

TALKING STICK

A GREAT BEAR
RAINFORREST
PUBLICATION



Wei Wai Kum Nation Seaside Cottages Boost Tourism
Old Massett Village Council Transforms A Haida Village Site

Strengthening Community Well-Being: **Creating Family-Supporting Jobs**

FALL 2017

Updates from Coast Funds

Welcome to the Fall 2017 edition of Talking Stick.

Published throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii, the Talking Stick explores conservation science, stewardship, sustainable development, and community well-being initiatives led by First Nations.

This month, we're honoured to share stories from **Wei Wai Kum Nation** and **Old Massett Village Council**, who have embarked on **strategic and very different approaches to community-owned tourism businesses**. As with every story in Talking Stick, they're capsules of longer stories available online. Check out www.coastfunds.ca for: in-depth interviews, videos, community well-being outcomes, and direct contact with storytellers, as First Nations highlight their innovations, lessons learned, and wise practices.

This season, **we're excited about key initiatives that First Nations are preparing to launch soon**, and which Coast Funds is proud to be supporting. Grand openings are in the works for the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation's new stewardship office in Klemtu, which promises to increase stewardship and conservation research; and for the Heiltsuk Nation's new Wáglísla community grocery store in the heart of Bella Bella. Nisga'a Nation is also close to opening Vetter Falls Lodge

and finishing the development of the Hlgu Isgwit Hot Springs, both located within Anhluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'asanskwhl Nisga'a (a.k.a. Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park).

At our Annual General Meeting in July, our Members (representing First Nations and the Funders) reappointed Darcy Dobell, Wally Eamer and Garth Davis to the Board. Our Fall Board meeting will take place in Campbell River, where Board members from across the coast will learn more about First Nations' recent investments—like Wei Wai Kum Nation's ambitious expansion of Thunderbird RV Park & Resort (the topic of this edition's cover story), the Ha-ma-yas Stewardship Network created by a collaboration of coastal Nations, and Homalco (Xwémalhkwi) Nation's grizzly bear-viewing business and salmon conservation efforts.

We are privileged to present stories that First Nations are sharing in Talking Stick. If you'd like us to publish your story, please reach out to us at talkingstick@coastfunds.ca.

Darcy Dobell
Communications Committee Chair

Brodie Guy
Executive Director

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COVER

Wei Wai Kum Nation Chief Councillor Bob Pollard, Councillor Chris Roberts, Thunderbird RV Park & Resort Manager Sandra Malone, and Band Manager Angie Sarsons welcome visitors to beautiful Tyee Spit.

PHOTO BY
Coast Funds

OPPOSITE PAGE

Tyee Spit, the location of Wei Wai Kum Nation's Thunderbird RV Park & Resort, offers views of Campbell River estuary and Discovery Passage across to Quadra Island.

COURTESY OF
Thunderbird RV Park & Resort

An aerial photograph of a coastal town. In the foreground, a large parking lot is filled with numerous white RVs. To the right, a paved road runs along the coast. The town includes several buildings, some with blue roofs, and a small pier extending into the water. In the background, there are mountains with patches of snow under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Wei Wai Kum Nation's Seaside Cottages Boost Tourism In Campbell River

By expanding a reliably performing tourism business—Thunderbird RV Park—Wei Wai Kum Nation is investing in economic development to reach new markets, providing significant new sources of revenue and employment for its people.

WEI WAI KUM NATION

is serving up a powerful example of how First Nations are investing in tourism businesses to significantly expand capacity, creating year-round employment, increased revenue, and provide new training opportunities for their people.

Thunderbird RV Park is a community-owned, on-reserve business that has been profitably operated by Wei Wai Kum Nation at its picturesque seaside location in Campbell River for more than thirty years. Offering RV and camp sites and hosting extremely popular events like an annual fishing derby capped by a family barbecue complete with traditional dance and drumming by Wei Wai Kum performers, Thunderbird RV Park has a dedicated clientele—about 80 percent of whom return year after year.

But Wei Wai Kum leaders perceived strong signals—like having to turn away up to 30 RVs a day during high season, increasing inquiries about cottages, and comparatively low camping site revenue—that there was room for change. For Chief Councillor Bob Pollard, “The question became: Can Thunderbird do more for us?”

Wei Wai Kum’s cottages are 95 percent booked in the high season and were more than 50 percent booked in their first shoulder season.

After strategically analyzing the business, group brainstorming, and thorough business planning, the Nation decided upon an economic development initiative to invest in with Coast Funds. It constructed four new cottages along the Campbell River estuary, all sited for premium views, plus 18 new fully serviced RV sites. Onsite laundry and accessible shower facilities, power upgrades, and new landscaping also enhanced the Park. Wei Wai Kum carvers created art pieces designating each new cottage.

Results have already exceeded expectations. New RV sites have been snapped up by long-term clients. The luxurious cottages are about 95 percent booked in the high season, solidly booked over Christmas, and were more than 50 percent booked in their first shoulder season. “We were targeting July and August, but it turns out people are willing to rent cottages year-round,” marvels Pollard. Equally impressive, Thunderbird RV Park & Resort (as it’s now called) created 12 new year-round jobs, which are mostly held by Wei Wai Kum members—and more during the summer.

