



## DECLARATION OF THE GITDISDZU LUGYEKS (KITASU BAY) MARINE PROTECTED AREA

**We, the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation, hereby declare *Gitdisdzu Lugyek*s (Kitasu Bay) to be a Marine Protected Area.**

We make this declaration in accordance with Kitasoo Xai'xais laws, customs, principles, and values, and as the holders of inherent and Aboriginal Rights and Title on our unceded territorial lands and waters. Our laws include our inherent stewardship responsibilities to act in a manner that protects this unique place on behalf of past, current, and future generations of Kitasoo Xai'xais.

*Gitdisdzu Lugyek*s, commonly known as Kitasu Bay and as shown in the attached map, is a spiritual place that is ecologically and physically unique. This Bay and all of its lands, waters, fish, and wildlife are integral to Kitasoo Xai'xais culture and way of life. The rich abundance of Kitasu Bay has sustained our families and communities for thousands of years through to the present day. This place and marine space was exclusively used and occupied by Kitasoo at the time of contact, and is exclusively used and managed by the Kitasoo Xai'xais today. Kitasu Bay embodies the fundamental relationship between the Kitasoo Xai'xais and the land and marine resources that define the Kitasoo Xai'xais culture and connection with the natural and supernatural worlds. The Bay has a wide variety of foods that we survive on, is close to Klemtu, and is often protected and easily accessible in small boats. It is home to one of the last abundant herring spawns along the central coast - where we harvest 95% of our herring eggs, a culturally and economically important harvest for our families and community.

With the establishment of Kitasu Bay as a Marine Protected Area (MPA), the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation is taking an important step towards advancing Indigenous-led conservation. We are reinvigorating our traditional management systems, and exercising our Inherent and Aboriginal rights, responsibilities, and obligations to steward and manage areas and resources for this and future generations. We will continue to govern and manage our entire Territory, and expect to set aside other marine protected areas in the future. Given the importance of Kitasu Bay, we must take steps now to protect this unique place.

Our vision for the management of marine areas and resources in our Territory is based on a commitment to sustainability, now and into the future. For us, this means the responsibility to act so that the wealth of the marine environment, fish, wildlife, and the complexity of all life will be here forever. It also means that we will be here forever. To remain here as the Kitasoo and Xai'xais people we need to protect, manage, and enhance our natural and culture heritage. We also need to live in the modern world and have jobs to sustain our families and community.

Our Nation has always relied upon a sustainable way of management, harvesting food and other resources from our lands and waters, with respect. These ways have been instilled in us through our heritage, oral history and our everyday decisions as to where, what and how we harvest, and how much we harvest, never taking more than we need to ensure the resources remain abundant for current and the future generations to come. Drawing on our inherent jurisdiction, laws, and management practices, as stewards of our Territory, we are responsible for the health and well-being of Kitasu Bay and other marine areas in our Territory.

This Declaration reaffirms our commitment to protecting and maintaining the ecological integrity of Kitasu Bay, protecting food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) uses, and ensuring that the relationships between the Kitasoo Xai'xais and the marine resources of Kitasu Bay are maintained for present and future generations.

This Declaration commits us to immediate and long-term planning and management of the MPA for continued cultural, social, educational, and sustainable economic uses and benefit. Stewardship in the MPA will focus on:

- Maintaining ecological integrity;
- Protecting fish and wildlife, and at-risk ecosystems;
- Protecting cultural and archaeological sites and features;
- Protecting historical, present and future Kitasoo Xai'xais harvesting and hunting areas and uses, including the communal herring roe spawn on kelp (SOK) fishery and other community fishing activities; and
- Protecting the wilderness values that in turn support opportunities for ecotourism in the MPA.

This Declaration is accompanied by our draft Gitdisdzu Luyeks (Kitasu Bay) Marine Protected Area Management Plan, which will guide how we will govern and manage the marine resources and areas of Kitasu Bay. The plan outlines what activities are allowed in the MPA, and what activities are prohibited or restricted. It also outlines the value of the area, and why we are protecting it. Visitors to Kitasu Bay will be expected to follow the management measures and rules set out in the plan, which will be monitored and enforced by the Kitasoo Xai'xais Guardian Watchmen.

The Management Plan reflects the experience and knowledge that has been passed on for generations and that we have gained through decades of research and monitoring. It also builds on over 20 years of modern land and marine management planning in our Territory, reinforcing our laws and stewardship responsibilities for the lands and waters that have been passed down generation to generation through our stories, songs, names, and practices. The plan is guided by legal principles that are based on Kitasoo Xai'xais laws, customs, ethics, and values, and form the foundation of Kitasoo Xai'xais legal tradition and practice that the Kitasoo Xai'xais people have abided by for thousands of years. These include *Loomsk* (Respect), *Sagayt k'üülm goot* (Interconnectedness), *Sityaaw* (Reciprocity), *Gugwilx'ya'ansk* (Intergenerational Knowledge), and are the building blocks of planning and management in Kitasu Bay and the Kitasoo Xai'xais Territory.

