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Weaving together  
the threads of  
conservation  
and community  
wellbeing



# The Talking Stick

NEWSLETTER OF THE COAST OPPORTUNITY FUNDS

## Telling the Stories of Coast Funds

Welcome to the second issue of *The Talking Stick*, the newsletter of Coast Opportunity Funds. In this issue we're delighted to be highlighting two more projects undertaken with Coast Funds allocations: Campbell River Indian Band's Heydon Bay Salmon Enumeration Project, and Homalco Nation's fish hatchery and wildlife tours.

Our September Board meeting was held in We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum territory, at beautiful Tsa-Kwa-Luten lodge at Cape Mudge on Quadra Island. While we were there we were able to take one of Homalco's bear viewing trips to Orford Bay, a wonderful opportunity to see a sustainable business in action that not only provides regional economic benefits but is contributing to Homalco's conservation and cultural goals. More information and photos are on page 3.

We all know how important it is never to forget where we come from, and believe that holds true for Coast Funds, too. Part II of our series about Coast Funds contains interviews with some of the people who were involved in the creation of the organization, giving their individual perspectives on the history and vision behind what would become Coast Funds as we know it today.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Talking Stick*, and on behalf of the Board of Coast Funds wish you all the best for 2012.



Cindy Boyko, Chair  
Coast Funds Communications Committee

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# 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 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION CREATION TO CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING. PROJECTS UNDER WAY INCLUDE SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE, FORESTRY, TOURISM BUSINESSES AND ACCOMMODATION, INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND MORE.



## Counting on Salmon The Heydon Bay Salmon Enumeration Project

"Campbell River Band wants to ensure that our future generations have fish for food and ceremonial purposes," says Campbell River Indian Band Councillor Tony Roberts Jr. "Our salmon enumeration activity on Heydon Creek is a vital part of that." Until 2009, however, that was easier said than done.

Since 1998, Campbell River Band had been working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) at Heydon Creek, 65 kilometres north of Campbell River. Using a salmon counting fence, the goal was for Heydon Creek to be a representative salmon indicator stream for the Johnstone Strait area, counting not only Sockeye, but Chum, Coho and pinks as well.

It is important to have that information in order to make planning decisions based on trends in fish production; but the enumeration crew were challenged by inconsistent funding, making it difficult to gather sufficient information year after year. "We needed to make sure we could collect data continually," says Roberts. "But without consistent funding, which was our situation until 2009, that just wasn't possible."

In 2009 Campbell River Band decided to

use its Coast Funds conservation fund allocation, a secure committed source of annual funding, to support the creation of a complete and consistent record of all salmon runs on Heydon Creek right through to the 2013 season. Its other partners have been DFO and the Living Rivers Trust Fund. The Band was already contributing its own funds to the project (and continues to do so).

The First Nation intends to utilize the data collected to develop a long term plan to enhance habitat and spawning channels in the area. Modification of the fence to allow for counting and tagging of juveniles heading out to sea, as well as adults, is a work in progress. "Our overall goal," says Roberts, "Is the restoration of balance to the ecosystem in the watershed. That's a very important priority."





Fisheries biologist Kelsey Campbell, who is a Band member, adds: "Our First Nation has been the steward of the Heydon Creek watershed for generations. With so much uncertainty around access to fisheries stocks, the Heydon Bay project represents an opportunity for a diverse group of organizations to work together towards realizing a worthwhile goal that will result in real benefits to the environment and our community."

Part of the balancing act is ensuring there are enough young people like Kelsey involved in carrying on the work into the future. Tony Roberts says: "One of our key goals has also been to build capacity within the First Nation in fisheries management. We would like to see our youth take an interest in fish management and production. Ultimately, we hope we will see more of our youth work towards becoming fisheries biologists as well. After all, this is all about our future generations."



## Bringing Home the Bears

### Homalco First Nation's Orford Fish Hatchery and Wildlife Tours

Photos by Neil Philcox



Surrounded by the dramatic scenery of the Orford River Valley on Bute Inlet, Homalco tour guides are telling visitors from all over the world about the history and culture of the First Nation while they watch fat, glossy bears feeding on wild salmon in the sunlit river. The tourists are completely rapt in the scene, mesmerized by the confidence and pride in the voices and faces of their young guides. "You can really see the pride as they recount our stories," says Homalco Councillor Alison Trenholm happily. "It makes the tours such a rich experience for everyone."

