

Section Two

The Role of Naikoon



Regional and Provincial Context

Naikoon protects the ecological diversity of a portion of the lowland areas of the Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii. The lands provide food, cultural, and outdoor recreation opportunities for local residents and tourists. In addition to conserving ecosystems and wildlife habitat, Naikoon also protects special natural and cultural features.

To properly understand the role of Naikoon in conservation and recreation, one needs to acknowledge the different ways people view the area. Naikoon's significance can be viewed in two general contexts: the local resident and the provincial context. It is important to recognize that there are broad generalizations made when discussing these contexts.

For Island peoples, Naikoon is an important economic, inspirational, and personal area. While Naikoon occupies an exciting historic cultural space, it continues to make important contributions to the lives of people who compose the Island community. This historical association with the area is particularly long for the Haida and the strong connection between the Haida people and the Naikoon area continues. Although Naikoon is currently less important as a homesteading area, the other values maintain their importance today and there continues a strong connection between local residents and Naikoon. For many residents, they want to continue to use Naikoon the way they have been, without significant changes or damages to its natural character. This view of "keeping things the same" is a common local perspective of conservation.

In the context of regional and global systems of protected areas, Naikoon makes important contributions to the unique and special types of ecosystems and natural physical processes. As well, Naikoon provides a special destination for recreation, complementing tourist visits to the Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii. Within the provincial context it is common to find support for a high level of protection and for managing Naikoon conservatively to ensure the natural and cultural values are maintained.

Conservation Role

- Naikoon conserves ecosystems and biological diversity of the Queen Charlotte Lowland Ecoregion and Ecoregion. Naikoon encompasses about 21 percent of the total area of the Ecoregion and also lies entirely within the wet hypermaritime subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone.
- Protects important historical and cultural features of the Haida. These features include: ancient Haida village sites connected by trail systems; weir sites; river trap sites; stations for netting, gaffing, spearing and harpooning; shellfish beds; crab, chiton, and other marine food sources; food preparation and processing sites; hunting areas and stations; bird trap areas; vegetation gathering and preparation sites; non-vegetative material gathering and processing sites; ceremonial, religious and first-food sites; initiate preparation sites; and, gathering places as well as repository sites for the dead; guardian spirit questing sites, and; sites for spiritual cleansing, paraphernalia

repository, and medicinal gathering and treatment.

Additionally, there are places associated with narratives, stories, boundary markers, legal and ideological landforms, transportation or departure sites, meteorological analysis sites, super natural areas, private secular sites, recreation areas, conflict areas and other events associated with oral narratives.

- Protects colonial-period features including aging remains of roads, a wooden railway, homesteads, cleared areas and drainage ditches from early farmers and the remains of the Pesuta shipwreck.
- Approximately 90 percent of Naikoon is zoned as wilderness. In these areas, effects of visitor use on natural aspects will be minimized and natural processes are allowed to continue as much as possible.
- Protects a number of provincially and nationally significant features including:
 - ⇒ Rose Spit-Naii Kun which is the largest spit formation in British Columbia;
 - ⇒ extensive sand dunes and beaches comparable in size to any in Canada and British Columbia;
 - ⇒ the best examples of Sitka spruce dune forests in British Columbia;
 - ⇒ Gahlans kun/Cape Ball cliffs which is the earliest post-glacial site known on the British Columbia coast, dating back 16,000 years and providing

evidence for possible glacial refugia on the archipelago;

⇒ Tow-Toa Hill which is a columnar basaltic rock outcrop scoured by glacial ice into a classic roche moutonne; and,

⇒ provincially significant bogs with assemblages of mosses, lichens, liverworts, and herbs.

- Conserves important wildlife and habitat including:
 - ⇒ occurrence of the Marbled Murrelets, a “threatened” seabird (COSEWIC, 1990);
 - ⇒ one of the major concentrations of nesting Greater Sandhill Cranes in British Columbia;
 - ⇒ the Haida weasel, the rarest of the island’s endemics, listed as a “vulnerable” sub-species;
 - ⇒ occurrence of *Mertensia maritima*, a rare sand dune plant;
 - ⇒ the unarmored stickleback, which is listed as a “threatened” species; and,
 - ⇒ the largest wintering population of Sanderling in British Columbia.
- Protects three (Cape Ball, Oeanda, and the Hiellen rivers) coastal temperate rainforest watersheds.

Recreation Role

- Frontcountry camping, beachwalking and hiking through coastal forests are available for local residents and tourists.
- Day use opportunities are available such as trail walks through forests, beachcombing, picnicking, bird-watching, whale-watching and exploring marine, forest, beach and bog environments.
- Naikoon has opportunities for backpacking hiking trips along the beaches which can be planned for one day or multiple days. The East Beach hike, in excess of 100 kilometres, is a destination backpacking opportunity primarily for tourists. The loop route from Tow Hill to Cape Fife to Rose Spit and back to Tow Hill generally takes between one to three days and is becoming increasingly popular.
- A number of productive freshwater and intertidal rivers are available for anglers, including the Tlell River. The lower section of the Tlell River has the potential to be accessible to Special Needs people because it is road accessible and its banks are gently sloped.
- Hunting opportunities for introduced species, such as deer, are popular for both residents and visitors.
- Hikes are available along old wagon roads that are now rustic trails leading into Naikoon's interior for interpreting ecological and geomorphological processes as well as Haida and colonial history.
- Viewing opportunities from the top of Tow Hill provide an impressive overview of North Beach.

Vision Statement

The vision statement looks forward to describe the character of Naikoon ten to fifteen years from now. Being clear about the long-term vision helps to guide what should be done in the short-term. The vision statement is an important guide when reacting to changing demands in recreation or incorporating new approaches to conservation management. Avoiding reactions to new recreation demands or new management initiatives, without first looking at the “larger picture” and looking at the long-term affects, is a priority.

A Vision For Naikoon

Ten to fifteen years from now, people visiting Naikoon will notice that its overall character has changed little from today. The campgrounds will be slightly larger to accommodate increased tourist numbers to the Island and there will be additional trails through portions of Naikoon’s interior.

The significant changes will be ones that are not readily apparent. The management of Naikoon will evolve over the years to reflect the important connection of Naikoon with Island residents and the Haida. A number of Island residents will be part of a committee sharing their knowledge and advice on the stewardship of Naikoon. Annual information meetings will be held with interested Island residents to discuss the on-going implementation of the management plan. Agreements with the Haida to cooperatively manage Naikoon form a solid foundation for its stewardship and enhance community support for management initiatives.

An important focus of management over the next decade and beyond will be to increase awareness about the values of the natural and cultural values, to work cooperatively with the Island community in protecting the features, and to expand the level of interpretation of Naikoon’s cultural and natural features. Naikoon is carefully managed to balance the important conservation interests with tourist and local use of the area.

Knowledge of Naikoon’s resources will increase. Inventories of vegetation communities, bog ecosystems, and wildlife will be undertaken. Naikoon will continue to attract research projects which help to develop appropriate management strategies. Into the twenty-first century, introduced species will be managed more effectively and Naikoon’s wildlife and ecosystems will be more naturally balanced.

Increasing demands placed on Naikoon for recreation have meant that some management initiatives have been put into effect to protect the environment and natural values. These initiatives are in keeping with the management plan and have been developed with the Haida under the cooperative management agreement and with advice from residents. Working cooperatively with the Island community develops support and understanding for management initiatives.

Naikoon continues to be an important part of the lifestyles of the people on the Island and residents have a sense of stewardship and pride in Naikoon. This special place continues to play a role in protecting, for future generations, some of British Columbia’s and North America’s most valuable examples of our natural and cultural history.