

Weaving
together the
threads of
conservation
and community
wellbeing



The Talking Stick

NEWSLETTER OF THE COAST OPPORTUNITY FUNDS

Introducing our new newsletter

It is my pleasure to launch this first issue of *The Talking Stick*, a newsletter for the members of the First Nations communities of the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii, with whom Coast Funds works on projects that will sustain long term business and employment opportunities and conservation outcomes.

We want to keep you informed about the wide range of projects that communities are working on, share your successes and achievements and our activities, challenges, progress and plans, and provide a forum for you to share your stories.

We know that not everyone will be familiar with the whole story of how Coast Funds was created and what we do. So, in every issue, we plan to include a section that recounts the vision and partnership between First Nations and Funders that resulted in the creation of this one-of-a-kind organization, with a unique mandate as the steward of the funds entrusted to us on behalf of the First Nations communities. We'll hear from some of the key people involved in the development of the Coast Funds vision and mandate.

Please don't hesitate to let us know how you like *The Talking Stick*, and what else we could do with it to make it more informative, interesting and useful. If you have ideas on where else we should distribute the newsletter, or you would like us to email it to you when it comes out, please contact us. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this issue.



Cindy Boyko, *Chair*
Coast Funds Communications Committee

WHAT'S INSIDE

Project Stories | About Coast Funds: Part 1 | News and More...

Project Stories

IN THE FOUR YEARS SINCE COAST FUNDS WAS CREATED, THE FIRST NATIONS HAVE EMBARKED ON A WIDE RANGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS, FROM THE CREATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS TO CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING. PROJECTS UNDER WAY INCLUDE SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE, FORESTRY, TOURISM BUSINESSES, INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ENERGY PLANNING, GUARDIAN WATCHMEN PROGRAMS AND MORE. WE PLAN TO PROFILE AT LEAST TWO PROJECTS IN EVERY ISSUE.



The Metlakatla Traditional Canoe

The Metlakatla First Nation's business activities include marine transportation. For a number of years the Metlakatla Development Corporation has conducted canoe tours for passengers on cruise ships docking in Prince Rupert.

The existing canoe was too small, showing signs of its age, and did not properly represent Metlakatla's Tsimshian culture and heritage. Metlakatla studied the market and knew there was capacity to expand its operation. In May 2009 they invested in the design and construction of the world's largest North Coast First Nation traditional-style Tsimshian canoe, and to prepare the necessary infrastructure for canoe tour operation.

The canoe is a replica, built with modern materials, but is in a traditional design and decorated with Tsimshian art. For the Metlakatla, this was not just about using a Coast Funds award to invest in a sustainable business, but for the right sustainable business, done the right way.

The capacity of the canoe, which was launched in April 2010, more than doubled from twenty to forty-five occupants, creating more employment in the business. The canoe is also linked to Metlakatla's broader tourism strategy, with opportunities for related activities like participating in traditional meals. There is interest being shown in using the canoe in films because it is unique.





Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network

The Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network, or CGWN, was created in 2005 by the Great Bear Initiative Society, an alliance of coastal First Nations on British Columbia's north and central coast and Haida Gwaii. First Nations Guardians are the eyes and ears of the First Nations in their territories, observing and monitoring natural resources and their use. They receive training at Northwest Community College and gather standardized information about the impacts of human activities such as tourism, logging, and commercial fishing, as well as collect scientific data.

The information is collected in the CGWN's database and helps to inform resource management decisions for each territory. This supports not only long term conservation efforts, but social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the First Nations communities. Through forums set up by the CGWN, Guardian Watchmen from each community are able to engage in dialogue, cooperate on projects and learn from each other.



Coast Funds supports this work in two ways: first, by providing core funding for Guardian Watchmen programs in seven communities; and second, by working to develop the CGWN into an effective and financially stable network. Prior to Coast Funds' involvement, it was very difficult for communities to establish long term, consistent funding for an office and staff.

Because Coast Funds' conservation funding is permanent, First Nations can build lasting capacity to steward their territories. By taking control of resource management, the First Nations can take control of the agenda and expect better long term outcomes for the territories and their communities.

COMING UP NEXT

In the next issue, we'll report on our September Board meeting with information about what's coming up for Coast Funds over the next year. We'll also highlight **We Wai Kai Seafood Corporation's** scallop aquaculture project and the **Heydon Bay Salmon Project**. Look out for **Part II of About Coast Funds**, highlighting our early development in more depth.

SEND US YOUR STORIES

If you have stories to share, project photos, or other interesting information, we want to know. We'll publish stories and photos on the website and in this newsletter whenever we can. You can send them to us any time at communications@coastfunds.ca.



About Coast Funds: Part I in a series

Coast Funds News

Our 2010 Annual Report was issued in June and can be read online at www.coastfunds.ca. Contact us for a print copy.

It is the Board's custom to hold a meeting in the Project Area every year. We will be holding our September meeting in We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum territory, touring some local projects. A report and photos will be in our next newsletter.

One of the things we will be talking about is our 2012 Strategic Plan. We plan to undertake a comprehensive review of our activities and outcomes to date. We want to talk with the people who have been involved, hear about challenges as well as achievements, and get your opinions and advice on our future direction. In the meantime, you can always check our website or contact the office for up to date information on all of our activities.

In the late 1990s, First Nations, environmental groups, private conservation foundations and the federal government began exploring ideas to meet conservation goals in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. Everyone agreed that it would only be through successful partnering and collaboration with First Nations communities that viable solutions would be found.

It was also recognized that the key to a durable and healthy environment in the Great Bear Rainforest is the maintenance of the link between the environment and the First Nations, and supporting a sustainable economy and healthy communities. The First Nations made it clear they did not want to rely on unsustainable government program funds to support those goals. Discussions culminated in the groundbreaking signing of historical land use agreements with the First Nations and the 2007 establishment of the \$120 million Coast Opportunity Funds, including both conservation and economic development funds allocated to each First Nation community.

Coast Funds is responsible for approving awards from the allocations to the First Nations for projects that meet the goals and criteria agreed to by the creators of the funds. By the end of August 2011, Coast Funds had approved economic development awards of \$18 million and conservation fund awards of \$5.8 million, and allocated conservation funds of \$9.35 million. Eighteen First Nations had utilized all or a portion of their economic development allocations, and twelve had utilized conservation allocations. Coast Funds now supports conservation management efforts in First Nations whose traditional territories in total cover over 80% of the Project Area and include more than 110 of the 126 conservancies.

In Part II, we'll describe in more detail the unique vision and mandate of Coast Funds, as stewards of the funds allocated to every First Nation to support durable and long-lasting economic and conservation outcomes.



Other interesting information

A recent article in Scientific American Magazine profiles Heiltsuk First Nation: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=first-nations-tribe>. You can read about Heiltsuk's ancient village of Luxvbalis at: <http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/have+uncovered+lost+village/5226599/story.html>. In July, National Geographic magazine featured the Great Bear Rainforest: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/08/canada-rainforest/barcott-text>; <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/08/kermode-bear/barcott-text>.

First Nations-owned and operated CFNR Classic Rock Radio broadcasts to every community on the Central and North Coast and Haida Gwaii and will feature Coast Funds' project stories over the coming year. In the meantime, tune in at 6pm weeknights with William Wesley highlighting First Nations culture, language and traditions and check for community event listings at <http://www.classicrockcfnr.ca/>.