

Ktunaxa Land Declaration

WHO WE ARE

WE, THE KTUNAXA, are the peoples of ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, our territory and homeland, where we have lived since time immemorial. We are also known as Kootenay in Canada, and Ksanka, Kootenai, or Kutenai in the United States.

Our Nation currently includes the four Ktunaxa First Nations: ʔakisq̓nuk, ʔaq̓am, Yaqan Nuʔkiy and Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓ti'it in Canada, and we recognize and affirm our enduring connection to our sister Ktunaxa communities in the U.S.: Ksanka, of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana, and ʔaq̓anq̓mi, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.

Our Creation and ancient oral histories tell us where our lands are: Stretching from Ya-qawiʔti-li (near the Big Bend of the Columbia River) in the north, straddling Naʔmuq̓in (Rocky Mountains) southeasterly to Ya-qawiʔta̓mki (southwest Montana), thence northwest to Kik̓siʔuk and ʔakink̓aʔnuk (Castlegar area), thence north to Ktunwakanmituk Miʔq̓aq̓as (Revelstoke area), and north of the Big Bend of the Columbia River.

Our culture and identity are rooted in our land. Ktunaxa place names, stories and songs passed down from untold generations are a rich cultural heritage written across our homeland. Our language, ʔa-kʔukaq̓wum, is ancient and a language isolate, unrelated to any other in the world. ʔa-kʔukaq̓wum is integral to our identity – we are the Ktunaxa ʔaq̓tsmak̓nik.

OUR COVENANTS SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL

WE HONOUR THE COVENANTS given to us by Creator to live in, occupy, utilize, protect, cherish and celebrate ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa.

We are bound by Creator's Natural Law, ʔa-knumuʔtiʔiʔ, which requires the protection of ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa now and forever.

Yaqaʔ Hankatiʔiʔki na ʔamak – *Our people care for the land, the land cares for our people* – is our stewardship responsibility.

We steward our lands, water and air to honour and respect ʔa-kxam̓is q̓api q̓apsin – *All living things* – as anything that affects one affects everything else, including ourselves.

ʔa-kuk̓pukam̓nam is how we identify as being Ktunaxa, through our ancestral lineage. That is, we have roots that tie us to ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, and we are of this land.

WE HAVE PERSEVERED, SURVIVED AND FLOURISHED

WE HAVE ALWAYS RESISTED incursions to our territory and efforts to deny our existence and extinguish our rights. Our ancestors protected our territory by joining together to seek treaties of mutual recognition and respect with other Indigenous peoples and, where necessary, to fight.

When the first Europeans arrived, we welcomed trade and commerce and offered to share our wealth with the newcomers. We never consented to these newcomers taking our lands. We have never been defeated in war, nor have we entered into treaties with the Crown or ceded our lands.

Despite the creation of colonial boundaries that sought to divide us, we never consented to the creation of the Canada – U.S. border. We deny the Federal and Provincial claims to ownership of ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa.

We were party to petitioning the Prime Minister of Canada in March of 1912 to seek recognition of our rights, to no avail. We affirmed the *Kootenay Nation Land Claim and Declaration* in July, 1981, to express to the world our inalienable right to maintain our sovereignty.

In spite of all the atrocities laid upon us, we maintain our cultural connection to our land, our language, and our spirituality to this very day. We continue to live and flourish, we have never left, and we will always remain in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa.

We, the Ktunaxa, declare and make known to all:

We hold our inherent, sovereign rights and title to all the territory which we have held intact since time immemorial.

We reaffirm the declaration by our Chiefs of our Ktunaxa sovereignty and unceded title and rights as set out in the *Kootenay Nation Land Claim and Declaration* signed on July 8, 1981, and all that our leaders have said to settler society respecting our sovereignty to this land since contact.

We maintain our right as a sovereign people to govern ourselves and our territory in accordance with our own laws and traditions, including the right to use and occupy our land, decide how our land will be used, and enjoy the wealth that comes from our land.

We require the Crown to deal with us honourably, uphold our rights, and recognize our laws and legal orders as a sovereign people.

We expect everyone to respect our rights, culture and decision-making processes.

We will refute other First Nations who make unsubstantiated claims to rights to our territory and homelands in present-day British Columbia.

We require other First Nations who visit these homelands to respect our laws and protocols, as we would when visiting your homelands.

We are willing to work with other First Nations through processes based on mutual respect and recognition.

We are of one heart and mind to protect ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa for present and future generations of Ktunaxa.

We shall continue to work with the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of Montana and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, our sister Ktunaxa communities in the U.S., to protect and uphold Ktunaxa rights.

We will maintain our rights to develop laws and policies consistent with this Declaration.

