

April 2025

Nis̓maakqin Park Mux̓w̓ši̓la Hot Springs Area

Visitor Use
Management
Strategy



BC Parks



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Acknowledgements

The development of this Visitor Use Management Strategy for the muᖃw̄šiᖃa hot springs area of Nisᖃaakqin Park has been jointly undertaken by BC Parks and the ᖃaᖃuusᖃaᖃ (Ahousaht) Nation, represented by the Maaqutusiᖃ Hahoulᖃee Stewardship Society (MHSS).

Special thanks to the members of the BC Parks-ᖃaᖃuusᖃaᖃ Working Group who worked collaboratively and respectfully to advance this strategy and build stronger relations through the process.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue swimsuit, is sitting in a natural rock pool. She is surrounded by dark, jagged rocks, some of which are covered in green moss. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding rocks and the woman. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue swimsuit, is sitting in a natural rock pool. She is surrounded by dark, jagged rocks, some of which are covered in green moss. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding rocks and foliage. The scene is set in a lush, green environment, likely a forest or park.



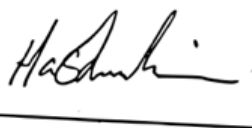
Message from Maaqutusiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society (MHSS)

On behalf of the ʔaḥuusʔaḥ (Ahousaht) Nation and in collaboration with BC Parks, I am pleased to present the Nisḥaakqin Park - Muḥʔšiḥa Visitor Use Management Strategy. This document reflects our shared commitment to ensuring that the muḥʔšiḥa (steaming from rock) hot springs —known for its unique natural and significant cultural values— is preserved for ʔaḥuusʔaḥ cultural and economic use, while also ensuring that visitors can experience its beauty respectfully and sustainably.

Our community has long understood the importance of muḥʔšiḥa as a place where natural, cultural, and spiritual elements converge. Over the past years, we have observed growing visitation to this area, leading to challenges in balancing access with preservation and enjoyment. The ʔaḥuusʔaḥ Nation and BC Parks have therefore developed this joint strategy to guide visitor use with an eye toward upholding ʔaḥuusʔaḥ's right to self-determination and our joint responsibility to steward cultural integrity and environmental responsibility, all while creating economic opportunities for ʔaḥuusʔaḥ to engage in tourism and stewardship of ʔaḥuusʔaḥ ḥaḥuulii (lands, waters and resources).

We recognize that the strategy outlined here is not simply a management document but a living testament to a meaningful partnership rooted in respect, reconciliation and recognition of ʔaḥuusʔaḥ's inherent responsibilities and right to steward our ḥaḥuulii. With its guidelines, we hope to safeguard muḥʔšiḥa for future generations, exercise our rights to self-determination and foster a visitor experience that honours our land's cultural and natural richness.

Ḷekoo



Hasheukumiss on behalf of the ʔaḥuusʔaḥ ḥawil (hereditary Chiefs)



MAAQUTUSIIS HAHOULTHEE STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

Message from BC Parks

On behalf of BC Parks, I am pleased to release the Nis̓maakqin Park Mux̓w̓šil̓a Hot Springs Visitor Use Management Strategy. This strategy represents the collaborative efforts of BC Parks and ʔaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation, represented by the Maaqtusiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society (MHSS).

The document presents a shared vision for the future of the Mux̓w̓šil̓a hot springs area in Nis̓maakqin Park and reflects a joint commitment to protect this culturally significant, geothermal hot springs and to provide visitors with memorable experiences and opportunities to learn about the unique cultural history of the area.

BC Parks is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Collaborative projects such as this visitor use management strategy are one way in which BC Parks and the ʔaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation can strengthen government-to-government relationships and nurture common interests in protected area stewardship and management. This strategy honours the intent of the Ahp-cii-uk MOU, which translates as “going the right way, together”, a reconciliation agreement between the Province of British Columbia and the ʔaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation that commits both governments to create a relationship based on recognition, respect, and collaboration.

BC Parks recognizes ʔaḥuus̓aṭḥ ancestral responsibility to steward and monitor the lands and waters of ʔaḥuus̓aṭḥ haḥuul̓ii. I would like to extend my gratitude to ʔaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation and the BC Parks-MHSS Working Group for working in partnership to provide management direction to protect this significant place in Nis̓maakqin Park.

Sincerely,



Robert C. Austad, Executive Director
Regional Operations- Coast Area
Parks and Recreation Program | Ministry of
Environment and Parks



BC Parks

Glossary

Sahuus?ath (ahousaht) – people with their backs to the mountains and land, facing the ocean and sea

