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Mamalilikulla First Nation Declares Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)

News Release

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The Mamalilikulla First Nation today declared the Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala¹ (Lull Bay/Hoeya Sound) in Knight Inlet, on the British Columbia Central Coast, an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA).

“This IPCA Declaration reflects our intent to take a primary role in the planning, use, management, and restoration of our traditional lands and waters in the Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala area of our territory,” said Mamalilikulla Chief Councillor Winidi (John Powell). *“The area has great significance to our people, and we are taking the initiative to restore our traditional governance approach. It represents a constructive challenge to Canada’s Prime Minister and British Columbia’s Premier of their governments’ commitments to implement the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”* said **Chief Powell**.

The 10,416 hectare IPCA contains a unique underwater sponge and coral reef of high biodiversity, critical estuaries and salmon-bearing streams. The watersheds are important to many land, sea and sky beings including grizzly bears and eagles, and require careful management of human activity. A number of historical Mamalilikulla settlements and associated cultural and archaeological sites are found within the IPCA. The Mamalilikulla First Nation has been working with Canada and British Columbia on a co-governed marine protected area, and collaborating with BC on the area’s forest management under the Great Bear Rainforest Land Use Order.

¹ Pronounced “ Gwat-ch-dala-lah / Nah-latch-dala-lah

Chief Powell stated *“We have never ceded our rights or title over the lands, seas and skies of our traditional territory, and intend to exercise a stronger stewardship role in the IPCA marine areas and watersheds. We have developed management plans for the IPCA watersheds and marine areas based on the ancient law of Aweenak’ola, meaning I am one with the Land, the Sea, the Sky and the Supernatural Ones, and making it our responsibility to steward the land, sea and sky, and all beings that exist within them.”*

“The DSF strongly supports the Mamalilikulla’s IPCA establishment,” said David Suzuki Foundation Executive Director **Severn Cullis-Suzuki**. *“IPCA demonstrate a totally different model of management that begins with responsibility to the land, and shows the interconnectedness between terrestrial and marine environments and ecologically and culturally significant areas. There are so many benefits of IPCAs - land, water and wildlife protection, reinforcement of Indigenous rights, title and stewardship, sharing of knowledge and culture, and healing of people with the land. At a time of ecological and climate crisis, we thank the Mamalilikulla for this leadership.”*

Eli Enns (Co-chair of a 2018 national report on IPCAs by the Indigenous Circle of Experts), commented: *“It’s great to see the increased uptake of IPCA innovations across Canada, and I congratulate the Mamalilikulla First Nation for taking this initiative and setting an important example for other Kwakwaka’wakw First Nations and other Indigenous governments across Canada.”*

Neil McDaniel, a marine naturalist who has been diving and mapping the Hoeya Sill for over ten years said: *“This declaration represents an important step towards expediting both interim and long-term marine protection of this spectacular and unique marine ecosystem.”*

Wayne McCrory, bear biologist with many years of research experience, commented: *“Grizzly bears are under considerable stress due to uncertainties over food supply. Indigenous protection of the Hoeya and Lull estuaries and watersheds, and salmon run restoration will help to restore the grizzly bear population in the Knight Inlet area.”*

“Our own management plans place a priority on conservation, protection, and sustainable activities beneficial to our Nation. We respectfully call on Canada and British Columbia to commence immediate work with us to accelerate conservation, protection and restoration in our IPCA for the ultimate benefit of all beings,” said **Chief Powell**. *“We challenge Canada and British Columbia to begin development of collaborative governance agreements for joint decision-making that will serve as important expressions of their responsibilities to our collective journey in reconciliation.”*

For further information:

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