

Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Report 2023



Released May 31, 2023

Čaamaapĩtsiinhi?in

The ?iisaak Pledge

?iisaaksinhi?in (ii-saak-sin-hi-in)

Let us be respectful of Natural Law. Let us be observant, appreciative and act accordingly.

Yuuchapsiinhi?in (yuuts-hap-siin-hi-in)

Let us behave with honour, dignity, respect and humility in the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks.

Q^waasiinhapin (kwa-siin-hap-in)

Let us leave things as they are.

Avoid disturbing, destroying or removing indigenous plants, animals, shells, stones, & minerals.

Tiičsiinhi?in (tiich-siin-hi-in)

Let us protect life by staying safe, being prepared and by supporting the continuation of life for generations to come.

Taaquuqhĩ?in (taa-quuqh-lthi-in)

Let us speak truthfully and act honourably.

Let us learn the history of this place and its People, correcting colonial narratives like the myth that this is a wilderness.

łaayaksiinhi?in (lthaa-yak-siin-hi-in)

Let us be generous and helpful: There is no end to the work of building community.

Čaamaapĩtsiinhi?in (tsa-ma-pilth-siin-hi-in)

Let us stand in dignity, honour, respect and humility, practicing the above!

Acknowledgement

Tla-o-qui-aht began using the term “Tribal Parks” when interpreting our relationship to this place to outsiders unfamiliar with our language, traditions, and teachings. The term “Tribal Parks” is intended to communicate the understanding that this area is cared for. It is not a wilderness as early European explorers and settlers, or as contemporary loggers, miners, and tourism operators often presume. To Tla-o-qui-aht and other Nuu-chah-nulth Peoples, these are the haḥuuti of the ʔaḥukwiath ḥawiih: the lands, waters, forests, minerals, fisheries, songs, dances, regalia, for which hereditary leadership bear ultimate responsibility and authority. Hereditary leadership represent an ancient, unbroken lineage rooted in relationship with local biodiversity, ecology, climate, community, and spirituality. These relationships have allowed Tla-o-qui-aht to thrive for thousands of years, cultivating the local ecology into the magnificent rainforests and teeming fisheries which attract well over a million visitors each year.

It is at the direction and under the authority of the ʔaḥukwiath ḥawiih that the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks operate today. It is towards their vision for a thriving homeland where Tla-o-qui-aht laws, language, and culture are respected and celebrated, that the Tribal Parks Guardians work each day.



Overview

ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ: Welcome to the haᐱuᐱi of the ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ, the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks. It is difficult to overstate the value of this rich ecosystem, and impossible to separate the People who live here, our language, and our culture from these lands and waters.

These intergenerational gardens have been tended by Tla-o-qui-aht for a very long time. Our language and ways of being emerged from interactions and relationships with this environment and the life forms who collectively comprise this place. Because we belong to it, and because we cannot imagine a future for our Indigenous culture and language without it, our People are committed to protecting the old-growth forests and sensitive estuarine ecosystems which proliferate throughout the haᐱuᐱi.

These lands and waters are not only important to Tla-o-qui-aht and other Nuuchah-nulth Peoples. They are also enormously important to Canadians: The Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks are a biodiversity hotspot with some of the [highest species richness](#) in

Canada, provide crucial ecosystem services like clean drinking water to our communities, and offer a pathway towards realizing Canada's commitments to [cut emissions by 45%](#) and [protect 30% of lands and waters](#) by 2030. They encompass the largest intact old-growth coastal temperate rainforests remaining on Vancouver Island, [sequestering over 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide](#): roughly 1.5 times [BC's average annual greenhouse gas emissions](#). The region also punches over its weight in economic terms: Visitors flock to these beaches every summer, fuelling a tourism industry with a [\\$240,000,000 direct annual economic output](#) and \$57,000,000 in tax revenue for BC and Canada. We know that tourism has fully recovered from the pandemic: [Tourism Tofino's unofficial projected occupancy](#) for the 2023 season is back up to 2019 pre-pandemic occupancy levels. It is time for proponents of Tofino's tourism industry to prioritize ethical travel and the development of an equitable industry which honours Indigenous Rights.

