



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Lílwat Nation
N'Quatqua

Working together to preserve the natural beauty of Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park

PEMBERTON – A partnership between BC Parks, Lílwat Nation and N'Quatqua for Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park will maintain a protective balance between supporting the growing number of people who want to visit this summer, and sustainably conserving the natural and cultural values that make the land special.

Click here for pronunciation of Pipi7íyekw: <https://www.firstvoices.com/lilwat/words/dfe88534-e668-4588-af04-57078e87a659>

The park is collaboratively managed with Lílwat Nation and N'Quatqua with the primary goal of maintaining the park's natural environmental state. It is managed to protect Indigenous cultural values, including ntákmen (meaning "our ways"), and ensures resource protection as well as public safety.

"Snekwnúkwa7, Pipi7íyekw has been a sacred place for our community since time immemorial, providing sustenance and cultural value, integral to our livelihood," said Kukwpi Skalulmecw, Chief Dean Nelson of Lílwat Nation. "By implementing these closures, we are striving to reintroduce our community to an area where they have been marginalized. The time and space created by these closures will allow our youth, elders and all Lil'wat citizens to practise their inherent rights while reconnecting with the land. The Province's commitment to listening and collaborating under the shared goals under the Visitor Use Management Strategy, demonstrates a true step in our shared journey of reconciliation. Kukwstumúlhkalap Nilh ti7."

George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, said: "British Columbians understand this land has been First Nations' territory for thousands of years. As more and more people arrive to enjoy the incredible beauty of Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park, there is an impacting result on the environment. We have deep appreciation for the collaboration that has gone into welcoming visitors to the park from summer to Labour Day long weekend, while ensuring First Nations communities have the time and space to connect with the land, their culture and traditions in a meaningful way."

Kuk'stum'kawc, Chief Micah of N'Quatqua, said: "Our territory has always been our focus, the land that we walk on, the waters we drink, the mountains where we hunt. All of these were taken care of by our ancestors. Now it is our duty to take care of them for the future generations, so they have the same beauty that we do. By closing Joffre for the times we chose, gives the land a break, a time to rejuvenate, to heal. It is a very special place; the world comes to see it, we need to keep it beautiful. Our ancestors left to us to protect, 'we shall remain.'"

Since December 2018, BC Parks, Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua have been working together on park and visitor-use management, and have developed a joint Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park Visitor Use Management Strategy to improve the overall visitor experience and protect natural and cultural values.

Together, BC Parks, Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua have closely monitored the environmental effects of visitors on the landscape. The evidence shows a need for enhanced visitor-use management to ensure that the beauty and values that draw visitors, and are so important for the First Nations, are not degraded by unsustainably high human traffic. Building on this evidence, the 2024 Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Operations Plan will continue to allow for day-use and camping this summer, while ensuring the park’s ecology has time to rest from human impacts.

Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park and the larger Duffey corridor is known to the Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua as the “banquet place” where minerals and plants can be gathered, berries harvested, animals such as mountain goat and deer hunted, mammals trapped, and fish caught. It is important to ensure that this ecology and environment remains protected for generations to come.

As part of the 2024 operations plan, three Pipi7íyekw Reconnection Celebration time periods will provide time and space for Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua to exercise their rights. This is in keeping with the provincial Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and will enable Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua to reconnect with the land and carry out traditional, sustenance, cultural and spiritual practices.

During these periods, the park will be closed to recreational visitors. Closure dates include:

- April 30 until May 15, to support Indigenous-led cultural celebrations, including Stl’atl’imx Days – a celebration of the Declaration of the Lillooet Tribe on May 10, 1911.
- June 14-23, to support summer solstice and Indigenous Peoples’ Day celebrations.
- Sept. 3 until Oct. 6, to support Indigenous fall harvesting practices and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Public access to the park begins May 16. BC Parks will continue the free, day-use pass program at Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park, which began in 2020. Adults and youth, 12 and older, will need to reserve a free day-use pass to visit the park, which will ensure the park is used sustainably. BC Parks uses a free day-use pass system at busy parks, like Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes, to reduce visitor impact on the natural environment. The free passes ensure that there is adequate and safe parking, and provide visitors a more enjoyable experience by reducing congested trails. Day-use passes also give visitors travelling the typically long distance to the park peace of mind by booking ahead.

This year, 500 free day-use passes, as well as camping opportunities at 26 tent pads will be available each day Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park is open for recreational use. The free day-use passes will be available for reservation starting at 7 a.m., two days before a planned visit, and are available online: <https://reserve.bcparks.ca/dayuse/>

Camping can be booked up to four months in advance of arrival: <https://camping.bcparks.ca/>.

