

TALKING STICK

A GREAT BEAR
RAINFOREST
PUBLICATION



Haida Nation Supports Cultural Rediscovery Through Youth Camps

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations Steward Territories with Guardian Watchmen Program

Community Well-Being: **Investing to Diversify Coastal Economies**

WINTER 2019

Updates from Coast Funds

Welcome to the winter 2019 edition of Talking Stick, a magazine that showcases the stewardship, conservation science, and sustainable development initiatives led by First Nations throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.

This issue features two projects that **reconnect First Nations with their culture by renewing relationships with the lands and waters of their territories**. On Haida Gwaii, the **Haida Nation** has developed culture camps that unite youth with the cultural practices, values, and histories of their ancestors. On north Vancouver Island, the **Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations** have developed a Guardian Watchmen program to strengthen the Nations' stewardship practices and cultural connections.

You can **find full versions of these stories online at coastfunds.ca** along with in-depth interviews, community well-being outcomes, and ways to connect directly with the individuals who develop and lead these initiatives.

Through projects like the two featured here, **First Nations are leading the diversification of coastal economies**. Both the Haida culture camps and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Guardian program contribute

to the conservation economy through job creation, new investment, workforce development, and cultural revitalization.

December 2018 marks the retirement of Merv Child from the Coast Funds board of directors. Merv was one of the first directors on the board when Coast Funds was established, and served as board chair between 2010 and 2018. Over these years, Merv's thoughtful leadership and tireless dedication have helped to establish Coast Funds as one of the world's leading models of Indigenous-led conservation finance.

We are very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Merv, and for his efforts to ensure a smooth leadership transition to our new board chair, Huux (Percy Crosby). Our thanks to both Merv and Percy for their service to this organization and to the First Nations we support.

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

Darcy Dobell
Communications Committee Chair

Brodie Guy
Executive Director

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WINTER 2019
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COVER
Haida youth paddle out from
Swan Bay Rediscovery Camp.
PHOTO COURTESY
Swan Bay Rediscovery

OPPOSITE PAGE
Weaving is one of the many skills taught
at the Haida culture camps at 'Laanaa
DaaGang.nga and T'aalan St'ang.
PHOTO COURTESY
Swan Bay Rediscovery



Supporting Stewardship through Cultural Rediscovery on Haida Gwaii

Since 1978, over 2000 Haida and non-Haida youth have participated in culture camps at 'Laanaa DaaGang.nga (Swan Bay) and T'aalan Stl'ang (Lepas Bay). The camps are revitalizing Haida culture, and creating a new generation of leaders to care for and sustain the lands and waters of Haida Gwaii.

Forty years ago, the Haida Nation set out to reconnect youth with Haida culture after two centuries of colonization cleaved many citizens from their culture. In 1978, the Nation created the first Rediscovery camp at T'aalan Stl'ang in the Duu Guusd Haida Heritage Site. The camp has served as a blueprint for 34 camps across the globe that unite young people with the cultural practices, values, and histories of their ancestors.



Today, over 2000 Haida and non-Haida youth have attended multi-day culture camps on Haida Gwaii at T'aalan Stl'ang (Lepas Bay) and 'Laanaa DaaGang.nga (Swan Bay). The camps are a place free of distraction where young people gain a set of skills, based in Haida values, that will support them throughout their lives.

"They get a rounded education," says Xiihliikingang (April Churchill), who has managed the Swan Bay Rediscovery program for four years. Situated in the heart of Gwaii Haanas, the camp seeks to connect participants with different professionals who work in the area, including archeologists, scientists, and the Haida Gwaii Watchmen. From these experts they learn introductory archeology, ethno-botany, and beach biology.

The program is similar on the north end of Haida Gwaii: "The kids learn about the culture and the land," says Xitwan Jadaa (Rosemary Hart), a member of the steering committee for the T'aalan Stl'ang Rediscovery Camp. Activities include visiting the triple mortuary pole in K'yuusda village to learn about Haida heritage and the impacts of colonization, receiving Haida language lessons, harvesting and preparing food, and hiking along the wild, wet coast.

"The Haida people are the Haida people because of the land and the sea around us," says Xiihliikingang (April Churchill). "We are a product of it—we are a part of it and we are connected to it. If we don't protect it, there won't be an 'us' anymore."

The camps' connection to the well-being of Haida Gwaii is undeniable, because stewardship is at the core of Haida values like yahguudanga (respect for everything) and gina 'waadluuxan gud ad kwagid (everything depends on everything else).

The cultural camps are revitalizing Haida culture and creating the next generation of Haida leaders who understand how to care for and sustain the lands and waters of Haida Gwaii, as the Elders did before them.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT [COASTFUNDS.CA](https://coastfunds.ca) AND SEARCH **HAIDA CULTURE CAMPS.**

"The Haida people are the Haida people because of the land and the sea around us. We are a product of it—we are a part of it and we are connected to it. If we don't protect it, there won't be an 'us' anymore."

ABOVE

Youth in 'Laanaa DaaGang.nga (Swan Bay) sing the supper song in preparation for dinner. Revitalizing language through song and daily vocabulary is a vital part of the Rediscovery programs.