Increasingly, alongside other regions customarily stewarded by Indigenous Peoples, the world is starting to pay attention to the incredible value of these lands and waters and the role Tla-o-qui-aht have played in protecting and caring for them. In 2022 & 2023, we celebrated new partnerships and opportunities to share our vision with the world. Every guest who sets foot in the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks should understand the significance of these lands, their relationship with the Indigenous People who belong



Photo credit: Killii Yüyan, National Geographic Magazine

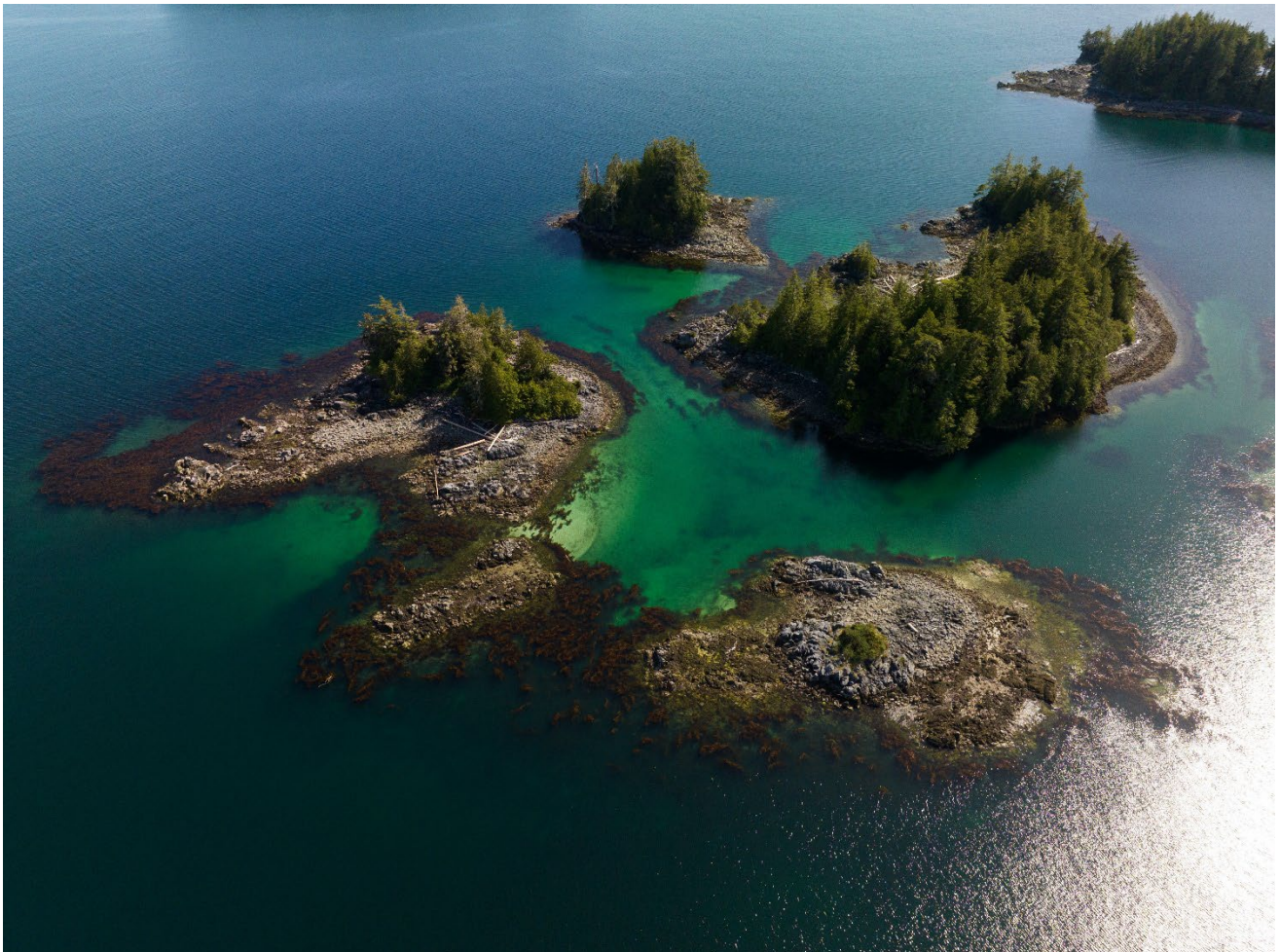
here, and contribute towards the achievement of our vision. To highlight some exciting partnerships and opportunities: Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks were featured in [National Geographic Magazine's July 2022 cover story](#) about the resurgence of Indigenous stewardship traditions across North America. Tourism Tofino made new commitments to centre Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks in their destination marketing, while [4VI \(Tourism Vancouver Island\)](#) and Indigenous Tourism BC committed to fostering Tribal-Parks-Allies-style programs based on our success across the province. BC published and began implementing its [2022-2027 DRIPA Action Plan](#), with material commitments to honouring Indigenous rights such as the right to benefit from economic activities in Indigenous homelands. With funding from Pacific Economic Development Canada, we launched the first naaʔuu interpretive dinner event series, commissioned and erected Tla-o-qui-aht art and signage in strategic locations throughout the Tribal Parks, and strengthened our presence at ʔaʔukmin Tribal Park. Most significantly, we continue to recruit new Tribal Parks Allies every other week, with 120 participating Allies at the time of writing this report. Some notable new Allies include the Tofino Coop, Meares Vista Inn, and HI Tofino/Whalers on the Point hostel. Muʔaa, the tide is rising.