The Province is committed to collaborative partnerships with First Nations to ensure the

recognition and application of Aboriginal rights throughout the province. BC Parks, Líl'wat Nation and N'Quatqua will continue to work together to plan for future years of use at Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park.

Kukwstumulhkalap (thanks from all of us to all of you).

Quotes:

Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –

“Lil'wat Nation and N'Quatqua have been stewards of Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park since time immemorial. It is vital that we work together to make sure the natural and cultural values of the park are preserved, so that this remarkably beautiful park can be enjoyed by future generations of British Columbians.”

Jen Ford, board chair, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District –

“The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Board is inspired by the work that has gone into prioritizing the cultural and environmental protection of Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park for the Nations of Líl'wat and N'Quatqua. This agreement honours the original peoples and stewards of the land, revitalizing cultural practices for elders and all future generations, while ensuring the area remains accessible to those who wish to appreciate, respect and experience it. We honour and acknowledge the meaningful collaboration that has resulted in this important agreement.”

Mike Richman, mayor of Pemberton –

“On behalf of the Village of Pemberton council, we are pleased to witness this collaboration between the Líl'wat and N'Quatqua Nations and BC Parks. Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park is an incredibly special place, and we stand in support of this agreement, acknowledging the importance of honouring and respecting the Nations inherent right to the land and its cultural significance.”

Cole Burton, associate professor and Canada research chair in terrestrial mammal conservation, Department of Forest Resources Management, University of British Columbia –

“British Columbia's parks provide important refuges for the province's unique wildlife. Many animals react to the presence of people in their environment, changing their behaviours when human activity is high. With rapid growth in visitor numbers in parks like Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes, there is concern that sensitive species can be disturbed and displaced. Periodic closures and other collaborative stewardship efforts are needed to ensure that parks can continue to provide benefits for people without negatively affecting wildlife.”

Farhad Moghimehfar, BC regional innovation chair in tourism and sustainable rural development; professor, Department of Recreation and Tourism Management, Vancouver Island University –

“Managing the overall daily visits to a park can be good for the park and the visitor experience. The visitor experience is generally improved when there is less crowding and more opportunity to experience the park's values without competing for space. When park visitation is over capacity, the usage tends to impact the facilities and the ecosystem, for example, people going off trail to enjoy a quiet place away from the crowds.”

Tori Ball, conservation director, Land and Fresh Water Program, Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society - British Columbia –

“Maintaining healthy ecosystems and supporting First Nations rights and practices go hand in hand. We’re pleased to see a visitor strategy that will support public access and ongoing cultural connection for Lílwat and N’Quatqua to Pipi7íyekw. We hope to see more proactive planning that centres reconciliation and builds up the next generation of nature advocates by spending time in BC’s parks and protected areas,”

Sandra Riches, executive director, BC AdventureSmart –

“Sometimes closing one door is opening another and creates a chance for reflection, planning, growth and respect. As BC Parks closes one park door, for a short time, they do so with respect to the land by providing a unique opportunity for the park to rest, and they do so with respect to Indigenous communities, and also with public safety front of mind.”

Vicki Haberl, hiker, Sea to Sky volunteer, retired BC Parks planner –

"I applaud BC Parks for having the courage to take action that truly reflects reconciliation. It is important to come to terms with the impacts of our exploring the traditional, unceded territory of our Indigenous neighbours. Supporting Indigenous communities exercising their rights to enjoy traditional ways and activities can lead to stronger, richer relationships, and greater stewardship of the special places that we all want to protect."

Quick Facts:

- Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park has become one of the busiest parks in the province.
- In 2019, the park reach an all-time high of 196,300 visitors, an increase of 222% since 2010.
- Over-parking, over-use, litter and campfires have had negative impacts on the park’s biological diversity and sensitive habitats, which include old-growth forest estimated to be more than 250 years old.
- A collaborative approach between BC Parks, Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua is being taken to implement the strategies in the 2021 Visitor Use Management Strategy.
- The annual day-use pass system resumes May 16 where users reserve a free day-use pass online to visit the park, which will ensure the park is used sustainably.
- Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park will be temporarily closed to recreation to provide time and space for Lílwat Nation and N’Quatqua to reconnect with the land and carry out traditional, sustenance, cultural and spiritual practices at the following times:
 - April 30 to May 15;
 - June 14 to 23; and
 - Sept. 3 to Oct. 6.

Learn More:

For more information about the BC Parks Day-Use Pass Program, visit: <https://bcparks.ca/reservations/day-use-passes/>

To view the Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park Visitor Use Management Strategy, visit: <https://bcparks.ca/joffre-lakes-park-vums/>

To learn more about responsible park visitation, visit: <https://bcparks.ca/plan-your-trip/visit-responsibly/>

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