

# **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**The Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board**

**And**

**The University of Northern British Columbia**



## **Part I: Introduction**

The Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board (Advisory Board) and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) have had a long-term partnership and working relationship that dates back to an *Interim Letter of Understanding* signed in 1999 between the President of UNBC and the Chair of the Advisory Board.

With the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (MK Management Area) in northern British Columbia as its focus, the partnership between UNBC and the Advisory Board was founded on a joint vision for the research needs and priorities of the MK Management Area during the first decade of the new millennium. Appendix 1 provides an historical overview of the accomplishments and research that resulted from the *Interim Letter of Understanding* as well as subsequent agreements between the Advisory Board and UNBC.

Twenty years have passed since the *Interim Letter of Understanding* was signed. Significant changes have taken place not only with the Advisory Board and UNBC but also in northern British Columbia more broadly.

The Advisory Board and UNBC pursuant to this Agreement want to continue their partnership. We desire to support and implement research that not only builds on the past but looks to the future in meeting the educational, management, economic and social needs of both the MK Management Area and northern British Columbia.

## **Part II: Background**

### *MK Management Area*

Comprising 6.4 million hectares, the MK Management Area is situated in the heart of northern British Columbia. It lies within the traditional territories of the Kaska Dena, Tsay Keh Dene and Treaty 8 First Nations. The MK Management Area is known for its large, intact, relatively undisturbed ecosystems and as a globally important area of wilderness, wildlife and cultures. The MK Management Area also has significant potential for non-renewable resource development and renewable energy and eco-tourism opportunities.

The vision for the MK Management Area is *“a globally significant area of wilderness, wildlife and cultures, to be maintained in perpetuity, where world class integrated resource management and decision-making is practiced ensuring that resource development and other human activities take place in harmony with wilderness quality, wildlife and the dynamic ecosystems on which they depend”*.

The MK Management Area includes both Protected Areas and Resource Management Zones. The Protected Areas will not see any industrial development. The Resource Management Zones, however, allow for timber harvesting, mineral exploration and mining, oil and gas exploration and development and other resource development activities as long as wilderness, wildlife and cultural values are maintained. As such, the MK Management Area has the foresight to set a world-class standard for land and resource management. Approximately 25 percent of the land base is allocated to Protection and 75 percent is designated as Resource Management Zones where sustainable resource development can occur.

In areas where industrial activities are allowed, the long-term objective is to return the lands to their natural state as development activities are completed. The long-term maintenance of the wilderness characteristics, wildlife and ecosystems in both the Protected Areas and Resource Management Zones is critical to the cultural well-being of First Nations who consider the MK Management Area traditional territory.

#### *Advisory Board*

Pursuant to the *Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act* and the *Muskwa-Kechika Management Plan Regulation*, the Advisory Board has for the past twenty years provided valued advice to the Premier and the public regarding natural resource management within the MK Management Area. The Advisory Board's track record of consensus-based decision-making and advice is second to none.

Past advice to the Province regarding the timing and sequencing of Pre-Tenure Plans for potential oil and gas development within the MK Management Area is but one example of how the Advisory Board has helped the Province make balanced and informed decisions that directly benefit British Columbians and their communities, uphold the Province's strong environmental standards and create potential job opportunities, while addressing the cumulative effects of multiple resource activities on the land base.

More recently, at the direction of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to "focus efforts around delivering advice around how the wilderness quality definition should be applied to maintain the wilderness quality [including] a rationale around the reasonable duration for persistence of disturbances", the Advisory Board has worked, with input from UNBC, to develop a draft Resource Management Framework for the MK Management Area.

The mandate of the Advisory Board is to: provide advice to the Government of British Columbia and the public regarding resource management issues within the MK Management Area; build awareness and understanding regarding integrated resource management decision-making; and, report to the public and the Premier on the status of the MK Management Area as it relates to the vision for the MK Management Area.

The mission of the Advisory Board is to: act as a catalyst, convener, facilitator and partner in achieving the vision for the MK Management Area; and, provide respected and trusted advice to the Government of British Columbia that ensures the dynamic ecosystems, wilderness, wildlife and cultural values of the MK Management Area are maintained in perpetuity.

#### *UNBC*

UNBC is a university both in and for the North and this mission has instilled a strong sense of ownership, purpose and adventure among students, alumni, faculty, staff and the communities served. The UNBC motto *En Cha Huná* from the Dakelh/Carrier Elders translated as "respecting all forms of life" encapsulates UNBC's spirit of academic freedom, respect for others, willingness to recognize different perspectives and its intention to foster the rich cultural diversity of northern British Columbia and its people. In particular, UNBC acknowledges a special

responsibility to the well-being of the North's communities and to the sustainability of the environments that support them.