Declared on the 23rd day of April, 2025, by the Chiefs and Councillors of ʔakisq̓nuk, ʔaq̓am, Yaqan Nuʔkiy and Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓ti'it at Kyaknuq̓ti'it (Invermere, B.C.).

Donald Sam

ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation
Nasuʔkin Donald Sam

Cheryl Casimer

ʔaq̓am
Nasuʔkin Cheryl Casimer

Jason Louie

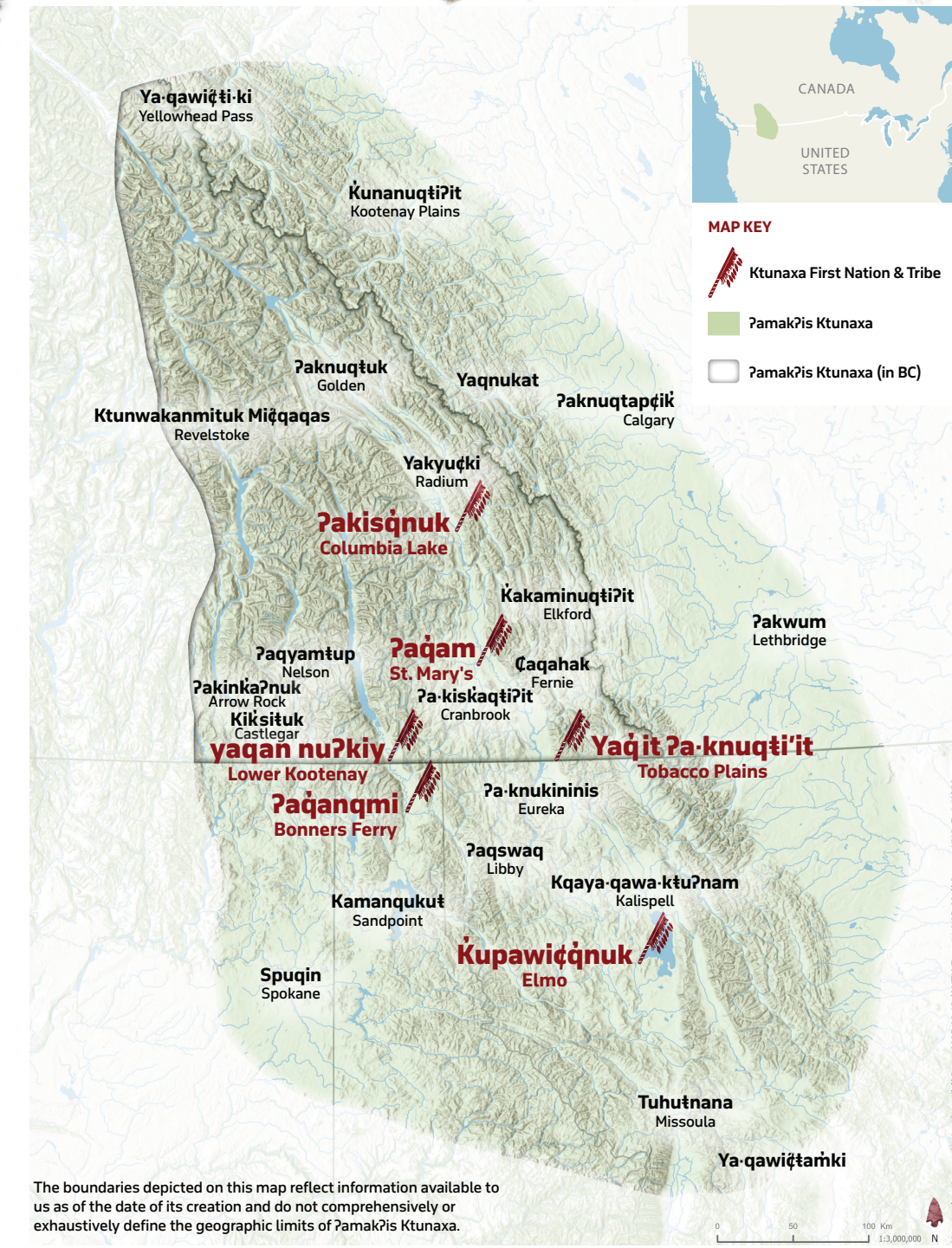
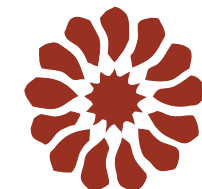
Yaqan Nuʔkiy
Nasuʔkin Jason Louie

Heidi Gravelle

Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓ti'it
Nasuʔkin Heidi Gravelle

Kathryn Teneese

Ktunaxa Nation Council
Chairperson Kathryn Teneese



The boundaries depicted on this map reflect information available to us as of the date of its creation and do not comprehensively or exhaustively define the geographic limits of ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa.