ᑭᐱᓂᓂᓐᓂᓐ ᑭᐱᓂᓂᓐᓂᓐ (ahousaht ha-hoolth-ee) – lands, waters, resources, people governed under Ahousaht traditional law in the traditional territories of the Ahousaht

hawih (ha-wilth) – Hereditary Chiefs, hereditary leadership of Ahousaht

musčim (mus-chim) – the Ahousaht people

nuučaanuḥ (nuu-chah-nulth) - people all along the mountains and the sea; refers to the language and cultural group of closely related Indigenous communities on the north-west coast of Vancouver Island

mux^wšīla (mahkw-shith-ah) – steaming from rock

Nis'maakqin (nis-mock-kin) – our land that we care for

ahp-cii-uk (up-see-ook) – going the right way, together

ᐱᕐᕈᓂᕐᕋᐅ ᕐᕈᓂᕐᕋᐅ ᕐᕈᓂᕐᕋᐅ ᕐᕈᓂᕐᕋᐅ
ᐱᕐᕈᓂᕐᕋᐅ (kla-yah-oo-alth wah-niche sewt-ilth hilth
 Ahousaht ha-hoolth-ee) – we welcome you to Ahousaht
 Territory

ᑲᓄᓄᓂᓂᓂ ᑲᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ ᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ (oo-soom-nish oo-ya-thook-at-koo ha-hoolth-thee) – we need to take care of the territory

čawaack^winiš mułmumc – we are from one root

Ṣaḥuusʔath Place Names

?upnit (up-nit) - maañuʔisʔaht village site

?apsuhta (up-suh-ta) – translates to “where trail ends” and refers to the area on the east side of Hot Springs Cove and to the area directly opposite to it, is part of the village of ?upnit

mux^wšīla (mahkw-shith-ah) – translates to “steaming from rock” and is the name of the hot springs located on the east side of Hot Springs Cove

t'ima?a (tih-mah-ah) – translates to “boulders” and is the name of a rocky beach on the east shore of Hot Springs Cove and of a smaller rocky beach immediately south of Puxwpuhwah

ʔayaaphi (ah-yahp-hey) – translates to “friendly” and is the name of this distinctive rock pinnacle only visible during low tide, located off the southeast end of Sharp Point

qaatsis (cawts-iss) – translates to “bubbling and boiling” and is an area where tiny bubbles can be observed in the water

ʔuuʔusiis (outs-oos-ees) – translates to “water goes in and out all the way” and refers to the entire length of the narrow passage between the two Mate Islands

sumaxqʷuʔis (soom-ack-kwew-is) – translates to “tommy cod point” and is the name of a former maaʔnuʔisʔath village site situated at the northeast end of ʔapswiis, across from the northern tip of the larger of the two Mate Islands

Ch'aa?ayapi (ch-ah-aye-apee) – translates to “water increases during a storm” or “fresh water splashing up” and is the name of Sharp Point

nuučaañuł words and place names are in the ʕahuusʔath dialect of the nuučaañuł language

1. Introduction

Reconciliation

The Ahp-cii-uk Agreement – which translates as “going the right way, together” – is an MOU that was signed between the ʔaḥuusʔaḥ (Ahousesht) Nation and the Province of British Columbia in 2021¹. It commits the parties to develop a way forward that recognizes ʔaḥuusʔaḥ culture, history and rights and begins to address the profound impact of colonization on ʔaḥuusʔaḥ haḥuulii (territory)².

The relationship between BC Parks and the ʔaḥuusʔaḥ Nation is built on a strong foundation of mutual respect and an acknowledgement of ʔaḥuusʔaḥ rights and title.

The relationship between BC Parks and the ʔaḥuusʔaḥ Nation is built on a strong foundation of mutual respect and an acknowledgement of ʔaḥuusʔaḥ rights and title. BC Parks is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, strengthening government-to-government relationships, and nurturing common interests in protected areas stewardship and management³.

BC Parks recognizes ʔaḥuusʔaḥ’s ancestral responsibility to steward and monitor the lands and waters of ʔaḥuusʔaḥ haḥuulii.

Background

The Nisḥaakqin Park hot springs area, known as muḥʷšiḥa, is located in ʔaḥuusʔaḥ haḥuulii. These lands and waters have been stewarded by ʔaḥuusʔaḥ ḥaḥiḥ (Ahousesht Hereditary Chiefs) and ʔaḥuusʔaḥ muḥḥim (Ahousesht people) for millennia.

Nisḥaakqin Park, formerly named Maquinna Marine Park, was established as a Class A Provincial Park in 1955. It is named and described in Schedule D of the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act⁴. Nisḥaakqin Park has a total area of 2,563 ha made up of both upland and coastal marine areas. The muḥʷšiḥa hot springs are in a small area close to ʔupnit in the southeasternmost portion of the park on the Openit Peninsula

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 30,000 people per year visited the muḥʷšiḥa hot springs, primarily between the months of May and September. Most visitors are transported to the park by commercial boat and float plane operators or, to a much lesser degree, paddle tour companies. Local residents, recreational boaters and paddlers also use and visit the hot springs, although these visits make up a small portion of total annual visitation.

¹ Ahp-cii-uk MOU

² The ʔaḥuusʔaḥ haḥuulii declaration and map can be found in Appendices A and B of the Ahp-cii-uk MOU.

³ BC Parks Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-2024.

⁴ Class A parks are lands dedicated to the preservation of their natural environments for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public.



Nisimaakqin Park is a popular destination in Clayoquot Sound and has seen a large increase in visitation over the last decade.