UNBC provides outstanding undergraduate and graduate learning opportunities that explore the environment, cultures, economies and health. The vision for UNBC is *"to be a student-centered, research-intensive university, uniquely Northern and personal in character, responsive to the region it serves, of national and international acclaim"*.

The UNBC mission is: to improve the quality of life in northern British Columbia, the province and world by attaining the highest standards of undergraduate and graduate teaching, learning and research; and, to serve northern British Columbia by nurturing relationships and being innovative, resourceful and responsive to student and community needs. UNBC delivers the research component of its mission through the following four interdisciplinary strategic research areas: Environment and Natural Resources; First Nations and Indigenous Studies; Community Development; and, Northern, Rural and Environmental Health.

In regard to the MK Management Area, UNBC established the Ian McTaggart Cowan Muskwa-Kechika Research Professorship in 2000. Ian McTaggart Cowan was one of the foremost wildlife ecologists in British Columbia; he provided unique perspective on the natural world over almost a century of environmental change. The individual holding this position conducts research in support of the vision for the MK Management Area and helps to maintain linkages between the Advisory Board and UNBC.

### **Part III: Continuing the Partnership**

Since the signing of the *Interim Letter of Understanding* in 1999, significant changes have taken place not only with the Advisory Board and UNBC but also in northern British Columbia, the province and the world. Issues such as indicators of climate change, the implications of cumulative environmental impacts from resource development, and the assertion and recognition of First Nations rights in resource management decision-making have become present-day realities for policy-makers, regulatory decision-makers, developers, and the public.

Domestic growth and global demands for natural resources – oil, gas, minerals, and timber – have brought focus to northern British Columbia as a provider of those resources to both North American and offshore markets. In addition, there is significant interest both in and immediately adjacent to the MK Management Area for renewable forms of energy development such as wind power.

Both the Advisory Board and UNBC recognize that environmental, social and local community concerns and issues are important components in maintaining the vision for the MK Management Area. Despite fiscal and social constraints associated with recent economic downturns and pressures for economic recovery, conservation efforts have increased both locally and globally. Public awareness of the human footprint on the planet, citizen science, and a general social conscience for environmental sustainability on working landscapes have never been higher or as active.

Balancing the industrial activities of sustainable economic development in and adjacent to the MK Management Area with the globally significant environmental values of the MK

Management Area creates a unique set of challenges for maintaining the vision and management intent for the MK Management Area itself. At the same time, the lessons learned in making balanced and informed resource management decisions within the MK Management Area potentially have broader application for provincial and federal policy and for regulatory decision-makers in all of northern British Columbia and potentially elsewhere.

As a result, the Advisory Board and UNBC recognize that through a continued collaborative partnership we can work together in different areas of research and community service in the best interests of both the MK Management Area and the northern part of the province. It is important now to appropriately apply the public policy documents and plans acknowledging their uncertainties, to the specifics of on-the-ground implementation on a land base that has many different and inherent values.

#### **Part IV: Scope of the Agreement**

The vision of our collaborative partnership for supporting and implementing research that looks to the future in meeting the educational, management, economic and social needs of both the MK Management Area and northern British Columbia is as follows: *to be regional, provincial and world leaders in developing and implementing targeted and timely research that advances environmental sustainability, options for renewable and non-renewable resource management, and cultural resiliency within the MK Management Area and the region.*

Building on existing, prior MK Management Area-related research and without giving priority, the Advisory Board and UNBC will focus on but not limit their research efforts in the following areas:

- ❑ identifying additional criteria necessary for the Government of British Columbia to determine not only if but how, when and where resource development can take place within the MK Management Area while still meeting its encompassing vision for other values;
- ❑ developing additional mechanisms to better understand and address the cumulative effects of resource activities on wilderness, wildlife and cultural values within the MK Management Area;
- ❑ understanding and determining the value of maintaining large, intact ecosystems as climate changes; and,
- ❑ understanding historical landscape change as a basis for ecological restoration and management within the MK Management Area.

#### **Part V: Implementation**

A small Working Group of Advisory Board and UNBC representatives, co-chaired by an Advisory Board member and the Ian McTaggart Cowan Muskwa-Kechika Research Professor, will be held accountable to provide oversight for the implementation of this Agreement. The Working Group will meet semi-annually in the Spring and Fall of the year to:

- ❑ identify research challenges and opportunities as they relate to the vision for the collaborative partnership;

- ❑ facilitate and communicate opportunities for potential research initiatives aligned with the priorities of the Advisory Board's Strategic Direction and Operational Business Plan;
- ❑ develop strategies and plans to secure funding in support of specific, identified research opportunities;
- ❑ monitor and review research results to ensure that the educational, management, economic and social research needs of both the MK Management Area and northern British Columbia are met; and,
- ❑ develop strategies and plans for the augmentation of the Muskwa-Kechika Endowment Fund held at UNBC.