"The Orford River Valley is right in the heart of Homalco's traditional territory," adds Homalco First Nation Councillor Bill Blaney. "For our young people to be able to work as tour guides there is very important. It's reconnecting them with our culture at the same time as it

is educating visitors about our history and our connections to this place. It's really making a difference."

The success of Homalco's ecotourism venture in the Orford Valley is all about connections. It's also the result of a steadfast vision and years of hard work. By the 1980s, years of heavy resource extraction in the Orford River watershed had taken a heavy environmental toll. Wild salmon stocks were declining rapidly and the bears that depended on them for food were starting to vanish. That's when Homalco Chief Richard Harry stepped in, establishing a fish hatchery on the river with the help of private funding and support from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. "If it hadn't been for that intervention," believes Shawn O'Connor, Homalco's economic development consultant, "there would be no salmon on the Orford River today."

As production from the fish hatchery relieved pressure on the wild salmon population in the river, the local bear population became more active and



started to regain strength. Initiating bear watching tours as an economic development initiative integrated into fishery conservation regime was a logical next step.

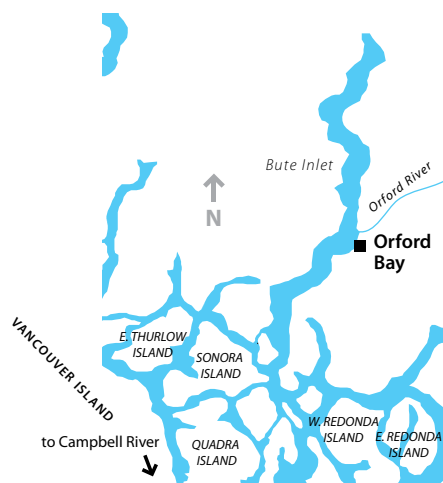
Homalco Councillor Mary-Ann Enevoldsen is happy about the environmental and economic benefits, but also because of what has been regained culturally. "You can't separate those three things in a place like Orford," says Enevoldsen. "Without the fish hatchery, we wouldn't have the bears returning to eat the salmon. Without the bears, we don't have the tourism business. The business is helping grow capacity, create employment for our youth, build their confidence to work in other tourism businesses, and be proud of their heritage." Visitors, says Enevoldsen, are as fascinated to learn about Homalco culture as they are to see the bears. "We hear from them that they really like to hear the First Nations perspective on the story of this place."

Their investment partners have been very important to their success, says Alison Trenholm. Homalco has obtained funding from the Coast Sustainability Trust and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, among others,

matching it with their own funds and project funding from their Coast Funds allocation. "The support from Coast Funds as we've developed the project has been tremendous," adds Alison Trenholm. "Without that kind of support we would not have advanced this far so quickly. It's greatly appreciated."

To further its ecotourism business Homalco has developed regional partnerships with other tourism operators, lodges and businesses in the area, and has been supported with invaluable business advice and guide training from nearby Sonora Resort. These kinds of relationships are positive for everyone, says Bill Blaney, as Homalco's operations have also generated economic benefits for other tourism operators in the area. "They really respect what we're doing. It gives everyone a great sense of pride in our work," says Trenholm.

Homalco has ambitious plans to continue expanding its work with both the fish hatchery and the tourism business. "This is just the beginning," says Bill Blaney. "I think everything is possible for us now. It's in our hands to carry it forward into the future, and that's what we're going to do."





# A Unique Creation

Merv Child, Chair, Coast Opportunity Funds



"I've been a director of Coast Funds since it was created in 2007, and have been honoured to be the Chair since 2010. As we always tell people ask about us, we're a unique organization born out of mutual recognition by conservationists, First Nations governments, resource industries and governments alike that a sustainable economy for First Nations is vital to conservation efforts in the Central Coast, North Coast and Haida Gwaii areas of the Great Bear Rainforest of coastal British Columbia."

It was the excitement and challenge of being part of such a unique organization that led Child to say yes when he was asked to be on the Board. Child had been involved in the early discussions leading up to the creation of Coast Funds, as a representative of the eight First Nations of the Nanwakolas Council. "I knew it would be a lot of work, but I also thought it was very important to take up the opportunity to continue to share the perspectives of those First Nations with the other directors," says Child.

Like the rest of the Board, Child is a strong advocate of Coast Funds' core

values of accountability, integrity and consistency in decision-making, inclusiveness and a collaborative approach to working with the communities, and respect.

