

Weaving together
the threads of
conservation
and community
wellbeing



The Talking Stick

NEWSLETTER OF THE COAST OPPORTUNITY FUNDS

COAST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (CEDS) AND COAST CONSERVATION ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION FUND (CCEFF)

Celebrating New First Nations Companies

Welcome to the first issue of the *The Talking Stick* for 2016. On behalf of the Coast Funds board, I am thrilled to offer our heartfelt congratulations to First Nations and the Province of British Columbia on the historic agreement reached to secure ecological integrity and community well-being in the Great Bear Rainforest.

In addition to this remarkable milestone, we at Coast Funds have much to look forward to this year. Later this spring, Coast Funds will be reaching out to First Nations across the coast about the Board's plans for the economic development fund, as we look to invest the remaining balance of funds into communities. We look forward to your insights on this important decision this year.

Coast Funds will also launch a new online knowledge resource in 2016, featuring numerous stories from First Nations that capture the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from economic development and conservation projects across the coast. Look out for the online resource to be launched later this summer.

In this issue, we explore the achievements of new First Nations businesses. On Page 3, you can read about Taan Forest's mentoring initiatives to welcome Richard Jones as their new Manager and to recruit youth into the Haida Nation's sustainable forestry company. You can also read about the K'ómoks Nation's acquisition of a seafood processing plant to create a new business, Salish Seafoods, on page 6.

The creation of First Nations businesses like Salish Seafoods and Taan Forest are only two of many of many strategic investments First Nations have made with Coast Funds support. We've highlighted the total number of First Nations businesses created since inception of Coast Funds on page 5. More community results will be featured in Coast Funds' 2015 Annual Report and the new online knowledge resource.

You can download these stories from our website if you would like to share or reproduce them. If you would like more copies or you would like to be emailed this newsletter, please contact info@coastfunds.ca or call 1.888.864.5223



Darcy Dobell, Chair
Coast Funds Communications Committee

WHAT'S INSIDE Growing Local Capacity with the Business | Community Well-being in the Region | Investing in the Community: Salish Seafoods | Final Agreement Reached for BC's Great Bear Rainforest | Coast Fund News | Other News

A man wearing an orange hard hat and a high-visibility yellow and orange jacket stands in a forest, leaning against a large tree trunk. The background is filled with green foliage and other trees.

GROWING LOCAL CAPACITY WITH THE BUSINESS

The Haida Nation Supports Skills
Development as Taan Forest Expands

**"HAIDA GWAIH IS SUCH A CLOSE-
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RICHARD JONES, MANAGER, TAAN FOREST

Project Stories

SINCE COAST FUNDS WAS CREATED, THE PARTICIPATING FIRST NATIONS HAVE EMBARKED ON A WIDE RANGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS, FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION CREATION TO CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING. PROJECTS UNDER WAY INCLUDE FORESTRY, FISH PROCESSING, TOURISM BUSINESSES AND ACCOMMODATION, INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND MORE.

"A HUGE CONCERN FOR TAAN IS HOW WE HELP IN THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE HAIDA GWAII ISLANDS."

BOB BRASH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE HAIDA ENTERPRISE CORPORATION.

Photo opposite: Richard Jones, Manager, Taan Forest.

Cover photo: An ancient Haida gyaagang (monumental pole) at Sgaang Gwaay's ancient Haida village of Nang Sdins Llnagaay (He Who Is Two Village), Gwaii Haanas National Park, Haida Gwaii by Brodie Guy.

"TAAN STARTED OFF FROM A NEGOTIATION THAT HAPPENED BETWEEN THE PROVINCE AND THE HAIDA NATION," EXPLAINS BOB BRASH. "THERE WAS A PARTICULAR FOREST TENURE THAT EVERYBODY WAS TARGETING, AND EVENTUALLY IT WAS BOUGHT BY THE HAIDA NATION."