Towards an Equitable Tourism Industry: Impacts & Benefits

The ʻākaʻiwiāhi ʻāwāhi carry a responsibility to care for the ʻākaʻiwi on behalf of all the communities of life who rely on this place for sustenance and wellbeing. Traditionally, this responsibility was upheld by maintaining an intimate knowledge of the conditions of the many complex systems interacting within each ʻāwāhi's respective domain, by hosting gatherings where wealth, wisdom, and policy decisions were communicated and distributed among community members and guests, and by honouring relationships with important species and entities who provided for the needs of the People. These were the primary ways that services were delivered to citizens. Fundamental to this system of governance was the principle of ʻākaʻiwiāhi, lifting one another up and making sure that everybody's needs were met.

The integration of colonial culture and governance with pre-existing nuuākaʻiwi systems has disrupted the old socio-ecological balance. Our challenge today is to achieve a new balance which is informed by our traditional ways and which accounts for new influences and relationships which have transformed the form and substance of the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks. From a nuuākaʻiwi perspective, responsible ecological stewardship means caring for community, lifting one another up, and centering equity in economics.





Tourism Impacts

Tourism in Tofino is thriving, but it is not equitable in terms of its impacts or its benefits. The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust's [2021 Vital Snapshot on Tourism](#) shows that tourism visitation has doubled to nearly 1.2 million visitors per year over the last decade, placing major stress on small-town public services and infrastructure. The report details an increase in crime, paramedic and search & rescue calls, Emergency Room visits, as well as environmental impacts. 80% of waste at the local landfill is commercial, and increased traffic volumes mean a heavier carbon footprint. These tourism impacts affect locals' quality of life and access to public services paid for by property taxes, not tourism revenue.

Nuučaañuł people experience deeper impacts as well: loss of access to proprietary hunting, fishing, and harvest areas, loss of privacy impacting ability to practice culture, increased settlement, camping, & squatting in sensitive cultural and spiritual areas, dumping and poaching, affordability issues affecting ability to live in homeland, parking issues in town, decreased community safety, limited access to foreshore areas, and a lack of benefits from the tourism economy.