"When we were discussing how to design the structure of the organization, everyone shared a common goal that we did not want to create a program or something that looked like a government bureaucracy handling these funds. This money was invested exclusively for the use of the First Nations, the first time anything had been created like this here. Everyone involved agreed on strict accountability requirements in how the funds were to be utilized, but we also knew that we would need flexibility and a different approach," says Child. "Coast Funds needed to be an organization that works with the First Nations we serve as a partner that supports the realization of their goals and dreams for conservation and sustainable economic development, and I think that's what we've achieved. I'm proud to have been part of that process."

## About Coast Funds: Part II in a Series

As you read in Part I of this series, in the late 1990s, First Nations, environmental groups, private conservation foundations and the federal government began exploring innovative ideas to meet conservation goals in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii, and in particular how conservation funding could be attracted to the region to help protect it. A vision was developed to attract funding for conservation based on the agreement of the First Nations to help establish land areas under provincial government protected area status.

In Part II, read the reflections of some of the individuals involved in the earliest days of the work that led to the creation of Coast Funds.

### MORE COAST FUNDS HISTORY

A detailed history of the work and issues that led to the creation of Coast Funds is contained in "From Conflict to Collaboration: The Story of the Great Bear Rainforest," co-authored by Merran Smith and Art Sterritt, with contributions from Patrick Armstrong. It's available online at <http://forestethics.org/downloads/WWFpaper.pdf>.

You can also read federal and provincial government press releases outlining the governments' vision for Coast Funds and for coastal BC here:

[http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2005-2009/2007OTP0003-000046.htm#](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2007OTP0003-000046.htm#)

and here:

[http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2005-2009/2008AL0003-000167-Attachment1.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2008AL0003-000167-Attachment1.htm)

# The Business Case

Patrick Armstrong, President, Moresby Consulting



Photo by Moresby Consulting

"Leaders in the forestry industry supported the concept behind Coast Opportunity Funds," says Patrick Armstrong, "because the concept was sound. There was a solid business case for it. It really made sense."

A consultant specializing in strategic management of natural resources and environmental issues, Armstrong has represented the forestry industry in the Great Bear Rainforest for more than fifteen years and was at the table during the 1990s and early 2000s for discussions between coastal forestry companies, environmental groups,

and First Nations about how to resolve forestry and conservation conflicts in the region.

The forestry industry was providing jobs and revenue for local communities, but was also running up against increasingly strong advocacy for conservation of the unique environment of the Great Bear Rainforest. How could this special place be protected, without sacrificing the economic wellbeing of First Nations in the region?

"What everyone recognized was that if forests were going to be set aside and not logged, we needed to be cognizant of the economic consequences of that for First Nations communities, and address them in some way," says Armstrong. "We needed to replace that economic activity with something else. That's not as simple as saying eco-tourism will take its place—you need a systematic, sustainable approach. You need to introduce economic diversity. The approach has to work long term to place control and ownership of resources in the hands of First Nations."

The goal of the discussions was simple, says Armstrong: "Whatever mechanism was adopted to protect and conserve the land needed to be able to sustain and improve the economic, environmental and human wellbeing of First Nations communities at the same time." That goal, says Armstrong, is what led to the concept of conservation financing to support both conservation activities and sustainable economic activity at the same time. With the financial support of the federal and provincial governments and environmental groups, and the backing of the forestry industry, Coast Funds was born.

"It made sense," repeats Armstrong. "It still does. Not only would First Nations communities in the Great Bear Rainforest benefit, but you could also see the long term regional advantages. Healthy, economically stable communities enhance the business investment climate in any region. That's good for everyone in the business community."



# A Shared Vision

Ross McMillan, President and CEO, Tides Canada



"I see a real sense of ownership and pride in the people responsible for the creation of Coast Opportunity Funds," says Ross McMillan. "There were so many people coming at the task from a whole range of different perspectives—the First Nations communities and regional groups, environmental

groups, industry, governments. But everyone really did share the vision, and once that was understood it was remarkable how everyone got to work and how quickly a viable system to implement the vision was developed."

McMillan represented various philanthropic organizations in the discussion on how to finance conservation and sustainable economic development as a viable package, and helped design the system that ultimately became Coast Funds in 2007.

The shared vision, says McMillan, was that conservation activities and economic activity were two essential parts of a whole. "Even though two separate funds were created, one

for conservation management funded by the philanthropic organizations and one for economic development funded by governments, that separation was just because of regulatory restrictions on philanthropic funding. All the investors were always committed to the notion that it is the combination of both funds that is fundamental for success. It was Coast Funds as a whole that we all focused on."