When the park was closed for a two-year period during the COVID-19 pandemic, it saw very little recreational use. The closure provided an opportunity for natural regeneration, facility improvements, and for ʕaḥuusʔaṭḥ and other nuučaaṇuḥ (nuu-chah-nulth) community members to utilize and reconnect with this culturally and spiritually important place.

When the park reopened in the fall of 2022, interim park use permit conditions were put in place to prevent a rapid return to the pre-pandemic visitation levels. BC Parks and the ʕaḥuusʔaṭḥ Nation had become concerned about overcrowding in the hot springs, and the impact of the large visitor numbers on ecological values, cultural uses and values, and visitor experiences in this area of the park.

At the same time as these interim conditions were introduced, the Nisimaakqin Park muḥʷšiša hot springs area Visitor Use Management Strategy was initiated to address concerns and provide management direction for the long-term.

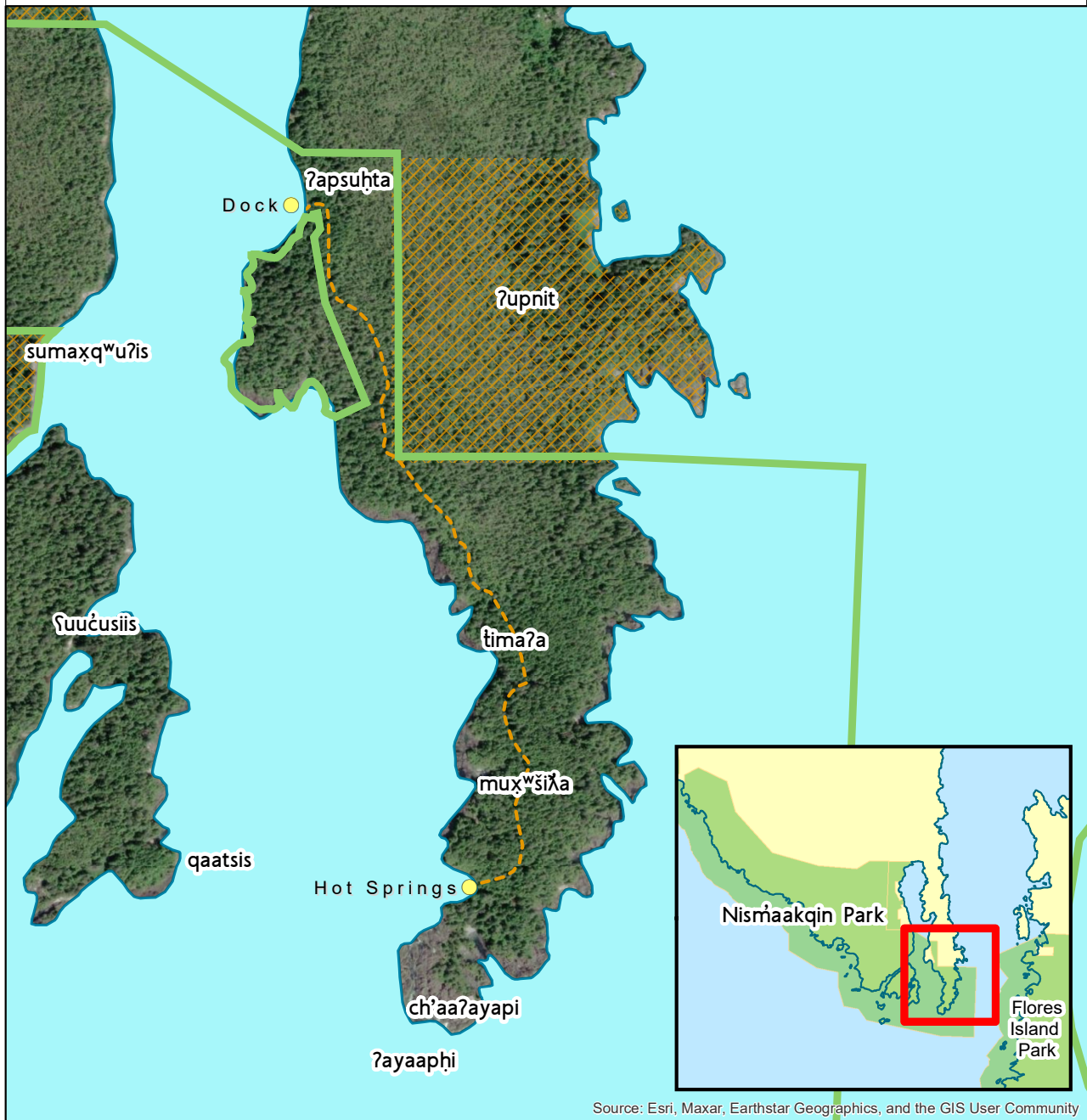
Purpose

The purpose of the Visitor Use Management Strategy is to provide long-term operational guidance for management of the muḥʷšiša hot springs area of Nisimaakqin Park, consistent with the approved management plan for the park.