Tourism Benefits

While the impacts of tourism in Tofino are disproportionately felt by Tla-o-qui-aht, and Tla-o-qui-aht citizens have complicated feelings about how the industry has transformed their communities, Tla-o-qui-aht administration and leadership are supportive of tourism that is respectful of Indigenous rights, title, and self-determination. This industry was established as an alternative to the unsustainable boom-bust economies which were devastating for Tla-o-qui-aht communities, lands, waters, and ecosystems. This transition is not complete. We believe that restructuring the tourism industry by placing equity and Indigenous rights at its foundations will strengthen the resurgence of Tla-o-qui-aht language, culture, community wellbeing, and stewardship for abundance. Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, at the direction of Tla-o-qui-aht elected and hereditary leadership, have developed Tribal Parks Allies as a tool to educate tourism operators about their responsibility to uphold Indigenous rights and to offer a pathway towards more respectful and ethical business practices.

Tourism's Benefit-Sharing Gap

BC and Canada have long traditions and established social customs of ignoring Indigenous rights which continue despite constitutional amendments, legal precedents, commitments to the United Nations, and a legislated mandate to reconcile with Indigenous Nations. Before reconciliation can be achieved, we need the humility to acknowledge this truth! We are currently in the truth-telling part of our shared Truth and Reconciliation journey.

Tourism, an industry with unique potential to educate and promote social change, is also uniquely non-compliant with Indigenous rights. Among industries in BC, Tourism is the only industry which has no standard of providing a benefit to Indigenous Nations. Tla-o-qui-aht has had benefits-sharing agreements with logging companies and operators in the fishing industry for decades. Indigenous Peoples have a legally affirmed right to benefit from any use of their territories, and the responsibility does not lie exclusively on government to honour that right. The Tribal Parks Allies program was

established to address this issue. We have prepared some reference materials to for Tofino business owners to consider as they contemplate their responsibility to respect Indigenous Rights:

[The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) articulates the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Skim through this document and reflect on how far the ideals it espouses are from Canadian society as it exists today. We value UNDRIP as an expression of how much work lies ahead on the journey to deconstruct the racist and genocidal architecture of our communities, of BC, and of Canada. BC passed their Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) in 2019, establishing UNDRIP as the province's framework for reconciliation.


We are now in the early steps of BC's first 5-year action plan to implement DRIPA. [The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Act \(DRIPA\) Action Plan](#) (2022-2027) mandates goals and actions for



provincial agencies to deliver by 2027. Of these Actions, we find Actions 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 3.5, 4.7, and 4.49 particularly relevant to Tla-o-qui-aht's relationship to the tourism industry.

The responsibility to honour Indigenous rights does not only apply to governments. Businesses, communities, and citizens are equally responsible. This is corroborated by [the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's \(TRC's\) Calls to Action](#). Call to Action 92 calls on corporate Canada – not the government – to take responsibility for co-creating a decolonized future with Indigenous Peoples. We quote it in full here:

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

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1. *Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.*
 2. *Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.*
 3. *Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.*

Finally, we encourage our Allies and Tofino residents to learn about the host of landmark court decisions which enshrine Aboriginal rights and title in Canadian law. Most recent, and perhaps most relevant, is the landmark [Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia](#) decision, which affirms that “Aboriginal title confers on the group that holds it the exclusive right to decide how the land is used and the right to benefit from those uses” [88].

All of these legal and legislative developments affirm something that Tla-o-qui-aht has always held sacred: A central teaching of the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks is that this ancient ecosystem is what it is because of its relationship with the people who live here. Through the Tribal Parks Allies program, we are extending intergenerational Tla-o-qui-aht responsibilities to the ecosystem to which we belong to the settler community. We urge Tofino businesses to join our existing 120 Allies and participate in this crucial, historical movement to protect and restore our homeland. We call on all residents of the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks to take responsibility for the role you play in this complex, sacred, living system.