With the purchase of this tenure in 2009, the Haida Nation invested in the creation of its own forestry company, Taan Forest. This strategic decision ensured that the Haida Nation's values are reflected in forestry operations on Haida Gwaii, such as adherence to strict ecosystem-based management standards.

By 2011, Taan and the Haida Nation owned two tenures with a potential harvest level of 460,000 m³—making it an immediate player in the coastal forest industry.

In addition to enforcing sustainable forestry on Haida Gwaii, Taan's operations also support the well-being of Haida Gwaii's communities. The business has a mandate from the Haida Nation to support the socio-economic well-being of local residents.

"A huge concern for Taan is how we help in the social well-being of the Haida Gwaii islands," says Brash, Chief Executive Officer of Haida Enterprise Corporation, Taan's parent company. "That means job creation and job security is a priority, and creating as many local jobs as possible and training locals."

To support this effort, Taan aims to recruit and train locals for its forestry operations. Through mentorship opportunities and training programs, Taan supports its employees to grow with the business, including the Manager, Richard Jones, who was promoted to his position in September 2015.

Keeping the Benefits of Business on Haida Gwaii

Taan wants to ensure that the actual residents of Haida Gwaii see the benefit of its operations. Other logging companies will often hire contractors from outside of Haida Gwaii to fill positions. When a job finishes, these contractors then leave the island and take the revenue with them.

"We hire contractors that support employing locals," explains Richard Jones. "When the employment stays here, the benefit stays here, and through the training provided we are building a local pool of knowledgeable contractors and workers."

About half of Taan's staff are Haida Nation members, which Taan actively tries to recruit and train. It is important to note, however, that Taan takes an "island-driven" model to hiring. "Haida Gwaii is such a close-knit community, that our focus is really on training locals—both Haida members and non-Haida members," says Jones. "When we keep employment local, everybody here benefits."

This socio-economic mandate also means that the company is more invested in the well-being of its employees. "We look at things with a different lens than other forest companies," explains Brash. "When the market conditions go down, other forestry companies will curtail their operations a bit and lay off staff. Taan does that far less eagerly. We try to keep our staff employed and buffer them from the ups and downs of the industry. Even if the market is down for a bit, we will keep operations going and break even so that our staff can continue to support their families."

**"WE DEFINITELY IMPACT THE
STABILITY OF HAIDA GWAII'S
ECONOMY—WE'RE A STEADYING
INFLUENCE"**

**BOB BRASH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
OF HAIDA ENTERPRISE CORPORATION**

This stability helps the whole community in the remote, forestry-dependant region of British Columbia. "We definitely impact the stability of Haida Gwaii's economy—we're a steadying influence," says Brash.

Building the Capacity of Local Workers

"There is a challenge that we face to find local people with the appropriate skills sets to do some of the technical jobs required," says Brash. For a solution, Taan works closely with the Haida Nation to provide training. "We work with the Council of the Haida Nation to come up with skills and courses to prepare people for the work force here."

Once employed, the Haida Nation works to further develop employees of its businesses through various training programs. "Just recently we had a manager's supervising skills course offered to various staff," says Brash. "Once people are under the umbrella of our company, we try to improve their skill sets. We invest in people to get them to become better employees, so they can grow with us."

Richard Jones, who is a Haida member, is an example of this growth. Now the Manager of Taan, Jones worked his way up from entry positions in the logging industry. "When I started at 18, I didn't have any professional background in the industry," he explains. "I started in an entry level position a month out of school, and worked my way through positions with more responsibility."

After many years in the industry, Jones eventually went to work for Taan when it was created. "When I started at Taan, I was contract supervisor, but I was mentored into increasingly higher management positions," says Jones. "Now I am the Manager of a forestry business."

This approach to staff development continues as Taan continues to grow. "There were only a few staff at Taan when I first started, and it was pretty small," says Jones. "There are about 17 staff members now."

Bringing Youth on Board

A challenge to strengthening local employment on Haida Gwaii is encouraging youth to work in the forestry industry, and one Taan is facing head-on.