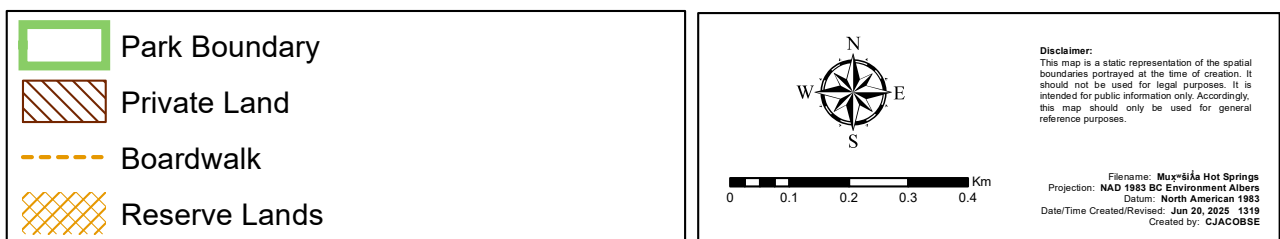
Specifically, the strategy aims to:

- Articulate **a vision** for protecting natural, cultural and recreational values;
- Identify **management objectives and strategies** to achieve the desired conditions;
- Make recommendations for implementing and monitoring the **effectiveness of management actions** at achieving the vision;
- Support a **high-quality visitor experience** in the park and at the hot springs; and
- Ensure ʕaḥuusʔaṭḥ and nuučaaṇuḥ **community and cultural uses and values** are protected and sustainable livelihoods are supported.

Mux^wsi^la Hot Springs Area



Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community



2. Planning Process

A Collaborative Planning Approach

The development of the Visitor Use Management Strategy for the muḡʷšiča hot springs area in Nisḡaakqin Park is being undertaken as a collaborative planning process between BC Parks and the ṡaḡuusʔaḡ Nation, represented by the Maaqutusiṡ Hahoulṡee Stewardship Society (MHSS).

The Province recognizes that this collaborative planning approach is an important step towards realizing the goals of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration), the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act), and B.C.'s commitment to lasting and meaningful reconciliation with First Nations.

In 2022, a BC Parks-ṡaḡuusʔaḡ Technical Working Group was formed to develop joint recommendations for re-opening the provincial parks and protected areas in ṡaḡuusʔaḡ haḡuulii that were closed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Working Group was also tasked with developing joint recommendations regarding a longer-term Visitor Use Management Strategy for the muḡʷšiča hot springs area in Nisḡaakqin Park.

External Engagement

In developing the draft Visitor Use Management Strategy for the muḡʷšiča hot springs area in Nisḡaakqin Park, the project partners have engaged park use permit holders, tour and transport operators, tourism marketing and industry organizations, as well as park visitors and the public, through a variety of methods including direct correspondence, phone and video meetings, and online surveys. Hesquiaht First Nation was also invited to provide input into the strategy. A summary of What we Heard through this engagement process is available.

This collaborative planning approach is an important step towards realizing the goals of UN Declaration, Declaration Act, and B.C.'s commitment to lasting and meaningful reconciliation with First Nations



Interim Park Use Permit Conditions

The BC Parks-Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ Technical Working Group developed an interim approach for the 2022, 2023 and 2024 operating seasons, with conditions for all park use permit holders that included group size restrictions, seasonal timing windows for Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ and non-Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ commercial operators, and permit provisions promoting development of mutually beneficial relationships with Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ Nation. These timing windows as well as scheduled monthly commercial closure days were designed to support undisturbed Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ and nuučaáníł community use of the hot springs for social, cultural and ceremonial purposes. Permit holders were encouraged to work together to coordinate daily arrival times within timing windows to ensure there is sufficient space at the dock and a positive visitor experience while enjoying the park and hot springs. This interim approach is supported by monitoring and enforcement of permit conditions, including planned joint patrols by BC Parks Rangers and Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ Guardians.

The interim approach presented an opportunity to learn about visitor experiences and observe visitor use patterns under new operating conditions, during the development of the visitor use management strategy. In survey responses, tourism operators reported generally positive visitor feedback under the interim park use permit conditions in 2022 and 2023, relative to the pre-pandemic visitor experience. A preliminary assessment of annual, seasonal and daily visitor use patterns showed lower annual and peak daily visitation in 2023 relative to pre-2019 levels. Seasonal patterns remained similar, with most visitation occurring from mid-May to mid-September and peak use in July and August. Daily arrivals were largely distributed between the hours 11 am and 3 pm, with a midday peak and some overlap among groups of visitors around noon. These preliminary observations suggest the interim conditions had a positive effect on visitor experience and addressing over-crowding at the hot springs.

Another change observed during the interim approach was the addition of four Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ tourism businesses to the list of operators holding park use permits to transport guests to the hot springs, whereas previously there were no Ṣaḥuusʔaḥ businesses among these operators. Interim park use permit conditions were also in place for 2024-25, providing a further opportunity to monitor and assess this approach for another full operating season prior to implementation of the final visitor use management strategy.