News from the Tribal Parks

Wanačas Hiłhuuʔis

Big Tree Trail: The aging dock at the Big Tree Trailhead was replaced and installed with an extended gangway to prevent premature wear-and tear from partially settling on rock at low tide. Access to the trail is significantly safer and easier for guests with this improvement. The Guardians completed the refurbishment of the existing Big Tree Trail and further extended the boardwalk around some of the most magnificent and enormous trees on the West Coast. Hikers can now access an ancient standing “Culturally Modified Tree” from which Tla-o-qui-aht ancestors harvested a plank. This provides an awesome story for the many operators who offer interpretive tours on the trail and we hope will enable visitors to appreciate the unbroken lineage of stewardship and care which is far older than any surviving trees along the path.



Meares Island Shoreline Cleanup with Coastal Restoration Society: From July 4th to August 26th 2022, Tla-o-qui-aht & Coastal Restoration Society cleaned 25 kilometers of coastline around wanačas hiłhuuʔis. A total of 7,467 kg of debris was hand picked from the shore. Of that, 6,140 kg were recycled, 77 kg were repurposed, and 1,250 kg were sent to the local landfill.

Opitsaht & Ty-Histanis

Community Revitalization Project with Coastal Restoration Society: From January 25th to March 3rd, 2023, total of 15,380 kg of debris was removed, including 8 derelict vessels and 500 litres of contaminated fuel and oil. 5,540 kg of scrap metal was recycled.

Derelict Vessel Removal: Also in partnership with CRS, Tla-o-qui-aht ran a second phase Derelict Vessel Removal project from June 27th - August 31 2022 on Meares Island adjacent to the village of Opitsaht. 33 abandoned vessels were removed weighing 222,490 kg.

New Guardians

Nathanial 'Natedoog' Currie joined the Tribal Parks Guardians team in the fall of 2022. Nate likes doing the work because for him it's a way to give back to his community and he gets to spend time outside getting to know the territory. It's also a way to support his young family and create a better world for his two-year-old daughter. Nate's partner Heather works in the Tla-o-qui-aht administration, and their family lives together in Esowista. Nate has quickly proven his value to the team as a hard worker, a quick learner, and a pair of safe hands with any task he's responsible for. These days you'll find Nate splitting cedar boards beside the Tla-o-qui-aht administration building and stockpiling materials for the next Big Tree Trail extension phase. Come and say hello!



Vera 'Ms. Panik' Danyk started in January 2022 as Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks' first ever social media Guardian. An established artist, musician, and creative media pro, Vera is responsible for giving Tribal Parks social media a major upgrade. Thanks to Vera's dedicated marketing, we were able to sell out almost every night that we hosted naa?uu events in March. Her personal touch and her community-based approach to media development, inspired by her Haida background and education, centres Nuu-chah-nulth storytelling and representation on our channels and is intended to encourage relationality and safe learning space for anybody ready to dig deeper into understanding and improving their relationship with Tla-o-qui-aht and other Indigenous Peoples.

If you reach out to us on Facebook or Instagram, Vera is probably the one who will get back to you. Pay us a visit at [@tlaoquiaht](https://www.facebook.com/tlaoquiaht) on Facebook or at [tlaoquiaht.tribal.parks](https://www.instagram.com/tlaoquiaht.tribal.parks) on Instagram.



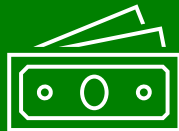
naaʔuu: feasting together

Coming together as a community to share a meal is a time-honoured tradition for Tla-o-qui-aht. During festivals, family celebrations, weddings, and potlatches, we invite our honoured guests to share in a wholesome meal. It is around good food that our elders and knowledge keepers share their wisdom and their stories. We believe that as we take in good food, our hearts and minds are most receptive to the teachings we have gathered to receive.