"Mentoring youth to be in the sector is something we strongly support," says Jones. "My own son got involved in logging by taking a junior engineer program offered by the Haida Nation."

Programs like these encourage young people's interest in the sector and help foster the next generation of local loggers on the island. "We recently hired three young people that went through the program, who are all from Haida Gwaii. They have taken all the training required—including the Cultural Features Identification training we do with the Heritage and Natural Resource Department, and in the next few days we will be processing the cut blocks they've engineered."

The process of mentoring youth is a rewarding one. "It's pretty exciting to see these young guys who have been brought up from a point where they would have been just tagging along to learn a few things to where

they are engineering cut blocks up to the environmental standards of the Haida Nation," says Jones. "It's really great to see that development."

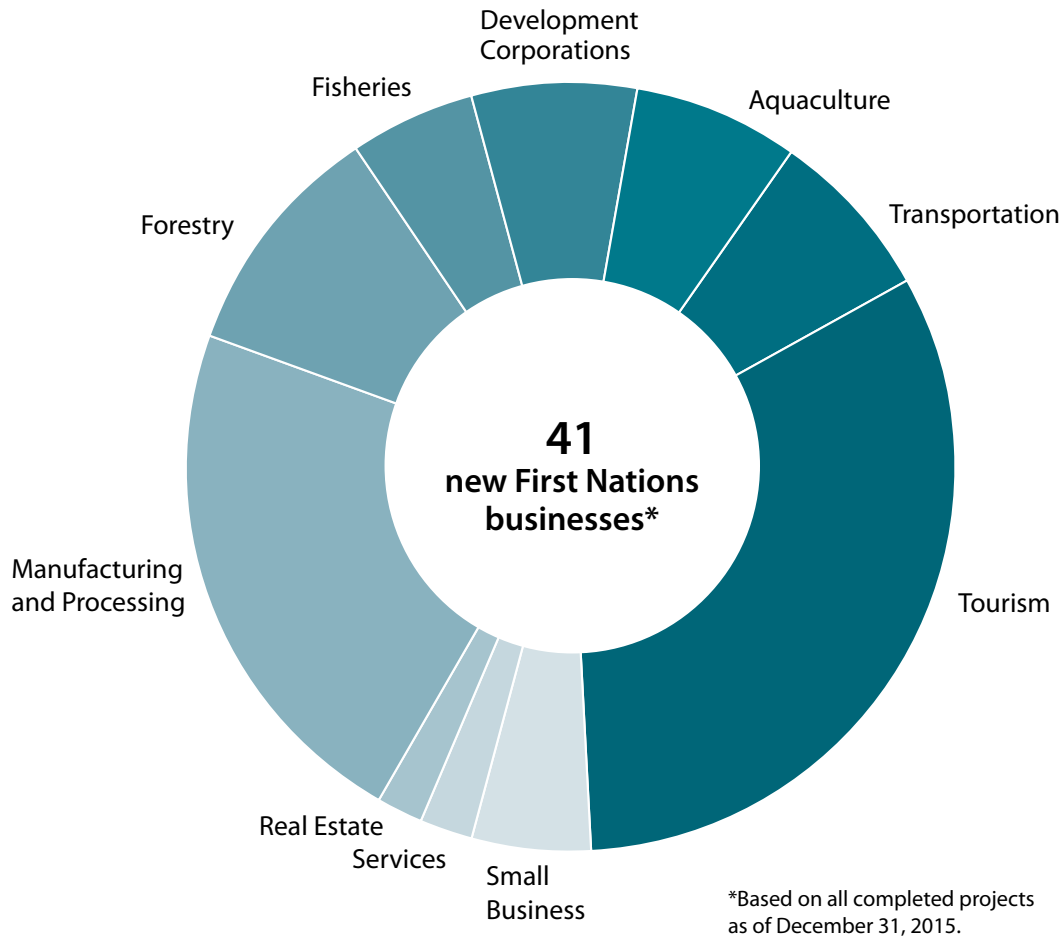
Taan Forest products.



Taan forester at work.