3. Key Management Issues at Mux̓w̓šiča Hot Springs Area

Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation and BC Parks are concerned about the impacts of the large number of annual visitors on the park's ecological, cultural, and recreational values. Prior to the pandemic, well over 30,000 people were visiting the park annually. During that time, park visitors, park use permit holders, and the park operator all reported high levels of crowding in the hot springs and surrounding area during peak season (as visitors waited to be able to access the small pools). Associated problems with overuse of the dock, boardwalk and change room facilities, noise and litter at the pools and in the forest, and other non-compliant behaviours were impacting the park and visitor experience. Potential impacts on the hot temperature ecosystem of the geothermal springs were also a concern, especially given that this ecosystem is not well understood. As well, heavy use of the park by tour groups in peak season discouraged Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ and nuučaaṇuḥ community use of this culturally and spiritually important place.



4. Values of Mux̓w̓šiča Hot Springs Area

Cultural Values

The mux̓w̓šiča hot springs area in Nis̓m̓aakqin Park is situated within the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ haḥuulii and is home to over 50 places of important cultural, historic and spiritual significance to the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation. The hot springs and surrounding lands and waters have been stewarded by the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ people, since time immemorial.

Mux̓w̓šiča, which means “steaming from rock”, is the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ name of the hot springs⁵. Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ knowledge and culture keepers consider the spring water in the pools to have healing properties. It was mostly women and men of lower rank who utilized the springs; whalers, specifically, were prohibited from bathing at mux̓w̓šiča, as doing so was thought to weaken them.

There was a path that led from mux̓w̓šiča to ʔapsuḥta (“where the trail ends”) at the village of Ṣupnit. Ṣupnit, meaning “place where it is always calm”, was the primary village of the maaṇuʔis̓aṭḥ people, who constituted one of the five local groups - the other

four being Ṣuḥuus̓aṭḥ, Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ, qilcmaṢaṭḥ and qʷaacwiiʔaṭḥ- who came under the protection of the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ following the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ-Ṣuḥuus̓aṭḥ war in the 1800s and would later amalgamate to form the Ṣaḥuus̓aṭḥ Nation as it exists today. The Openit peninsula, where the hot springs are located, is named after this village. When Chief kakaḥmis led the maaṇuʔis̓aṭḥ, some people remained at Ṣupnit throughout the winter. If the winter winds, which blow from the northeast, were too strong, and the seas were too heavy, the people would move up Sydney Inlet to a winter village named Ṣaḥmaʔa.

Many of the people moved from Ṣupnit north to the village of hisnit in March, although the whalers, including the head chief of the maaṇuʔis̓aṭḥ, remained behind. The head chief would go to hisnit in May and June to supervise the sockeye fishery, where he would stay for about a month before returning to Ṣupnit for whaling.

⁵ Bouchard, Randy and Dorothy Kennedy. Clayoquot Sound Indian Land Use. Victoria, B.C. Indian Language Project. 1990

Nis̓maakqin Park figured centrally in regard to whaling. Yaqaachišt (“something long on the water”), the ʕaḥuusʔaṭh name for Barney Rocks, is where whale-watchmen would have kept a lookout for passing whales. While the watchmen were on the lookout, whalers in their canoes would wait nearby atluʔakλim, where they kept from drifting by holding onto kelp. Časkʷatqis (“whale’s backbone or vertebrae”), located near the westernmost channel leading into Hot Springs Cove, is where the maaḥuʔisʔaṭh people would bring whales to be butchered.

Nis̓maakqin Park is also host to many harvesting grounds, where people gather čitapt (basket sedge or slough sedge), situup (blue huckleberries), yaʔisi (butter clams), ḥaʔištup (black chiton) and ɖaʕum (giant red chitons), tučup (purple sea urchins), ḥiix (small sea urchin), čaʔinwa (gooseneck barnacles), λučum (California mussels), taʕinwa (sea cucumbers), kʷikma (rockfish), tuškuuḥ (lingcod), tommie cod, puuʔi (halibut) and suuḥa (spring), cuʷit (coho) and hinkuuʔas (chum) salmon.

The muxʷšiḷa hot springs area and Nis̓maakqin Park continue to play an important role in ʕaḥuusʔaṭh culture, for harvesting, ceremony, community, family and healing uses year-round. The month of November is a particularly important time of year for cultural use of muxʷšiḷa. Considering both the historic and contemporary significance and uses of Nis̓maakqin Park, it is important that ʕaḥuusʔaṭh and nuučaaḥuḷ access to the park is respected and honoured. Formerly known as Maquinna Marine Park, the area has been renamed by the ʕaḥuusʔaṭh as Nis̓maakqin (our land that we care for) as it is inappropriate as per ʕaḥuusʔaṭh custom to use a hawiʕs (Chief) name (e.g. tayii hawiḷ Maquinna) for a place. The BC Parks-ʕaḥuusʔaṭh Working Group prepared a joint proposal to rename Maquinna Marine Park to Nis̓maakqin Park in the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

The muxʷšiḷa hot springs area and Nis̓maakqin Park continue to play an important role in ʕaḥuusʔaṭh culture, for harvesting, ceremony, community, family and healing uses year-round.