In keeping with this tradition, throughout March 2023 we invited ticket-holders to join us at the Best Western Plus Tin Wis Resort in Tofino to enjoy an evening of Tla-o-qui-aht style hospitality including traditional food, art, song and dance. Through those evenings, we shared some of the deep history of our homeland and our People. Our hope is that by understanding our history, guests will better understand their relationship to this place and their responsibilities to the future.

In our pilot series through March, we sold 350 tickets and hosted 95 Tla-o-qui-aht community members. Including our community members in these events was crucial, so that they could understand how we are portraying Tla-o-qui-aht culture to the world. With the support of the community, we are excited to offer the naaʔuu experience in the future.

For the pilot series, we commissioned Tla-o-qui-aht artists and carvers to create three masks and 12 sets of cedar bark regalia, compiled media assets for future marketing campaigns, and set the table for the Tin Wis resort to take over the long-term management of naaʔuu in future seasons.



\$60,024 gross ticket sales
\$13,430 gross art sales

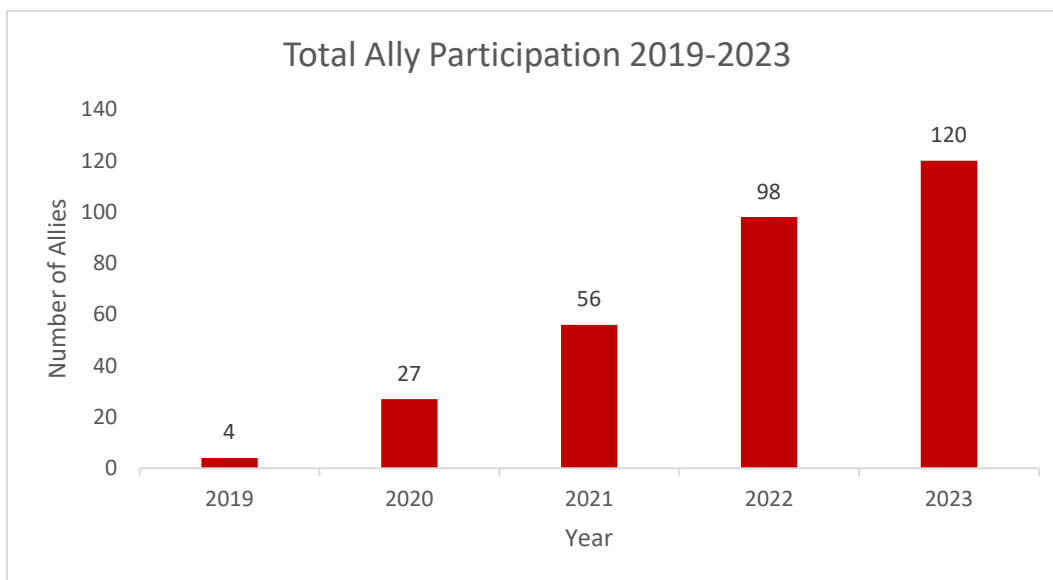


445 Guests
>45,000 Social Media Engagements

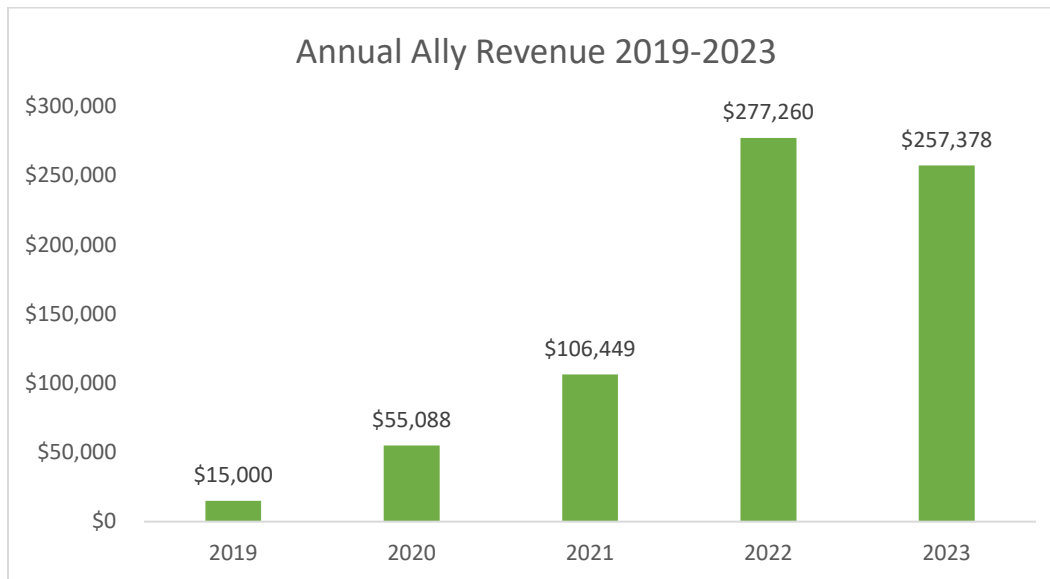


Tribal Parks Allies Financial Report

The Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Guardians stewardship program and other aspects of the Tribal Parks are funded by a combination of Tribal Parks Allies' ecosystem service fee contributions and grant and partnership funding. From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 (Tla-o-qui-aht's 2023 Fiscal Year), Tribal Parks expended grant and partnership funding from the Districts of Tofino and Ucluelet, Parks Canada, Health Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, Pacific Economic Development Canada, [Nature United](#), and [4VI \(Tourism Vancouver Island\)](#). These grants and partnerships enabled Tribal Parks to add