Within 60 days of the signing of this Agreement the Working Group will provide recommendations to UNBC and the Advisory Board as to: how income generated from the Muskwa-Kechika Endowment Fund could be used to support the vision of the collaborative partnership including: (a) support for the Ian McTaggart Cowan Muskwa-Kechika Research Professorship and (b) knowledge transfer of research findings to empower the Advisory Board in its role of providing advice to the Government of British Columbia.

**Part VI: General Provisions**

Nothing in this Agreement affects UNBC, its faculty or students from applying for project funding from other granting bodies or the Advisory Board and UNBC from establishing other agreements or partnerships in the pursuit of their respective mandates.

The Agreement will commence on the date of signing by both parties and have a term of four years. Either party may terminate the Agreement with a minimum of 90 days written notice to the other.

*Signed on behalf of the Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board*

Stephanie Killam

Date: 2019.05.16

Chair, Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board  
Stephanie Killam

*Signed on behalf of the University of Northern British Columbia*

Dr. Geoffrey Payne

Date: May 21/19

Vice President, Research and Graduate Programs  
Dr. Geoffrey Payne

**Appendix 1**  
**University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and**  
**Muskwa-Kechika (MK) Advisory Board Partnership**  
**Historical Overview**  
**1999 – 2019**

**1999**

- Discussions between BC Land Use Coordination Office – LUCO (Warren Mitchell), MK Program Manager (Ron Rutledge), Ministry of Environment – MOE (Jim Walker), MK Advisory Board (John Cashore, appointed as MK Advisory Board Chair, and Brian Churchill, former MK Coordinator), and UNBC (Dr. Max Blouw, Vice President for Research, and Dr. Robert Pfister, former Director of the Northern Land Use Institute – NLUI).
- Letter of Understanding signed between UNBC and the MK Advisory Board (Feb 10, 1999).
- Contribution Agreement signed, transferring monies from the MK Trust Fund to UNBC (Mar 1999).
  - Contributed \$400,000 to NLUI for community presentations, student projects, a research professorship (MK Research Professor), and long-term involvement in MK Management Area research and wilderness planning.
  - Contributed \$500,000 to the UNBC/NLUI Endowment fund. Letter of Understanding (LOU) requirements included:
    - ◆ Establishment of an MK component in the NLUI Endowment Fund; eligible to be matched by other UNBC partnership donors.
    - ◆ Building of this fund would provide resources and focus long-term involvement in MK related research and scientific wilderness management.
    - ◆ The fund must be built to \$1 million in order to support a substantive contribution to wilderness research and planning in perpetuity.
    - ◆ UNBC through NLUI to request further endowments from the MK Trust Fund to build capacity.
- NLUI developed a comprehensive computer-based annotated bibliography of reports and printed documents in the MK Management Area (up to 1998); funded by the MK Trust Fund.

**2000**

- Beginning of the Muskwa-Kechika /UNBC Community Lecture Series. Sixteen different research presentations were delivered by UNBC faculty members or students between January 2000 and March 2005 in the communities of Fort St John and Fort Nelson, with some presentations also given in Mackenzie, Toad River, and Prophet River. Public turnout improved over time with increased advertising and a location change in Fort St John from the North Peace Cultural Centre to Northern Lights College.
- A long-term “Framework for Strategic Research Plan” was developed to advance legislative requirements of the *MK Management Area Act* (Feb 2000). Components included: ecosystem relationships and maintenance, predator-prey relationships, restoration of

ecosystem components, recreation management, and historical and cultural processes. Objectives for the framework were to:

- Provide direction for the scientific community interested in conducting research in the MK Management Area.
  - Develop the knowledge needed to assist resource managers to maintain wilderness and ecological characteristics of the area.
  - Communicate the knowledge to resource managers, resource user groups, and the public.
- University-based Research in the MK; by Dr. Kathy Parker and Dr. Michael Gillingham (Jun 2000)
    - Report that identified strategies and priorities.
  - Draft Research Plan underway; completion anticipated (Aug 2000)
  - Research survey results sent to the MK Advisory Board (Aug 2000)
  - Integrated Research Committee; Dr. Kathy Parker, Dr. Alex Hawley, and Al Sanderson developed strategic priorities for the fall 2000 call for proposals from the MK Advisory Board (Sept 2000)
  - Proposal reviews by technical committee; coordinated by NLUI Director, consisting of: UNBC academic faculty, MOE personnel, and resource extraction industry representatives.
  - Evaluation form developed to rank objectives, methodology, feasibility, application qualifications, and relevance to the goals and objectives of the MK Trust Fund.
  - Establishment of the Ian McTaggart Cowan MK Research Professorship (Sept 2000) Dr. Kathy Parker appointed in this professorship.
    - Responsible for coordinating the UNBC-MK Community Lecture Series, establishing linkages with MK Program Manager and MK Advisory Board Coordinator, and meeting with BC Ministry personnel to initiate research projects in the MK Management Area.
  - Competitive grant opportunities for graduate students working in the MK Management Area; students submitted applications to a biannual call for proposals; research monies were sponsored by the MK Trust Fund.

#### **2001**

- Projects undertaken from 1999 to 2001 were listed in a table by Dr. Kathy Parker (Feb 2001).
- Ross Peck, appointed as MK Advisory Board Chair, June 2001.

#### **2002-2006**

- Interim Letter of Understanding (LOU) was extended in 2004 and 2006.
- Partnership recommendations were prepared by Dr. Kathy Parker, MK Research Professor, and Ross Peck, MK Advisory Board Chair (Mar 31, 2006):
  - That an action plan is developed re: promotional, educational and research activities to coincide with the recently completed MK Advisory Board Strategic and Business Plans.
  - That a joint vision statement be approved that compliments research and extension goals in the Knowledge and Understanding Program Area.

- That the MK Advisory Board) contribute to an overarching MK Management Area framework, and ii) identify key areas for research investments.
- That meetings be held with UNBC Vice President of Research, Development Officer and MK Research Professor, the MK Advisory Board Chair and a representative of BC Integrated Land Management Bureau – ILMB to develop strategies to secure funds enabling continued faculty and grad contributions to the MK Management Area.
- That the Knowledge and Understanding Committee develop review and evaluation procedures.
- That mechanisms be established to profile the purpose, scope and outcomes of MK research.
- That research findings be disseminated to local communities, decision makers, and professional societies and institutions.
- The collaborative Geographic Valuation Project between UNBC (Dr. Alex Hawley, student Nancy Elliott) and Halfway River First Nations was completed in 2006.

#### 2007

- \$100,000 MK Funds was transferred to the NLUJ/UNBC Endowment (Mar 2007). The Northern Land Use Institute was later disbanded at UNBC; comparable research interests are now associated with the Natural Resources and Environmental Studies Institute (NRESi). The MK monies are known as the UNBC Muskwa-Kechika Endowment.
- UNBC Besa-Prophet Ecosystem multi-year project was completed (Dr. Kathy Parker and students Dave Gustine, Brian Milakovic, Andrew Walker; work by Jeremy Ayotte on mineral licks in Northern Rockies Park finished in 2005).
- Tom Briggs, appointed as MK Advisory Board Chair, May 1, 2007.

#### 2008

- Revised 4-year Memorandum of Understanding between UNBC and MK Advisory Board, operating under the following vision statement:
  - *“The MK Advisory Board and UNBC seek to establish and maintain a valued and complementary role in the MK Management Area for enabling targeted and timely research to advance the understanding of ecosystem function and renewable/non-renewable resource management within the MK Management Area.”*
- BC Premier's Award for government (ILMB) – MK Advisory Board - UNBC Partnership.

#### 2012-2015

- Stephanie Killam, appointed MK Advisory Board Chair, March 2012.
- Three-year Collaborative Partnership Agreement between UNBC and MK Advisory Board signed on May 22, 2012, operating under the following vision statement:
  - *“to be regional, provincial and world leaders in developing and implementing targeted and timely research that advances environmental sustainability, options for renewable and non-renewable resource management, and cultural resiliency within the MK Management Area and the region.”*

- Establishment of a Working Group of UNBC (Drs. Kathy Parker, Mike Gillingham, Pam Wright) and MK Advisory Board (Stephanie Killam, David Luff, Juergen Puetter) representatives, June 2012.
- Support from UNBC's VP Research (Dr. Gail Fondahl) to allow one-time spending from the MK Endowment that would permit it to drop to \$800,000. The original intent for the MK Endowment was to avoid spending until it reached \$1M, but this was delayed because of weak financial markets. Spending from any UNBC endowment is on investment returns, but not capital. The current capital adjusted for inflation in the MK Endowment is \$800,000. For all UNBC endowments, the current allowed spending rate is 3.5% of the market value of the endowment based on a 3-year rolling average.
- First use of UNBC's MK Endowment Funds began in September 2013, with the hiring of a Research Associate (Nobi Suzuki) to develop visualization tools that assess possible conflict between conservation of wildlife habitats and natural resource development in the MK Management Area; and in 2014 to support graduate research (by Lindi Anderson) on mapping wilderness values.

#### **2015-2019**

- Revised four-year Collaborative Partnership Agreement between UNBC and the MK Advisory Board signed on May 28, 2015.
- Partnership exchange among the same members of the UNBC-MK Working Group.
- UNBC's MK Endowment continued to support Research Associate Nobi Suzuki and graduate student Lindi Anderson. It also supported new graduate student Odinn Steinsson working to understand wilderness perceptions of visitors to the MK Management Area.