

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

“IPCA” is the term chosen by Indigenous Circle of Experts to describe a variety of land protection initiatives in the Canadian context. Examples include Tribal Parks, Indigenous Cultural Landscapes, Indigenous Protected Areas, and Indigenous conserved areas.

IPCAs are lands and waters where Indigenous peoples have the primary role of protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems. Culture and language are the heart and soul of an IPCA.

IPCAs are Indigenous-led, with Indigenous Peoples having the primary role in determining objectives, boundaries, management plans and governance structures for IPCAs as part of their exercise of self-determination.

IPCAs involve a long-term commitment to the conservation of lands and waters for future generations; and IPCAs highlight Indigenous rights and responsibilities, such as the responsibility to care for and respect lands and waters consistent with natural and Indigenous laws.

Currently, though this is a priority for the Métis Nation, there are no Métis Nation conservation and protected areas recognized by or established in Canada.

IPCA Governance Opportunities

There are a range of management models that can apply to IPCAs and other protected and conserved areas that support a meaningful role for Indigenous Peoples.

IPCAs may employ a cooperative management model where Indigenous Peoples; federal, provincial, territorial or municipal governments; and others adopt shared decision-making, joint management or advisory mechanisms.

In cases where a potential IPCA overlaps with provincial or territorial crown land, it will be essential during the development of IPCAs that provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous Peoples work together in a manner that reflects the unique circumstances of local Indigenous groups and the jurisdictions.

Federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdictions recognize that a collective, mutually agreeable and beneficial approach to IPCA governance, management and operations is essential.

Additional partners, including those in the private or ENGO sectors among others, can also be involved in the establishment and management of IPCAs.

The Métis Nation is engaged as a participant of the IPCA working group. Each Governing Member is leading capacity building initiatives to design and identify what the governance of a Métis Nation Protected and Conserved Area would be.

Métis Nation stewardship authority over their traditional lands continues to be a jurisdictional challenge for the Métis Nation. Where First Nations and Inuit lands are federal jurisdiction, Métis Nation traditional lands continue to be governed by provincial laws and authority. The Métis Nation is advancing federal involvement in resolving these historic and ongoing disenfranchisements as part of the reconciliation process. Full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples includes reconciliation and restitution of Métis Nation authority over their traditional lands.