a new vehicle and two ATVs to our fleet, refurbish and extend the Big Tree Trail at wanačas hihuuʔis, commission signage, carvings, masks, and regalia, launch and promote naaʔuu, hire our new Social Media Guardian, replace the dock and gangway at the Big Tree Trail, and replace the aging dock at our hatchery at ʔaʔukmin. Grant funding is always most welcome as a tool to accelerate the achievement of Tribal Parks' vision for restorative stewardship, but it is difficult to plan for. This was a great year for grant funding, but we never know what will happen in the next year or the next election cycle. To build a resilient and sustainable Tribal Parks Stewardship program, we need predictable revenue. Happily, it was also a great year for the Tribal Parks Allies Program, with 26 new Allies continuing a 5-year trend of strong growth in participation (with the closure of some businesses during this period, this brought our total number of Allies up to 120 from 98).



Ecosystem Service Fee Revenue (2019-2023)



The Tribal Parks Allies collectively contributed \$257,378 from April 01, 2022 to March 31, 2023. These revenues are crucial for the Guardians program. Grant revenue is both unpredictable and is typically constrained in how it can be used. Ally contributions guarantee the sustainability of Guardian salaries and positions and provide the flexibility required for a responsive and adaptable stewardship program.

Oddly, even with increased participation in the program, Allies collectively contributed less revenue than they had over the previous year. We have confirmed with our Allies that this is because many Allies have not contributed their 2023 fees yet. We have asked our Allies to please remit their 2022-23 contributions. We will take more care in the new year to remind everyone to contribute before the end of March 2024. Late 2023 contributions will be counted as 2024 revenue, so we are anticipating a slightly inflated number than our projected total Ally contributions for next year.