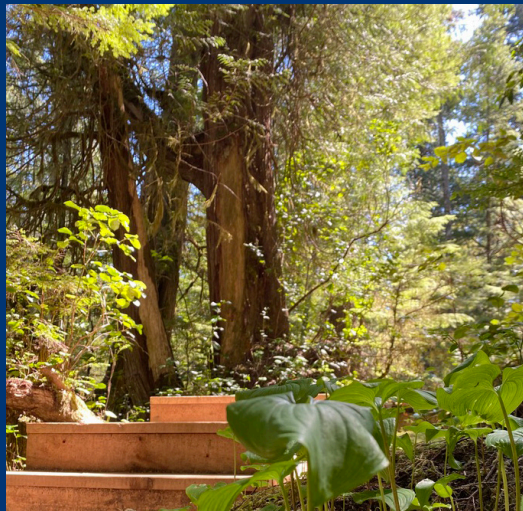
Ecological Values

The hot springs at *muḵʷšīḷa* are one of the most significant ecological features of this area of the park. They are a natural geological formation, characterized by a geothermal vent, waterfall and series of hot pools that cool in temperature as they cascade into the ocean. The warm, humid, and mineral-rich environment of the hot springs may support organisms exclusively adapted to or endemic to such microclimates. More research is needed to better understand the ecology of this feature.

The old growth rainforests and rich marine environment in this area of the park provide habitat for a diversity of terrestrial and marine species. The forested upland is within the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone, one of Canada's wettest climates, with a canopy dominated by western redcedar and western hemlock.

Visitors to the *muḵʷšīḷa* hot springs area can observe old growth trees, bald eagles, amphibians, ferns, fungi, vibrant inter-tidal life, and many other plants and animals. The marine environment supports wildlife species at risk, including *kūuxu* (surf scoter, blue-listed), *tukuuk* (Steller Sea Lion, blue-listed), *kʷakʷaḷ* (sea otter, blue-listed) and *waacʷiš* (marbled murrelet, blue-listed). There is critical habitat, mossy nest platforms, for *waacʷiš* (marbled murrelet) in nearby old growth forest that likely extends into the park. *Ḥusmin* (kelp) and eelgrass beds in the marine foreshore provide important fish habitat, and a *kʷakmis* (herring spawn) area has also been observed.

Nisḡaakqin Park is situated within a wider network of protected areas in British Columbia and Canada that provide ecosystem services, support biodiversity, remove and store carbon from the atmosphere, and contribute to natural solutions to climate change.



Recreational Values

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *mux̓w̓ši̓la* hot springs at Nis̓maakqin Park attracted more than 30,000 local, Canadian, and international visitors every year. Visitors continue to be drawn to the park, attracted by the opportunity to soak in the 50°C hot spring waters that flow out over a small waterfall and down through six rocky pools, gradually cooling and mixing with ocean swells as they descend. The remote coastal setting and unaltered natural condition of the pools lends to their unique recreational appeal.

Another draw for visitors is the 2-km walk to the hot springs. The scenic boardwalk and staircases give visitors the opportunity to travel easily and safely through the old growth forest. Viewing platforms, informational signage, composting toilets, a change house, and dock are other amenities valued by park visitors.

The hot springs provide commercial recreation opportunities for motorized and non-motorized tour operators. The opportunity to travel to and from the park by boat, float plane, or kayak also influences many people's decision to visit. Whether travelling independently or with a commercial operator, visitors can directly experience the rugged coastline of *Ṣaḥuus̓ath̓ haḥuul̓ii* and Clayoquot Sound, learn more about the natural and cultural history of the area, and see wildlife such as seabirds, whales and other marine mammals.

Visitors continue to be drawn to the park, attracted by the opportunity to soak in the 50°C hot spring waters that flow out over a small waterfall and down through six rocky pools.



5. Existing Management Direction

Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

A 2003 Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan provides management direction for this park. The plan directs BC Parks to develop good working relationships with First Nations and work together to manage the impacts of recreational use on cultural sites and values. It emphasizes protection of the geothermal hot springs and associated ecosystem as a core role for this park. The plan also provides direction to consider restrictions on visitor numbers to maintain high quality experiences.

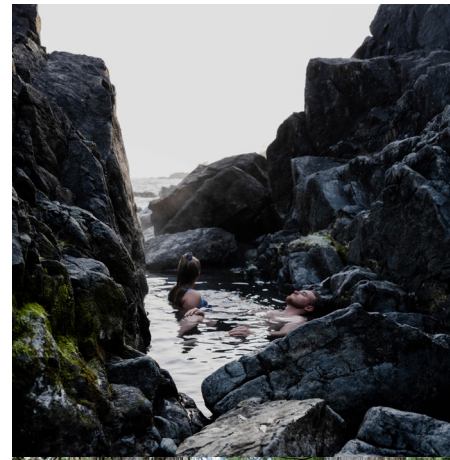
The park is divided into three zones. The Natural Environment Zone covers the developed area, including the 2 km boardwalk that leads visitors by foot from the boat dock to the hot springs and supporting facilities. The objective of this zone is to protect scenic values and to provide recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. The Special Features Zone covers the hot springs, warm springs, and a gas vent. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural features, resources, or processes because of their special character, fragility, and heritage values. Together, these two zones cover the area subject to this strategy. The remainder of the park is a Wilderness Recreation Zone.



