

Tunkwa Lake

SITE #050101

GC1VBVC

Written & Researched by Doug Smith

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Logan Lake, V0K 1W0
 Location/Parking: N 50°36.144'
 W 120°51.623'
 Geocache Location: N 50°36.139'
 W 120°51.625'
 Accuracy: 5 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing
 clues page
 UTM: East 0651406;
 North 5607787 10U
 Geocache altitude: 1,150 m./3,774 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1.5
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: c1909
 Ownership: BC Provincial Park
 Access: • Public Road
 • Year-round
 • Vehicle accessible



Tunkwa and Leighton Lakes lay approximately twenty minutes drive from either Savona or Logan Lake along a good gravel and dirt road. Tunkwa Lake Provincial Park is comprised of 5,100 hectares of grassland, forests, creeks, wetlands and lakes on the Thompson Plateau.

The area was used by ranchers and homesteaders early in the twentieth century in the Meadow Creek area, the Guichon Creek Valley and in some of the grassland areas toward Tunkwa and Leighton Lakes. Ranching continues to be active in these highland plateaus.

The area was used for hunting and fishing by First Nations peoples, but its elevation and long winters discouraged permanent residence. A transportation corridor was likely used from Kamloops Lake up Durand Creek and down Guichon Creek towards the Nicola River for trade. The first mining claims were established in nearby Logan Lake as early as 1871, but little development occurred for the next ninety years. Full scale development of the mines nearby started up in the 1960s. There were some claims in the Tunkwa Lake area also, and there is a story that a trapper was paid to overwinter in a cabin near the lakes just to protect the claim. Winters are long in this high country!



J.B. Leighton

Photo: Ashcroft Museum

For more information or to report a problem with this site please contact:
 Gold Country Communities Society
 P.O. Box 933 Cache Creek, B.C. V0K 1H0
 Tel: 1-877-453-9467
 email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

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Tunkwa and Leighton Lakes were made larger by damming the outlets. Downstream grazing lands benefit from a summer supply of water from these reservoirs. This occurred as early as 1909 when James Leighton funded a project to use the headwaters of Guichon Creek. By putting a ditch into Tunkwa Lake and another at Leighton Lake, with dams on both to feed Durand Creek as needed, he was able to provide irrigation and domestic water for the ranches on the southern hills above Savona.

James Leighton came from Scotland to California in the 1850s and then moved to Vancouver Island. He went on to Barkerville, then Lytton with his uncle while still a teenager. He became an agent for Barnard's Express, and then moved to Cache Creek where he and his new wife took care of the telegraph. In 1881 he received the contract to carry the weekly mail from Cache Creek to Kamloops and on to Spallumcheen. They moved

to Savona and over time Leighton took up ranching, acquiring 1,800 acres, with another 2,400 acres leased. He took on the task of running the ferry at Savona, was district cattle overseer, Fisheries Officer and superintendent of the B.C. Express. In James' retirement he published some of his reminiscences in 'The Sentinel' newspaper in Kamloops. He passed away in 1945 at the age of 94.

Tunkwa Lake was named after the Indian word "Toonkwa" which means Goose Lake. It was established as a Provincial Park in 1996 out of recommendations from a Provincial Management Plan process for the area. The lake features one of the top ten fisheries in the province, specializing in the famous Kamloops fighting trout. The two lakes also provide stock for other lakes in British Columbia. There are extensive grasslands surrounding the lake, with bluegrass, rough fescue, needle-and-thread and blue bunch wheatgrass. Grassland birds like meadowlarks, curlews, killdeer and vesper sparrows nest in the spring. Riparian zones, swamps and ponds are home to waterfowl such as ducks, geese, loons, grebes and sandpipers. The surrounding forests are habitat for moose, deer, bears, coyotes, lynx, bobcat, cougars, rabbits, marmots, eagles, kestrels and grouse.

Campers can stay at either Tunkwa or Leighton Lake and a total of 275 sites are available for fishermen, hunters, ATVers, hikers and geocachers, and anyone who loves the outdoors. Recreationalists can visit nearby Logan Lake for supplies and services. Toon-kwa – a special place.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

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- Balf, M. (1980). *Savona's Ferry*. Kamloops, BC: Kamloops Museum and Archives.
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- Tunkwa Lake Park Provincial Management Plan*. (1999). In *B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands & Parks*.