

Thaidene Nene FAQ

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Lutsel K'e Dene Band

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1. What's Thaidene Nene?

Thaidene Nene means 'Land of the Ancestors' in Chipewyan. It is a proposed protected area around and beyond the shores of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, in the NWT. The current study area for the protected area covers more than 33,500 square kilometres (7.4 million acres), and is not just spectacular, but has great cultural and ecological importance.

Thaidene Nene covers the transition from boreal forest to tundra, and includes the deepest freshwater in North America, spectacular cliffs and waterfalls, and magnificent paddling rivers including the Snowdrift, Lockhart and headwaters of the Thelon. It is home to several barren-ground caribou herds, and populations of grizzly bear, wolf, musk-ox, fox, bear, mink, moose, lynx, marten and great-horned owl.

Thaidene Nene is also the homeland of the Lutsel K'e Denesoline, and contains many beautiful places that have special cultural significance to the Lutsel K'e Denesoline. It is the place where their ancestors laid down the sacred, ethical, and practical foundations of their way of life. Carrying these traditions forward, the Lutsel K'e Denesoline take very seriously their right and responsibility to practice their relationship with the land, promote their culture, and protect the area upon which this culture and relationship depend. To the Lutsel K'e Denesoline, protection of Thaidene Nene means preserving the environmental and cultural integrity of a homeland fundamental to a material well-being and cultural identity, and establishing a sustainable local economy based on their relationship with the land.

The Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) has entered the final stages of negotiations with Parks Canada to create Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve. The LKDFN is also in discussions with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) regarding land protection adjacent to the National Park Reserve using territorial legislation.

2. Why does it need to be protected?

There is an opportunity to protect Thaidene Nene before increased mineral interests further fragment this region of the NWT. The area has experienced dramatically increased interest in mineral exploration for precious metals, uranium and diamonds in recent years. Mineral leases and winter roads extend to the current Thaidene Nene land withdrawal boundary. Without permanent protection, mineral exploration and development will likely engulf the entire region.

Establishing a protected area in Thaidene Nene will also contribute to creating a much-needed sustainable local economy in Lutsel K'e. The community will be the gateway to Thaidene Nene, and its operational and service centre. Thaidene Nene will provide opportunities for local people to develop capacity in management and operations of the protected area, as well as a range of related tourism services.

Parks Canada has a long-standing interest in representing the currently-unrepresented Northwestern Boreal Uplands natural region within Canada's National Park system, with a park that provides protection, quality visitor experiences, and opportunities for heritage presentation. Parks Canada has been pursuing protection of this area since the late 1960s.

The LKDFN wishes to protect Thaidene Nene from the impacts of industrial development, and to maintain this critical area of the homeland for cultural pursuits for generations to come. The LKDFN also wishes to keep the area open and healthy for generations of northerners and visitors to continue to enjoy.

3. What kind of a protected area?

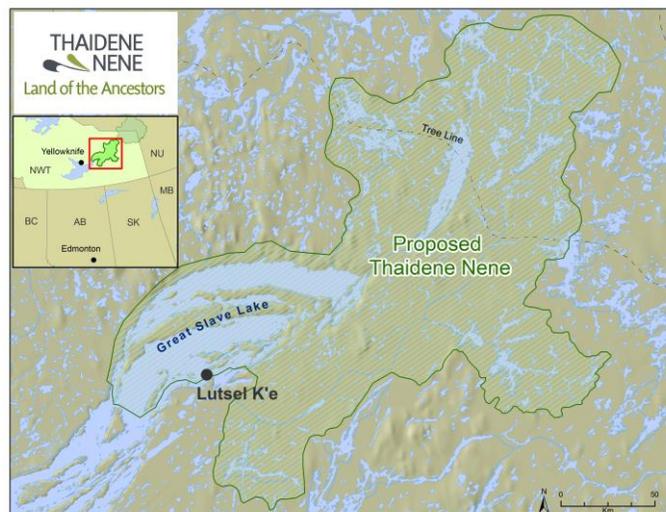
The Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) is currently negotiating an establishment agreement with Parks Canada. The parties intend to use the *Canada National Parks Act* to protect Thaidene Nene through a special partnership that would recognize LKDFN authority and responsibility in management and operation activities. It is LKDFN's vision for Thaidene Nene to be managed and operated from Lutsel K'e, by the Lutsel K'e Denesoline.