Ensuring that they were not simply creating an inflexible bureaucracy was very important, says McMillan. "We really wanted to create a partner for the First Nations communities who would work with them to support their initiatives and be accountable to them as recipients of the funding, as well as to the investors in the funds."

Those investors also saw the creation of an organization like Coast Funds as a real opportunity to showcase a working model of the successful marriage of conservation activity with economic wellbeing in other parts of the world where environmental values and community self-sufficiency are threatened by unsustainable resource extraction and development. "If these other communities can see successful outcomes in the Great Bear Rainforest," says McMillan, "it will be very encouraging. That was always the vision. That's happening. I think we can all be proud of that."

## Other Interesting Information

Read about an innovative agreement between the province and five northern Vancouver Island First Nations on forestry, tourism and clean energy. The First Nations taking part in the new agreements are Tlowitsis, Mamalilikulla-Qwe'Qwa'Sot'Em, Da'naxda'xw Awaetlala, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw and K'omoks: <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Forestry+tourism+clean+energy+part+deal+with+First+Nations/5786476/story.html>.

You can also watch Coast Funds Director Merran Smith talk about the green energy future on TEDx Georgia Strait: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ooj3s9vIQI&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ooj3s9vIQI&feature=player_embedded).

## COAST FUNDS NEWS

Our Strategic Plan, that will cover our activities from 2012–2014, is now complete and available online at [www.coastfunds.ca](http://www.coastfunds.ca). As you may know, we plan to undertake a comprehensive review in 2012 of our activities and outcomes to date in anticipation of preparing our Strategic Plan for 2013–2015.

A summary of all the project awards to date is also on our website, under "Awards and Projects." Don't forget that you can always check our website or contact the office for up to date information on all of our activities.

# A Completely Different Approach to Conflict Resolution

Merran Smith, Director, Tides Canada Energy Initiative

Merran Smith was involved in the discussions between First Nations, environmental groups, the forestry industry and governments about how to protect the precious ecosystems represented by the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii when those discussions reached a level of intensity among the conflicting interests that earned the infamous title of “War in the Woods.”

“At a certain point, everyone realized it was up to us to find the solution—no one else was going to do it for us, and there was simply too much at stake not to work it out. In fact, I would say it was our responsibility to work it out, and we understood we had to do that.” Smith, who represented the environmental sector, recalls a “monumental shift” in the energy to a more positive outlook as everyone involved decided there had to be a way to not only protect the Great Bear Rainforest, but the rights and wellbeing of the people who live in and around it.

“The First Nations invited us to come to their communities and experience how they lived, to share a traditional meal and talk to the elders and youth about how it is to live in this unique region. It became clear to us very quickly after spending some time like that how important it was to support their desire to continue to take care of their homelands and have viable economies and healthy communities at the same time.”

Together with other sector representatives, including Patrick Armstrong, Ross McMillan, Merv Child and Art Sterritt of Coastal First Nations, Smith worked on ways to find both conservation and government funding to support those goals. “Art played a huge role in moving the idea forward, and doing things like taking potential donors to the fund out to see the region and help them understand the First Nations’ interests. That was vital work that made all the difference to our success.”

The outcome was the creation of Coast Opportunity Funds. “It was an enormously exciting moment. Everyone loved the vision—it was a completely different approach that was nothing like the traditional outcomes of conflict resolution, which are win/lose, or else divide up the assets so everyone gets a little piece of them. Neither of those outcomes was viable in this situation, which is why we came up with this new model.”

Smith describes the difference this way: “We moved beyond the limited vision of simply trying to find the balance between conservation of the environment and enough jobs for the communities, to creating a space for both to co-exist without compromise. With Coast Funds, the First Nations are investing in job creation hand-in-hand with conservation efforts.”

“It’s a very creative solution, and it shows that you can move from conflict to harmony if everyone pools their



ideas. No single sector could have come up with this idea on their own.” It was risky, as any new venture will always be. “But everyone was prepared to take the risk, and I think everyone—the First Nations, governments, the environmental groups—can be very proud of that, what has been achieved is inspirational.”

## COMING UP NEXT

In the next issue of the newsletter, we’ll highlight a couple more interesting projects. We will profile the work of the Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department, and Kitasoo’s Spirit Bear Adventures. See you in April!

## 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](mailto:communications@coastfunds.ca).