Pollard offers high praise for the creativity of Council members, Wei Wai Kum staff, and the Park’s hardworking, customer service-oriented management. Much wisdom was gained during the making of this success story—about moving up the tourism value chain, teamwork, and deciding whether a solid existing business should be left to “coast” or be strategically developed to really take off. Wei Wai Kum



leaders are happy to share this wisdom—and are doing just that in their new in-depth story, available online. **TS**

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT
WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA
AND SEARCH **THUNDERBIRD**.

ABOVE

Wei Wai Kum welcomes visitors from around the world to Campbell River and their new cottages situated along the estuary on Tye Spit.

PHOTO BY
Coast Funds



Old Massett Village Council Transforms A Haida Village Site

On the site of an important Haida village on the northeast tip of Haida Gwaii, Old Massett Village Council has launched a promising venture in cultural revitalization and economic development: Hiellen Longhouse Village.

ABOVE

Hiellen Longhouse Village, located on North Beach at the top end of beautiful Haida Gwaii, comprises seven cabins and a longhouse that is available for groups.

PHOTO BY
Jason Shafto

ON THE VERY NORTHEAST TIP OF HAIDA GWAII, in the homelands of the **Haida** people, the site of the historic village of Tlielang Hiellen has been transformed into a new community-owned tourism business—where visitors connect with nature and leave with a stronger appreciation of Haida culture. “Signing the Reconciliation Protocol with the Province of BC was a huge feat,” affirmed CHN President Peter Lantin. “It took a lot of work to get to that point, but everything that came after—building a robust plan and a framework for how to implement the protocol—has been a monumental task, and is still ongoing.”

Capitalizing on increasing demand for accommodation, Haida Gwaii’s recognition around the world, and visitors seeking to experience Haida culture, Old Massett Village Council established the **Hiellen Longhouse Village**. This new business is comprised of seven individually rentable cabins and a 10-room lodge, all styled as traditional Haida longhouses. Set in the forest near Taaw Tow Hill and North Beach, the longhouses are largely off-the-grid.

Old Massett Village Council have shared their story on www.coastfunds.ca, introducing Patricia Moore, the community’s economic development planner who wrote the Village’s business plan and oversaw its completion. She describes how the project helped create a team of newly qualified carpenters on Haida Gwaii—who went on to launch another new business—and create permanent employment in this

beautiful, remote location. Moore also shares how the Council dealt with challenges like remoteness, ensuring operations are low impact, managing training costs, and how this new business fits into a larger tourism infrastructure plan.

“Hiellen Longhouse Village wasn’t built just to make a profit,” explains Moore. “It was about jobs, building tourism infrastructure, and supporting people from Old Massett that want to create their own employment, offering new services.”

Now fully operational, with cabins that are typically 70 to 90 percent booked months in advance, Hiellen Longhouse Village has surprised its planners. Younger, ecotourism-focused “independent travellers” from off-island were expected to be the mainstay of the business, but in fact they’re just 30 percent of visitors. It’s mostly patronized by Haida Gwaii residents and their family members; about half of these are Haida people.

Hiellen Longhouse Village has also become a focal point for cultural revitalization events—like Gathering of Nations events, attended by about 200 Indigenous youth; rehearsals for filming *The Edge of the Knife*: the first feature-length film shot entirely in the Haida language; and traditional-foods

harvesting such as razor clams by Haida citizens.

“Local guests really enjoy being able to be out on the land, in what was traditionally a fish camp. They can walk out the door and go clam digging,” says Moore. Although not a fan of camping, Moore is smitten by the cozy wood-heated warmth of a Hiellen Village longhouse, its fresh wood scent, and the firepits outside which tend to bring people together—as that village site has for thousands of years.

“It feels like you’re in a village—a little community. That’s what I get out of it. It’s kind of magical.” **TS**



Patricia Moore.
COURTESY OF
Old Massett Village Council

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT
WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA
AND SEARCH **HIELLEN**.

Hiellen Longhouse Village wasn’t built just to make profit. It was about jobs, building tourism infrastructure, and supporting people from Old Massett that want to create their own employment.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING: CREATING FAMILY- SUPPORTING JOBS

Just as Wei Wai Kum and Old Massett Village Council have highlighted in their stories, First Nations across the Great Bear Rainforest are creating new employment opportunities that enable people to remain in their remotely-located home communities with family-supporting income levels.

Since 2008, **First Nations have created 767 permanent new jobs** through projects they've invested in with Coast Funds.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA
AND SEARCH **JOB CREATION**.



Manufacturing
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In less than ten years, **First Nations** have created employment for more than 10% of their working-age community members through Coast Funds supported projects.

ABOVE
Raising of a Haida-style longhouse frame, built from locally sourced lumber at Hiellen Longhouse Village.
COURTESY OF
Old Massett Village Council



COAST FUNDS

Inspiring stories are unfolding in the
Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.

FIND OUT MORE AT:

coastfunds.ca