PHOTO COURTESY

Swan Bay Rediscovery



Return to the Homelands: Establishing the Gwa'sala- 'Nakwaxda'xw Guardian Watchmen Program

After a forced relocation separated the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations from their homelands, the creation of a Guardian Watchmen program is helping strengthen the Nations' stewardship practices and cultural connections.

ABOVE

The shell middens at Ba'as (Blunden Harbour) where 'Nakwaxda'xw members sustainably stewarded their territories for millennia.

PHOTO BY
Brodie Guy

We are one with the land and sea we own,” states the guiding principle of Oweetna-kula, a concept that has directed Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations’ relationship to their territories since time immemorial.

When a forced relocation removed the Nations from their homelands in 1964, that sacred connection was broken. Third-party development and resource extraction quickly expanded in the region. Logging, tourism, and aquaculture operations were authorized by the provincial government with few benefits returning to the community.

Decades later, when Coast Funds was created to support stewardship in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii, the Nations arranged conservation finance to create a Guardian Watchmen program and reconnect to their territories.

Increased presence and monitoring capabilities in the homelands had

“We do not have anyone there at our homelands to verify that we are the owners of the land, and that we did not relinquish our rights or title to this land, and will not now or in the future.”

been a priority for several decades and Elders suggested these goals could be achieved through the Guardian program.

“We do not have anyone there at our homelands to verify that we are the owners of the land, and that we did not relinquish our rights or title to this land, and will not now or in the future,” one Elder was anonymously quoted in a consultation report during planning stages.

Today, the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Guardians play an integral role in stewarding the natural and cultural resources of their lands and waters while supporting community members to revive a relationship with their homelands.

The Guardians monitor recreational and commercial activities in the homelands, and play an important role in protecting and researching the species of their territories.

In recent years, the Guardians’ work has expanded to include a wide variety of research projects aimed at protecting valuable fish and wildlife resources for future generations.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT
COASTFUNDS.CA AND
[SEARCH GNN GUARDIANS](#)



LEFT
Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Guardians
Leslie Walkus (L) and Ethan Shaw (R)
at a 2013 Guardian Watchmen gathering.
PHOTO BY
Scott Rehmus

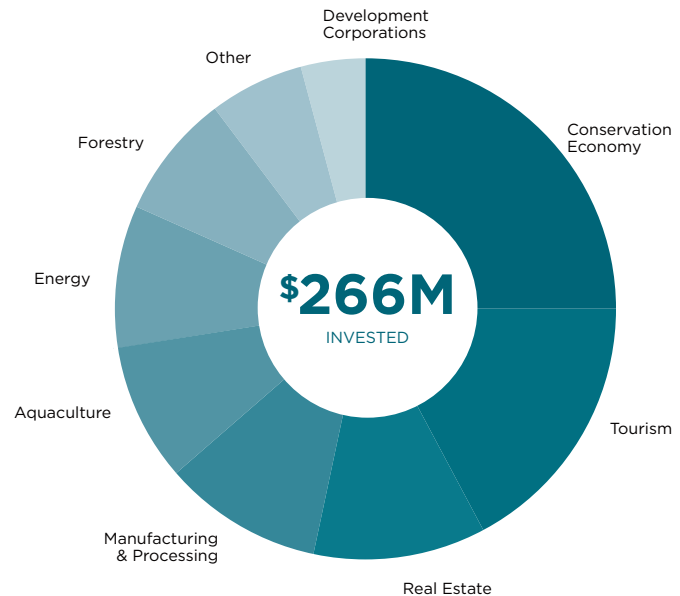
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING: Investing to Diversify Coastal Economies

First Nations in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii are leading the revitalization of their economies and ensuring resilience through diversification. With support from Coast Funds, as well as partnerships and leveraged investments, **First Nations have today invested over \$266 million into the diversification of their economies.**

By investing in a range of economic sectors—including tourism, aquaculture, forestry, and manufacturing—First Nations are strengthening their economies and reducing community reliance on single industries. This new diversification is helping to build a resilient coastal economy.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT COASTFUNDS.CA
AND SEARCH **COMMUNITY WELL-BEING.**

INVESTING TO DIVERSIFY BRITISH COLUMBIA'S COASTAL ECONOMY



THANK YOU TO MERV CHILD FOR 11 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP



After 11 years of dedicated service, Merv Child is retiring from Coast Funds' board of directors after having served the maximum terms allowable under the governing documents.

Child served as a director with Coast Funds since its inception and was appointed to board chair in 2010. During his tenure as chair, the board approved \$40.1 million toward economic development and \$29.7 million toward conservation initiatives led by First Nations.

Under his direction, Coast Funds made improvements to its communications with First Nations, conducted an organization-wide review, and underwent a leadership succession process. Child also played a major role in guiding the organization to achieve its mandate and provide the highest possible standards of support for First Nations. Thank you Merv for your dedication and energy!

OVERLEAF

Participants at a Haida Rediscovery Camp jog towards the ocean at T'aalan Stl'ang.

PHOTO COURTESY

Council of the Haida Nation



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