Community Well-Being in the Region

First Nations are investing in economic development and conservation initiatives to strengthen community well-being in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. In each *Talking Stick*, we will feature some of the many economic, social, cultural, and environmental outcomes of these strategic investments that have been supported by Coast Funds.



Creating First Nations Businesses

First Nations are creating new and acquiring existing businesses to increase their participation in the regional economy.

First Nations have acquired or created 41 new businesses with funding from Coast Funds. Investment in the start-up of these new businesses has been across a range of sectors, including tourism, manufacturing and processing, forestry, aquaculture, transportation, and more. Three new non-profit organizations have also been established with funding since 2008.

First Nations are acquiring and creating businesses to ensure they have access to the revenue produced from resources in their territories and that they are well positioned to shape the regional economy, making long-term decisions for the benefit of community members. First Nations businesses create unique employment and training opportunities for community members, such as using their knowledge of coastal territories and cultural traditions as tourism guides.

Investing in the Community: Salish Seafoods

"WE'VE CREATED A DOZEN NEW JOBS IN THE VALLEY THAT WOULD HAVE LEFT OUR COMMUNITY OTHERWISE, AND ALL OF THE DOLLARS EARNED WITH THEM. WE ARE SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH THIS ECONOMIC VENTURE."

ROBERT EVERSON, K'ÓMOKS NATION CHIEF COUNCILLOR.



Salish Seafoods retail store in Comox.

When First Nations own and invest in a business in a community that they live in, all of the dollars made and jobs created stay within that community," observes Robert Everson, K'ómoks Nation Chief Councillor. The mentality to support the local economy is part of the reasoning for the K'ómoks Nation's investment in Salish Seafoods.

"We primarily employ Comox Valley residents," confirms Everson. "We've created a dozen new jobs in the valley that would have left our community otherwise, and all of the dollars earned with them. We are supporting families through this economic venture."

This venture was possible through an investment in a processing plant that enabled K'ómoks Nation to expand an existing business, create local job opportunities and produce delicious seafood products.

Due Diligence for a Strong Growth Strategy

K'ómoks Nation is based in their traditional territory of the Comox Valley, where they have successfully owned and operated an aquaculture company, Pentlatch Seafoods, for over 10 years.

In 2012, management at the K'ómoks Nation identified an opportunity to use this business as the foundation for further growth and aimed to increase its revenue and products by expanding it into Salish Seafoods.

"We already had tenures for unprocessed clams and oysters that we were bringing to market through Pentlatch Seafoods," explains Robert Everson, Chief Councillor of the K'ómoks Nation.

This meant the raw product grown at the Nation-owned tenures was sold in bulk to processors, rather than directly to customers.

"Our economic development corporation envisioned expanding our involvement so that we were taking out the middle man. They wanted us to do our own seafood processing and then deliver the finished product to the market ourselves," says Everson.

The expansion began by searching for potential locations to build a processing plant. "The original plan was to build our own facility," confirms Everson. "However, after our team did an extensive location search, they realized the requirements for a location to build and construct a new plant from scratch were very prohibitive."

The First Nation changed tactics, and began to look for an existing facility to purchase instead. "Once we realized the cost savings, we initiated a search along the coast for an existing facility with an owner that might be willing to sell, and found one." The results of this approach were better than expected:

"After doing a business analysis we realized that a processing plant that was already right here in the valley would mesh well with our existing seafood venture and would positively add to the business that we already had."

Transitioning to New Ownership and Expanding the Business

Once the facility was identified, K'ómoks went ahead with the purchase of the plant to create Salish Seafoods. "The processing facility was previously a family-owned businesses for 30 years," explains Melinda Knox, the Chief Executive Officer of the K'ómoks Economic Development Corporation (KEDC). KEDC is the parent company of all the Nation's businesses. "With the funding we received from Coast Funds, we were able to purchase this processing facility and turn it into Salish Seafoods, which is now wholly owned and operated by K'ómoks First Nation."