Projected Ecosystem Service Fee Revenue 2024

Year	2019 (Actual)	2020 (Actual)	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Actual)	2024 (Projected)
Number of Allies	4	27	56	98	120	149*
Growth in Allies		23	29	42	22	29
Total Ally Contributions	\$15,000	\$55,088	\$106,449	\$277,260	\$257,378	\$380,397**
Average Contribution	\$3,750	\$2,040	\$1,901	\$2,829	\$2,145	\$2,553

*Projected Number of Allies in 2024 = (averaged growth of Allies 2020-2023) + (2023 Number of Allies) = (29) + (120)

**Projected Total Ally Contributions in 2024 = (averaged average contributions of Allies 2019-2023) x (projected number of Allies in 2024) = (\$2,553) x (149)

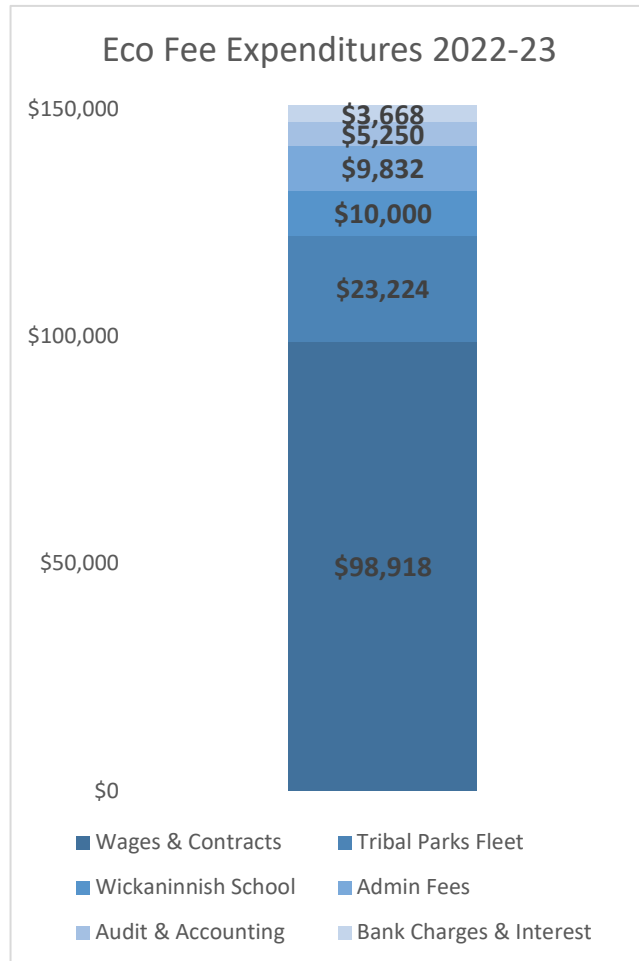
Since the launch of the Allies program, the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Allies have collectively contributed **\$711,175** towards the stewardship of these lands and waters. That is an awesome number and an enormous achievement of collective action for social and ecological justice!

Our target for 2024 is to at minimum achieve our projected growth in the total number of participating Allies and total Ally contributions. By holding the average 5-year trend, we expect to cross the \$1,000,000 milestone before March 2024.

Ecosystem Service Fee Expenditures

From our Ecosystem Service Fee revenue stream, a total of **\$150,892** was spent on our programs in 2022-2023. These funds were expended in 6 categories:

1. **Wages & Contracts:** Totalling **\$98,918**, this category includes \$51,764 in wages, \$42,700 in contract fees, \$3,569 in CPP/EI expenses, \$720 in WCB expenses, \$165 in pension expenses.
2. **Tribal Parks Fleet:** Totalling **\$23,224**, this category includes \$18,286 in maintenance and repairs, \$6,966 in fuel costs, and \$4,570 in insurance.
3. **Wickaninnish School Programs:** Every year, Tribal Parks contributes **\$10,000** towards a school lunch program or other school programs.
4. **Administration Fees:** **\$9,832**
5. **Auditing & Accounting:** **\$5,250** was spent on an audit of Tribal Park's accounts for the 2022 fiscal year. This audit was conducted at the request of resorts considering whether to participate in the Allies program and in a spirit of building trust.
6. **Bank Charges & Interest:** Totalling **\$3,886**, this category includes \$3,340 in interest payments on long-term debt and \$328 in bank charges and other interest.



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Thank You!



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