

Thaidene Nënë

Proposed National Park Reserve

Boundary Considerations

THAIDENE NĒNÉ

On July 29, 2015, the Government of Canada announced, in the community of Łutsël K'e, Northwest Territories, its commitment to a 14,000 km² national park reserve in the Thaidene Nënë area, unveiling the boundary and the launch of consultations on the proposal.

The proposed boundary is the result of a long-standing partnership with the Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation and ongoing collaborative work with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Northwest Territory Métis Nation. The Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation is spearheading a conservation initiative to protect an area important to them, a place their elders call Thaidene Nënë, or Land of

the Ancestors. This area around the East Arm of Great Slave Lake has, since the early 1960s, been of interest to Parks Canada as a potential national park.

With the advent of devolution in 2014, the GNWT has led a process to determine the future of the 33,690 km² interim land withdrawal in the Thaidene Nënë area. This process has resulted in a proposal that includes territorial parks, other territorial designations, and a national park reserve. In addition, some areas will be reserved for development opportunities, such as mining. Two land withdrawals are in place to provide interim protection for the area while decisions are being made.

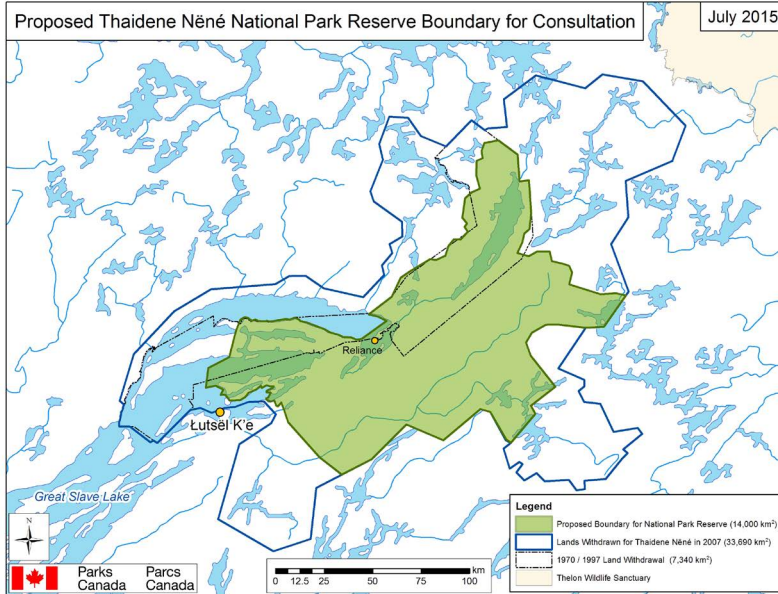


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Thaidene Nënë National Park Reserve



The proposed boundary for the national park reserve would provide adequate representation of the Northwestern Boreal Uplands Natural Region in the National Parks System Plan. It will encompass the eastern-most part of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, Artillery Lake and the lower Lockhart River, and much of the watershed of the Snowdrift River. While significantly smaller than the study area, the national park reserve, in combination with a range of territorial designations, will conserve 75 percent of the original study area of 33,690 km².

The East Arm of Great Slave Lake is known for its outstanding landscape features of dramatic cliffs, cuestas (flat topped hills) and waterfalls on the maze of islands and peninsulas. The proposed boundary includes the most eastern part of the archipelago with Kahochella and Douglas Peninsulas on each side of Wildbread Bay. The park will include Tochatwi Bay and eastern Christie Bay, with the deepest waters in North America, as well as the south shore of Great Slave Lake from Pearson Point to Reliance and the mouth of the Lockhart River.

The proposed boundary includes Artillery Lake, which crosses the treeline and presents a dramatic transition from boreal forest to the tundra. This area is an important area of

traditional use for the Łutsël K'e Dene, particularly for fishing and caribou hunting. Flowing from Artillery Lake, the lower Lockhart River has spectacular waterfalls and canyons, including the spiritual site known as "Our Lady of the Falls". Running parallel to the perilous Lockhart River, Pikes Portage provides the safer access route to Artillery Lake. Fort Reliance National Historic Site and Kaché, the area for the annual Łutsël K'e gathering, are near the mouth of the Lockhart River.

In the southern part of the proposed park area, the Snowdrift River has outstanding potential as a canoe and kayak route, with floatplane access at several lakes, including Whitefish, Tent and Eileen Lakes. This watershed, added to the Lockhart River and Great Slave Lake, provides a large, unfragmented ecosystem that will allow for the maintenance of ecological integrity. The proposed boundary extends eastward to Whitefish Lake, at the headwaters of the Thelon River, an area of important caribou crossings and archaeological sites.

In summary, the proposed boundary achieves key conservation objectives and enhances economic opportunities in the area. The proposed boundary:

- represents a natural region of the national park system;
- has a configuration that will maintain ecological integrity;
- includes some of the most significant cultural and spiritual sites in the Thaidene Nënë area;
- includes areas that will provide iconic visitor experiences;
- will allow for tourism investments that benefit communities;
- excludes areas of high mineral potential;
- will accommodate third-party interests; and
- is a significant contribution to the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan.

Prior to making final decisions on the national park reserve and its proposed boundary, Parks Canada will undertake consultations with Aboriginal groups and communities, stakeholders and third-party interests, and the public.



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