6. Shared Vision for Muḡʷšiča Hot Springs Area

The following statements describe a vision for the future of the muḡʷšiča hot springs area in Nisḡaakqin Park. This vision reflects the ḡaḡuusʔaḡ worldview of ḡišukʔiš čawaak (everything is one), and identifies priority community and cultural values, ecological values, and recreational values. Together, these priority values will guide a management approach that will allow visitors to truly enjoy the quiet of this remote coastal park, leave no trace, and come away with more knowledge of the rich cultural history of this area in ḡaḡuusʔaḡ ḡaḡuulii.

1. Visitors to muḡʷšiča are aware they are **visiting ḡaḡuusʔaḡ ḡaḡuulii** and have opportunities to learn about ḡaḡuusʔaḡ and nuučaaḡuḡ culture, history and use of the hot springs area.
2. **ḡaḡuusʔaḡ and nuučaaḡuḡ people continue accessing muḡʷšiča for cultural, ceremonial, and community purposes** and can carry out traditional practices at times when commercial visitors are not present.
3. The **unique geothermal hot springs** and associated hot temperature ecosystem, wildlife habitat, old growth forest and marine environment are **healthy and protected from disturbance or damage by visitors**.
4. Visitor activities and facilities in the park are **resilient to the impacts of climate change** and reflect efforts to **minimize greenhouse gas emissions**.
5. Visitors expect and seek out a multi-faceted experience while in the park, learning about and **experiencing the unique features** of the hot springs, the old growth forest and coastal environment, and ḡaḡuusʔaḡ and Nuučaaḡuḡ culture and history.
6. **Visitors enjoy their time** in the park and do not feel the experience is overcrowded, noisy, rushed or degraded due to the number of visitors or size of groups at any one time in the park.
7. **A variety of visitors can access and use the park**, whether travelling independently or through a tour operator by boat, plane or paddle.
8. Visitors are well prepared for park conditions and **plans are in place for visitor safety**.
9. **ḡaḡuusʔaḡ Nation and members have meaningful economic opportunities** related to park operations, commercial activity, and interpretation/education.
10. Tourism operators bringing visitors to the park routinely hear from clients that the **park experience is positive and worthwhile**, helping them to develop resilient businesses.



7. Management Strategies

The focus of the Visitor Use Management Strategy is to identify management approaches that will help advance the shared long-term vision for the muḡwšila hot springs area in Nisḡaakqin Park. These management strategies may be adapted over time as they are implemented and monitored, and new information is gathered.

Cultural Management Strategies

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
Enhance visitor understanding and the visitor experience through opportunities to learn about the cultural history of the area and the hot springs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate nuučaañuḡ language and ṣaḡuusʔaḡ place names in park information and maps. • Support the development of interpretive materials and/or programming to communicate the cultural history and use of the area and the hot springs. • Support opportunities for guided cultural tourism at the hot springs.
Ensure supportive conditions for regular ṣaḡuusʔaḡ and nuučaañuḡ community, cultural and spiritual use of the park and the hot springs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide dedicated times and days for cultural and community use. • Increase nuučaañuḡ language resources, cultural information, and facilities in the park to create a welcoming atmosphere for ṣaḡuusʔaḡ and nuučaañuḡ people. • Integrate cultural protocols into park rules and etiquette information for visitors.

Ecological Management Strategies

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
Visitors stay on the boardwalk system and marked trails to travel through the park, minimizing their impact on sensitive habitats and ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the visitor experience on the way to the hot springs, inviting visitors to stay on the boardwalk and learn about the cultural and ecological significance of the area. • Provide information reminding visitors to stay on the boardwalk, such as through signage at the trail head and at impacted or sensitive locales. • Retain and maintain the existing facilities that help to reduce impacts of visitor use (e.g., boardwalk, pit toilets, change house). • Continue to regularly maintain and clean boardwalk to ensure safe conditions and minimize step-offs.
Ensure hot springs pools remain in their natural state and visitor use does not harm hot springs ecology or wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave hot springs pools in their natural condition (not actively modified or altered for bathing purposes). • Minimize the introduction of any possible contaminants and litter into hot spring pools and adjacent areas. • Provide visitor information to enhance understanding of hot springs ecology and sensitivity, and to promote responsible and respectful behaviour. • Discourage open food and feeding of wildlife to minimize habituation. • Encourage and support research projects and partnerships to better understand the ecological and cultural importance of the hot springs pools. • Support research and monitoring to assess wildlife disturbance and response to visitor use patterns.
Park contributes to natural climate solutions and improves resilience to the impacts of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage visitor use to minimize impacts to old growth forest, which serves a role in carbon storage (e.g., by enhancing the visitor experience along the boardwalk to minimize step-offs). • Retain and maintain the BC Parks dock as an important visitor facility that directs use away from nearby marine eelgrass and kelp beds, which serve a role in carbon storage • Incorporate a climate change vulnerability assessment into project planning for major repair or replacement of visitor facilities. • Take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in park operations (e.g., on-site park operator accommodation to minimize travel needs). • Encourage tourism operators to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and explore ways to support or encourage these efforts.

