



*Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, 117 Industrial Road, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2T8  
(867) 668-3613*

*Kwanlin Dün First Nation, 35 McIntyre Drive, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5A5  
(867) 633-7800*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 13, 2020** – Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (TKC) and Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) are calling on Yukoners and all travellers passing through the Whitehorse and surrounding area to support efforts to protect and preserve the cultural and environmental integrity of First Nation Settlement Lands.

Both First Nations understand Yukoners' desire to be on the land. However, with a growing population in the Whitehorse area, KDFN and TKC Settlement Land has become a destination for more people each year. These lands are increasingly used for hiking, camping, dog walking, biking, wildlife viewing, off-road vehicle use and many other recreational pursuits.

Due to the present COVID-19 regulations, both TKC and KDFN lands staff are recording a significant increase to the number of people utilizing Settlement Lands for recreational purposes. Because Whitehorse serves as a busy hub for Yukoners, travellers passing through to Alaska, and British Columbia residents who are now able to enter the Yukon freely, both First Nation governments are concerned of the negative impacts future use will have on these important areas.

The key areas of concern for KDFN and TKC Settlement Lands include:

- Unauthorized usage, vandalism and destruction of cultural sites, including traditional family cabins and camp sites.
- Unauthorized structures, and the creation of trail obstructions and cutting of trees.
- Unauthorized trail development and road network development.
- Social media promotion of specific wildlife viewing sites.
- Increased pet waste, litter and dumping.
- General environmental and habitat degradation.
- A general lack of awareness by the general public about First Nation land management practices.

Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation are asking members of the public to refrain from using Settlement Land sites in order to allow the land, water, and wildlife populations time to heal. Both First Nations will be increasing patrols and community engagement events focused on areas of concern. If visitors are uncertain if they are using Settlement Land or have questions about land management practises, they are invited to contact KDFN or TKC or consult Settlement Lands maps.

### **Quotes:**

"We respect everyone's desire to enjoy all that the Yukon has to offer. But we are concerned that increased use of these lands for recreational pursuits is having a negative impact. The cumulative effects and impacts facing these sites is challenging and can take years to reverse. This increase in use also needs to be taken seriously by our government when it comes to safety and liability matters. The public puts themselves at risk when using lands that are not regularly patrolled or managed for general recreational purposes. We hope to educate everyone about respecting and caring for these important TKC resources."

*Chief Kristina Kane, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council*

“Protecting and preserving our lands and heritage sites for future generations is a key priority for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Our ancestors have inhabited this land for thousands of years and we must continue our role as stewards of the land, air, waters, and animals. The Department of Heritage, Lands and Resources will be increasing its patrols and community engagement surrounding use of these lands, to increase awareness of provisions made in our agreements and our values of conservation of resources and respect for the land.”

*Chief Doris Bill, Kwanlin Dün First Nation*

**Background:**

- Kwanlin Dün signed its Final and Self-Governing Agreements in 2005. As part of the land claim settlement, KDFN received 1,042 square kilometres of Settlement Land. Approximately 75 per cent of Yukon’s population lives on shared Traditional Territory of KDFN and TKC.
- Ta’an Kwäch’än Council signed its Final and Self-Governing Agreements in 2002. Under its land claim, the Ta’an Kwäch’än Traditional Territory covers approximately 12,079 square kilometres, of which 796 square kilometres are designated as Settlement Lands.
- Settlement Lands are protected under both government’s land claim legislation to allow TKC and KDFN citizens to oversee these traditional lands to carry out on-the-land activities, protect important harvesting areas and cultural sites and allow for future developments.

**Associated links:**

- [KDFN Traditional Territory and Settlement Lands maps](#)
- [TKC Traditional Territory and Settlement Lands map](#)

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**Contacts**

Janet Smellie  
Communications Officer  
Ta'an Kwäch'än Council  
(867) 334-5298  
[communicationsoffice@taan.ca](mailto:communicationsoffice@taan.ca)

Eileen Duchesne  
Executive Assistant to the Chief  
Kwanlin Dün First Nation  
(867) 633-7800 Ext. 105  
[eileen.duchesne@kdfn.net](mailto:eileen.duchesne@kdfn.net)