

## Executive Summary

K'ágee Tu First Nation (KTFN) is proposing the permanent protection of a large portion of its traditional land use area, for both cultural and ecological reasons. The current K'ágee Tu Candidate Protected Area (CPA) covers a total of 9,600 square kilometres and encompasses a significant part of the K'ágee Tu watershed. Two sites within the CPA are internationally recognized as significant habitat for migratory waterfowl.

In order to fulfill Step 5 PAS requirements, KTFN contracted Crosscurrent Associates Ltd. to prepare a cultural assessment report based on existing documents and map data, all of which were prepared consistent with the principles of community engagement outlined in the PAS Cultural Assessment Guidelines (2005). While some of these existing materials were researched and prepared as part of the PAS process, many were prepared as part of other KTFN traditional knowledge (TK) research and land protection initiatives. In particular, KTFN has done considerable research to support its interventions in environmental assessments for oil and gas operations in the Cameron Hills. These efforts have culminated in KTFN designing its own coordinated environmental monitoring program.

Within only a few generations, the K'ágee Tu got'ine (people) transitioned from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled community at Tatł'áqlę Tu (Tathlína Lake), and were then subjected to an intense period of dislocation and dispersal resulting from a large forest fire and a subsequent series of socio-economic impacts. From the 1950s through to the 1970s, the K'ágee Tu people experienced significant impacts from unregulated resource extraction in their traditional land use area, along with impacts arising from disease, residential school, and relocation. The current community of Kakisa, which was established in the early 1960s, currently has about 48 residents. For the past few decades, KTFN has been organizing on-the-land programs, cabin building, and trail clearing to reconnect with its traditional landscape, particularly areas around Tatł'áqlę Tu.

The K'ágee Tu CPA fits the territorial definition of an 'Aboriginal cultural landscape' in that it harbours an interconnected web of historical, spiritual, socio-cultural, and physical values, including land use values. These values—reflected in place names, historical narratives, archeological sites (potential and documented), traditional trails, sacred sites, gathering places, and current cultural and land use activities—provide insight into the special relationship the K'ágee Tu got'ine (people) have with their landscape and the natural and spiritual resources within it.

Historical values are rooted in ancient stories about 'eyudzih' (a prehistoric cave lion) and Yamózha (a Dene cultural hero); however, more recent historical events and influences have also profoundly impacted the relationship between K'ágee Tu got'ine and their traditional landscape. In many cases, the community has been able to incorporate these newer influences into their cultural framework, such as when they have created Slavey place names to mark more recent historical events.

The little archaeological work that has been carried out to date within the K'ágee Tu CPA took place between 1966 and 1984, and only in places where the land was already being disturbed for some other project (such as a highway or campground). There is considerable more archaeological

potential at traditional occupancy sites (such as the transitional settlement at Tatł'ajlǰ Tu), harvesting areas, and along traditional trails. KTFN is making arrangements with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre to investigate these sites as early as the summer of 2011.

The K'ágee Tu CPA contains sites with special spiritual power, as well as sites associated with stories about the pre-historic formation of the landscape. These special sites and the stories associated with them provide insight into the deep and intimate relationship the K'ágee Tu got'ine have with their landscape, and the beliefs and practices that help guide and maintain the integrity of this relationship.

Socio-cultural relationships have been engraved into the K'ágee Tu landscape through trails that link extended families in neighbouring communities and in gathering places used to host visitors, meetings, and celebrations. The health of the landscape provides evidence of the success of the resource management values and practices that have guided the K'ágee Tu got'ine in their harvesting activities and movements.

At the core of the K'ágee Tu cultural identity is the continued harvesting of game and fur-bearing animals, fish, migratory and other birds, and plant resources—for food, clothing, materials, and medicines. Community members have detailed knowledge about animal patterns, movements, health and abundance, and how these may have changed over the years. Maintaining the ability to utilize the land for traditional harvesting and cultural practices must be a key element of the protected area management plan.

This report offers cultural insights that will assist in drafting a management plan reflecting the eco-cultural approach KTFN desires for the K'ágee Tu Protected Area. From this perspective, the management plan must:

- fully acknowledge KTFN rights and interests;
- support initiatives to transmit K'ágee Tu culture from elders to youth, in particular strengthening the community's connections to the Tatł'ajlǰ Tu and Tsá Tú areas;
- fully utilize traditional knowledge (TK) in all management initiatives and respect the KTFN policy on TK research/use; and
- support and align with the community's coordinated environmental monitoring program.

Building upon the community's experience carrying out TK-based impact assessments for potential resource projects, making recommendations to companies and regulators, and designing its own community-based monitoring program, KTFN expects to take a lead role in designing and implementing a protected area management plan.