After moving forward with the purchase, K'ómoks Nation set out to transition the business from its family-owned roots to its full potential as a Nation-owned business. "It was a very comfy family business before," explains Knox. "They were doing just enough business to make a comfortable living, and employing about 14 people on a sort of part time basis."

K'ómoks Nation wanted to ramp up operations to generate increased revenues and employ more people. Part of this

process included expanding the facility to be able to process shellfish harvested from K'ómoks' Pentlach Seafood business, in addition to the fin fish the plant had been processing before. This meant a lot of initial work after the business changed hands. "There was a lot of extra hard work being put into it, to change all the assets and re-organize the company," says Knox. "We developed a retail store and renovated it, and really upgraded everything."

The results were worth it. "We wanted to bump up production and increase marketing," says Knox, "to make the business really well known and create opportunity for our members and growth for the Nation-owned venture." This effort has translated into increased profits and employment. "We retained all of the original employees and have hired even more. We now have 24," says Knox. "I think it's been a really excellent company for us and I don't think we would have been able to do it if it wasn't for Coast Funds."

The Importance of Building and Maintaining Relationships

Investing in partnerships and the local community has been a key part of Salish Seafoods' operations. It started from the very beginning, by establishing good rapport with the facility's previous owners, and extends to their employees and the local community. "We had a really good relationship with the previous family owners of the business, and kept that relationship through the transition," confirms Knox.

This eased the transition of the business, and ensured retention of all of the existing employees. It's an approach Knox recommends. "I think it is easier to take on an existing business that is already established than to start from the ground up, especially if you have a good working relationship with the previous owners. But you still have to make sure that you have a great product and that you're a good company—for your customers, employees, and fellow community members."

In return, building these relationships help build the business. "We participate in a lot of things, like the local Shellfish festival here, and we do a lot of donations to different community events that happen in the valley," says Knox. "We are a real player in our surrounding community. We do it to play our part, but it also gets word out there—everyone knows our products and what we do and who we are."



Salish Seafoods products.

Final Agreement Reached for BC's Great Bear Rainforest

On February 1, the BC government announced that a final agreement had been reached to protect the Great Bear Rainforest.

The Great Bear Rainforest is the largest remaining intact coastal rainforest in the world and sustains unique ecosystems and the rich cultures of First Nations communities who reside in it.

The agreement stipulates that 85% of the Great Bear Rainforest has been restricted from logging and the remaining areas must adhere to strict ecosystem-based management practices. It also recognizes First Nations in the region as co-decision makers of the area and commits to providing economic opportunities for communities.

This landmark achievement was made possible by over 20 years of negotiations between First Nations, environmental organizations, and the Province of British Columbia.



Pictured: Jens Wieting, Dallas Smith, Christy Clark, Steve Thompson, Chief Marilyn Slett, and Rick Jeffery celebrate the GBR agreement.



Mr. Dave Mannix, Coast Funds retired Executive Director.

COAST FUNDS NEWS

Join us in wishing Dave Mannix well on his retirement

Coast Funds' Executive Director, Dave Mannix, retired from his position in January. Dave joined Coast funds shortly after its inception, making many significant contributions over his eight years with the organization. We are very grateful for Dave's dedication to Coast Funds through the years and he will be missed. As we move forward, we have appointed Brodie Guy as Coast Funds' interim Executive Director. If you would like to wish Dave well, please contact us and our staff will get you in touch with him.

From all of Coast Funds' staff and board, we wish Dave well on his retirement!

OTHER NEWS

Ha-Ma-Yas Stewardship Network has a New Website

The Ha-Ma-Yas Stewardship Network has recently launched a new website: www.hamayas.com/

This network, supported by N̓anwak̓olas Council Society, promotes a regional approach to stewardship activity between its six member First Nations. The new website features stories of the monitoring, research, and capacity-building work being carried out in the member Nation's territories.

SEND US YOUR STORIES

If you have stories to share, project photos, ideas about Coast Funds projects and community activities, 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 meaghan@coastfunds.ca

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