While we have had many conversations with the public and other governments on the unique importance of Kitasu Bay, over the next three (3) months our draft Management Plan will be open for public review and comment, and will be shared with other levels of government and affected parties. After these engagements we will finalize the Management Plan.

We invite Canada and British Columbia to work with us in achieving our collective objectives and targets for land and marine protection and conservation including for Kitasu Bay. We also invite government partners to work with us to implement our plan and to reach co-governance and management of the MPA, and to advance reconciliation with Canada and BC and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a meaningful way. But we seek no permission. For decades we have worked with Canada and British Columbia to collaboratively form an MPA in Kitasu Bay. We will continue to encourage that outcome, however we can no longer wait until other governments act to preserve and protect this special place that is integral to Kitasoo Xai'xais. Our right to establish this MPA comes from our inherent and Aboriginal Rights and Title and from our connection to this land for thousands of years.

This Declaration is made in accordance with Kitasoo Xai'xais laws, Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of Canada, 1982*, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which has been recognized and adopted under the laws of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. This Declaration does not describe,

define, amend, or modify, the full extent of our Inherent and Aboriginal Rights and Title, including our stewardship responsibilities in this area.

This Declaration is made by the Hereditary Chiefs of the Kitasoo and Xai'xais, and is supported by the Kitasoo Xai'xais elected Chief and Council.

Signed on behalf of the Hereditary Chiefs this 21st day of June, 2022, by:

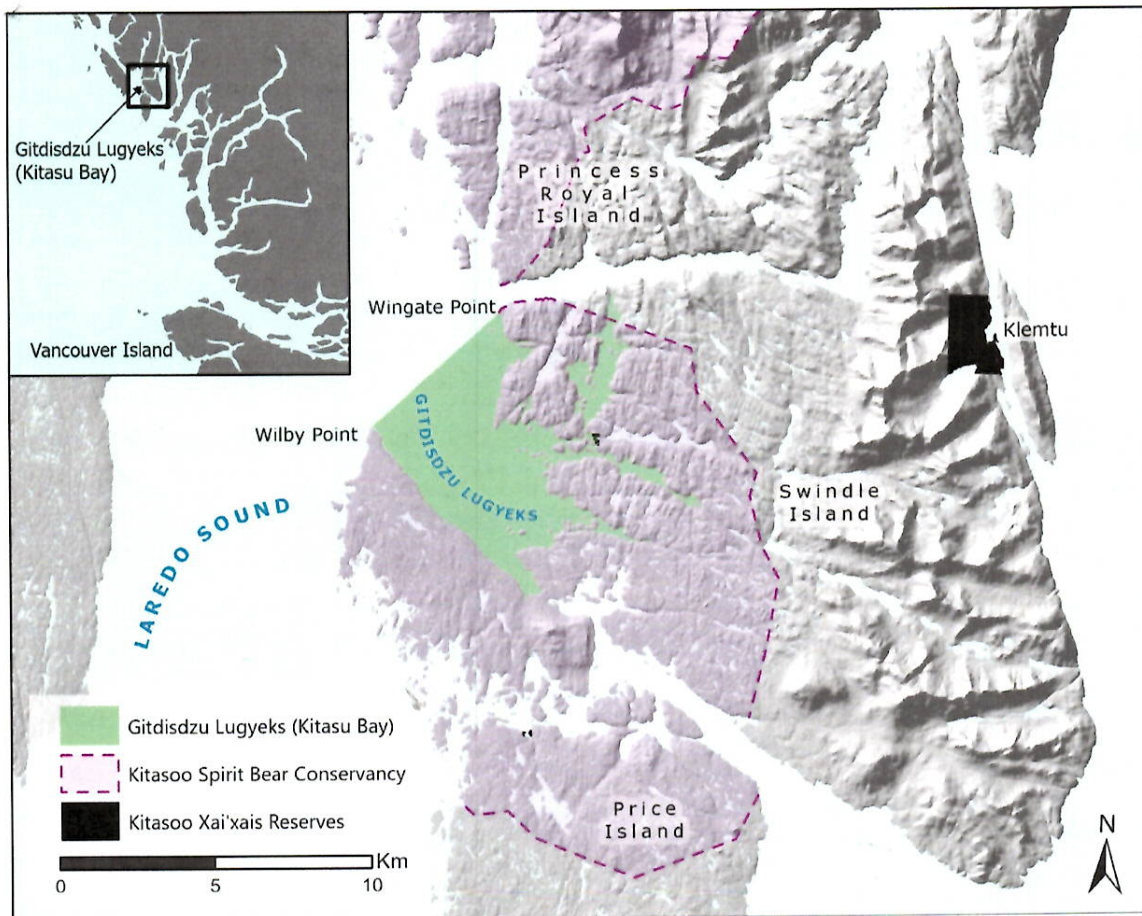
Nies'los (Kelly Robinson)  
Hereditary Chief

Haay-maas (Ernest Mason Jr.)  
Hereditary Chief

Douglas Neasloss  
Elected Chief Councillor

Ben Robinson  
Witness

### Gitdisdu Lugeyks (Kitasu Bay)



Source: Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority