

Getting to Know Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound

A place for humanity and nature to thrive



ÁTL'KA7TSEM
HOWE SOUND
BIOSPHERE REGION



Stawamas Chief and Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Photo: Chris Christie



Connecting People and Place

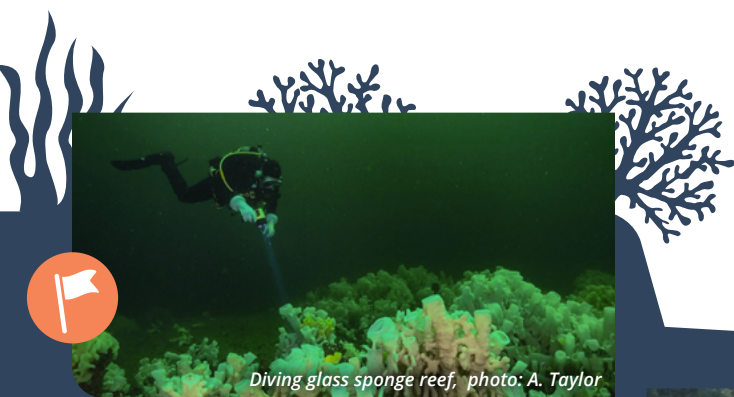
The Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Region (AHSBR) offers an optimistic path forward as climate change poses the greatest challenge of our time. This wild place—steeped with rich Indigenous culture, vibrant biodiversity, and awe-inspiring geography—connects both residents and visitors to a remarkable and precious natural world. As Canada's 19th UNESCO Biosphere Region, we are a place of pride for the people who live here, and provide an enduring reminder that this fragile ecosystem is worth protecting. This will be place of learning and discovery for all ages for generations to come.

What is a UNESCO Biosphere Region and why does it matter?

UNESCO Biosphere Regions are a network of more than 700 unique areas of global ecological significance that make an ongoing commitment to strive for sustainability. They are not parks, and they have no legal authority. They are international designations that bring people together towards a common purpose, where people are inspired to find ways to live and work in harmony with nature. The prestigious UNESCO designation recognizes the best practices implemented in the region towards the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development.

Visit all 3 of BC's UNESCO Biosphere Regions

Did you know you can visit all three Biosphere Regions in one trip? AHSBR is the province's third UNESCO Biosphere Region and the first on BC's mainland.



Diving glass sponge reef, photo: A. Taylor

Exploring rare, ancient glass sponge reefs

Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound, one of Canada's southernmost fjords, is home to rare glass sponge reefs, habitat to more than 84 species of fish and invertebrates. Thought to be extinct, these fragile reefs filter vast amounts of seawater every day. There are 10 Howe Sound Glass Sponge Reef Marine Refuges within the core protected area of AHSBR.



Gambier Island Forum, photo: K. Hemmelgarn



Deeply-rooted Indigenous culture

The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and other Coast Salish peoples have existed and prospered from this shared territory since time immemorial. As land stewards and knowledge keepers, they are key collaborators in co-creating the vision for Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound.



On the edge of a bustling metropolis

Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound inlet and surrounding mountains are on the cusp of Metro Vancouver (population 2.5 million). Our Biosphere Region is abundant with nature and wildlife, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the outdoors, while learning about Indigenous culture and our region's unique ecology.

AHSBR extends from the sea floor to mountaintop, encompassing a 218,723-hectare swath of terrain, which begins near Point Atkinson (Sk'íwitsut) in West Vancouver, running north to Black Tusk (T'ekt'akmúyìn t'l'a In7inýáxa7en) near Whistler, and as far west as Gower Point on the Sunshine Coast. [View the map.](#)



Facing Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound photo: David Suzuki Foundation/ Kris Krug

The origins of Átl'ka7tsem

There are three different ways of saying "Howe Sound" in the Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim (Squamish language): Átl'ka7tsem, Nexwnéwu7ts, or Txwnéwu7ts. The former, pronounced "At-KATsum," is the most commonly used term. [Listen](#) to the pronunciation live.

Balancing environmental protection and economy

For five years, First Nations, all levels of government, individuals, businesses, and organizations—our very own "community of communities"—have formed a coalition, working towards a shared vision for the entire Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound watershed.

Our role is to gather these parties and facilitate conversations around how best to balance environmental protection and economic development.



Education, Research, and Monitoring

We are a hub for youth camps, researchers, and citizen scientists. Knowledge-sharing and open data provides important decision-making tools.



Biodiversity Conservation

We champion initiatives aimed at protecting the land and waters of this area, while carving a path forward for the regional economy to thrive.



Sustainable Development

We facilitate conversations around building a livable, resilient, and prosperous region; providing a framework for sustainable development.



Reconciliation, Equity, and Inclusion

We create ethical space for listening, dialogue, and shared understanding for all nations and communities that thrive in this region.

What's next? The journey from designation to management

Our Biosphere Region will be managed by the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society, showcasing to the world how regional collaboration leads to sustainable development and conservation.

As we move forward in a management role, we will continue to facilitate round-tables and forums with our "community of communities," reaching consensus on what the sustainable future for Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound looks like. Together, we will gather, listen, learn, and co-create.



Bigg's Killer Whale, photo: Richard Duncan

Join the conversation as we collaboratively address issues for our region, based on a collective vision of place.

howesoundbri.org
#HoweSoundBiosphere

