensure land, air, and water are and will be clean and healthy.

## Special requirements for Qat'muk

Qat'muk is a place to celebrate, protect and honour Grizzly Bear Spirit.

We invite other governments and stakeholders to participate in developing a management plan for Qat'muk, including the *refuge* and *buffer* areas, which reflect our Stewardship Principles.

We will continue to share the designated *refuge area* and *buffer area* with non-Ktunaxa when such use is respectful of Ktunaxa spiritual values and consistent with our *Qat'muk Stewardship Principles*.

The refuge and buffer areas will not be shared with those who engage in activities that harm or appropriate the spiritual nature of the area. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- The construction of buildings or structures with permanent foundations;
- Permanent occupation of residences.

To further safeguard spiritual values, no disturbance or alteration of the ground will be permitted within the refuge area.