While much of Thaidene Nene will be protected as a National Park Reserve, there is potential for the surrounding area to be protected using new territorial legislation. Thaidene Nene will be a unique protected area in Canada: conservation for northerners, by northerners, and respectful of the unique role of indigenous peoples in managing the land.

Currently, the study area is temporarily protected until March 2016 by land withdrawals put in place in 1970 and 2014.

4. How big is the area proposed?

The study area for Thaidene Nene covers an area of over 33,500 km² (7.4 million acres). It is currently under interim land withdrawal. It



is unknown at this point whether the waters of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake will be included in any final protected area.

5. Who decides on the final boundary of the area?

LKDFN, Canada and the GNWT will endeavour to agree on a final boundary for Thaidene Nene.

Lutsel K'e is engaging directly with both Canada and the GNWT to determine considerations for a Thaidene Nene boundary. As well, Parks Canada's National Park establishment process requires that public consultations be conducted across Canada before a final boundary is decided upon. Current research on ecological, cultural and resource values will be evaluated to determine the proposed boundary, as will the results of engagements with stakeholders and the public.

At this point, establishment negotiations between Lutsel K'e and Parks Canada are proceeding, but Parks Canada's formal public consultation process has not yet started.

The LKDFN and CPAWS will advocate for a boundary that protects key ecological and cultural features of Thaidene Nene.

6. How will users of the area be affected by establishment? Will I still be able to go there?

LKDFN's intention in creating Thaidene Nene is to insure continued use and access the pristine landscape, and to provide a sustainable economic base for the community as the gateway to the protected area. It is not LKDFN's intention to restrict others' access and enjoyment of the natural wonders of Thaidene Nene: as the keepers of Thaidene Nene, the Lutsel K'e Denesoline have the responsibility to act as stewards of the land and as host to visitors.

The Canada National Parks Act aims to establish representative natural areas of Canadian significance. These areas are protected for public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, while being maintained in an unimpaired state for future generations. All people are allowed access to areas protected under the Act, though it does establish rules and regulations governing access. It is possible that regulations relating to fuel storage, firearms use and access to indigenous sacred areas will change how visitors use the East Arm and beyond. It is also likely that registration and fees will be required of visitors.

7. How much will it cost to visit the park?

Specific costs to visitors will likely be determined following establishment. It is possible that a Thaidene Nene management body created through the establishment agreement could recommend appropriate fees, and ensure that fees collected for Thaidene Nene are used there, but these details have yet to be determined.

For example, fees for Tuktuk Nogait National Park are as follows, per person:

- Backcountry excursion/camping: \$24.50 per day, \$147.20 per year
- Fishing: \$9.80 per day, \$34.30 per year

8. How can I give feedback to the establishment process?

Contact LKDFN or CPAWS-NWT regarding the following opportunities:

- Meet with CPAWS-NWT staff or LKDFN representatives to ask questions and discuss concerns
- Attend Parks Canada public consultations
- Visit www.landoftheancestors.ca and fill out a comment form

9. What about mineral interests in the area?

There are mineral interests in the region, including uranium and diamonds. Mineral interests are delineated in the Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) for Thaidene Nene, which can be read at:

<http://geoscan.nrcan.gc.ca/starweb/geoscan/servlet.starweb?path=geoscan/shorte.web&search1=R=292448:292476>.

Because Thaidene Nene is so ecological and culturally important, LKDFN is pursuing permanent protection that will prohibit mineral exploration and development activities. LKDFN is pursuing other economic opportunities with respect to Thaidene Nene, for example tourism, operations, and management services related to showcasing Thaidene Nene. At the same time, LKDFN is working with industrial interests outside of Thaidene Nene to maximize community benefits from development.

10. When will it become a protected area?

The LKDFN is committed to completing an agreement-in-principle with Parks Canada for Thaidene Nene by spring 2015. Both parties anticipate that it will take about a year to ratify this agreement, placing establishment in the spring of 2016.