Recreational Management Strategies

Management Objectives	Management Strategies
Visitor numbers are managed to maintain a quality experience for visitors and to protect natural and cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine appropriate visitor use levels, considering the ability of the hot spring pools, dock, boardwalk, and park to accommodate visitor use. • Manage visitor numbers to stay within appropriate use levels. • Carefully evaluate and implement methods to manage visitor numbers, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the number, timing, and group size of commercial vessel/aircraft arrivals. • Staggering group arrivals to avoid multiple groups arriving at one time. • At peak times/days in the park, limiting duration of use of the hot spring pools (e.g., 1 hour max.). • Limiting the total number of permitted commercial operators (e.g., through a competitive bid process). • Monitor and assess visitor use levels over time, and adjust management methods as necessary to protect park values, including visitor experience. • Monitor visitor use patterns for both public and commercially transported visitors. • Assess the current sources of visitor use data and explore any improvements that may be needed to effectively monitor visitor use levels at the hot springs. • If public use significantly increases, review strategies in place for managing visitor numbers. Consider limiting daily non-commercial recreational arrivals, if necessary, to meet capacity limits.
Different types of visitors and groups can access the park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public (self-directed) and commercial access is managed within appropriate use levels. • Opportunities are provided for a range of commercial access options, including non-motorized, boat and air. • Local residents, recreational users, and education groups have opportunities to access the hot springs.
Visitors can easily obtain needed information about park conditions and how to prepare prior to arriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide visitor information through readily accessible communication channels, such as the BC Parks website, via tour operators, on-site signage, and other. • Provide visitor information on responsible recreation and etiquette at the hot springs. • Highlight important information that visitors may not anticipate (i.e., no potable water, no dogs allowed, slippery terrain at springs, high tide conditions, cultural protocols, closure days, etc.).

Recreational Management Strategies (continued)

Management objectives	Management strategies
Public recreation and commercial demand for use of the dock can be safely and regularly accommodated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor dock use levels and, if required, take steps to coordinate usage, manage demand during peak times/days and communicate best practices.
Park users are aware of risks at the remote location and know how to respond in an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a park emergency response plan (which includes evacuation and closure procedures) in the event of natural disaster (e.g., earthquake, tsunami), wildfire, or medical emergency. Include information on potential hazards, safety, and emergency procedures in visitor information available to park users while planning their trip and upon arrival (e.g., park web page, signage).
Maintain opportunities for tourism business to offer high quality visitor experiences consistent with protecting natural and cultural values at the hot springs, and increase ʔahuuʔath and nuučaañuʔ involvement in these economic and commercial recreation opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support visitors to access the park through permitted commercial tour operators. Support ʔahuuʔath and nuučaañuʔ commercial operators to learn about and navigate the permit application process. Ensure ʔahuuʔath and nuučaañuʔ commercial operators have opportunities to access the park. Support opportunities for cultural tours in the park led by ʔahuuʔath guides.



Photo Credit: Iain Robert Reid

8. Implement, Monitor, Evaluate and Adjust

A collaborative approach will be taken to implement the strategies outlined in this document, including planning for any projects that are above and beyond the operational work routinely conducted by BC Parks and the Park Operator.

Ṣaḥuusʔaṭḥ Nation and BC Parks will work together to identify and implement priority strategies, subject to available funding and staff resources.

Management strategies identified as high priorities for implementation include, but are not limited to, the following:



Cultural Management Strategies	Ecological Management Strategies	Recreational Management strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate nuučaaṇuḥ language and Ṣaḥuusʔaṭḥ place names in park information and maps.• Support the development of interpretive materials and/or programming to communicate the cultural history and use of the area and the hot springs.• Provide dedicated times and days for cultural and community use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retain and maintain the existing facilities that help to reduce impacts of visitor use (e.g., boardwalk, pit toilets, change house).• Retain and maintain the BC Parks dock as an important visitor facility that directs use away from nearby marine eelgrass and kelp beds, which serve a role in carbon storage.• Encourage and support research projects and partnerships to better understand the ecological and cultural importance of the hot springs pools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine appropriate visitor use levels, considering the ability of the hot spring pools, dock, boardwalk, and park to accommodate visitor use (see Appendix A).• Manage visitor numbers to stay within appropriate use levels.• Monitor and assess visitor use levels over time, and adjust management methods as necessary to protect park values, including visitor experience.

BC Parks and Ṣaḥuusʔaṭḥ Nation will also develop a monitoring approach to determine if conditions are moving towards the vision for the muḁwšiḭa hot springs area. As monitoring information is gathered and conditions change, management strategies and actions may be adjusted to better reach desired outcomes. Ṣaḥuusʔaṭḥ Stewardship Guardians will continue to play an important role in on-site monitoring at muḁwšiḭa.

čawaack^winiš mułmumc
we are from one root

