

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)

Chair's Message: Looking Ahead

Welcome to the first issue of *The Talking Stick* for 2015! They say time flies when you're having fun, and it certainly feels like yesterday when the very first *Talking Stick* was published. But it was more than three years ago, in September 2011. Looking back over previous issues, it has been an eventful and productive time.

Looking ahead, over the course of 2015 we will be starting to focus on what needs to be done as the economic development fund continues to be spent down and how we can best address the ongoing needs and goals of participating First Nations as the CEDS fund enters the "sunset" phase of its term. Our goal, as always, is to fulfil the purpose of CEDS expeditiously, effectively and responsibly.

Success, in these terms, is defined not merely by full uptake by the First Nations of the CEDS fund as quickly as possible, but by real results: sustainable projects that generate stable revenues and employment, and help build and maintain resilient Participating First Nation community economies throughout the region.

Of course, when Coast Funds eventually transitions to a post-CEDS organization, CCEFF must continue to be operated sustainably and cost-effectively and be positioned to meet the ongoing conservation requirements of the First Nations.

As we turn our minds to these important issues in our planning discussions this year, we will seek your insights before we make decisions on how to move forward to meet Coast Funds' strategic goals and objectives.

In the meantime, we continue to celebrate the efforts of First Nations putting their Coast Funds dollars to good work. In this issue of *The Talking Stick*, you'll read about Haisla's strategic commercial investments in Kitimat; a Nuxalk study of culturally driven forest management, utilization and values; and the acquisition of a water taxi by the Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis of Gilford Island. I hope you enjoy these stories!



Darcy Dobell, Chair
Coast Funds
Communications Committee

WHAT'S INSIDE Nuxalk Nation's Forestry Vision | Short Takes: Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis Water Taxi; Haisla invests in Kitimat | Coast Funds News

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.

Nuxalk Development Corporation
President and CEO, Randy Hart.



Seeing The Forest For The Trees:

NUXALK NATION SETS ITS VISION AND STRATEGIES FOR THE FOREST SECTOR

Communities face an amazingly complex set of challenges in the forest industry in BC today," observes Nuxalk Development Corporation President and CEO, Randy Hart. "So this work on forestry management we have been undertaking with UBC has been very beneficial."

In a packed Nuxalk community meeting hall in late 2013, students from the University of British Columbia's Department of Forest Resources Management delivered the results of nine applied research projects they had undertaken in Nuxalk territory over the summer. The goal of the research was two-fold: to help Nuxalk complete their vision and strategic plan for management of their forests and community forest licence, and to guide Nuxalk as they make decisions on forest-related matters, including collaboration with their neighbouring First Nations on various forestry strategies and economic development opportunities.



"Nuxalk are determined to move forward with an effective forestry strategy," explains Hart, "but until this work was done, opinion was divided as to what we should be doing. We needed a clear-headed, objective look at our approach to forestry management and the opportunities before us by someone with the kind of technical expertise that we don't have but that we really need in order to make good decisions. Now, with the work that these UBC students have done, we can have discussions within the community that are well-informed and make decisions based on this technical, objective knowledge and advice. It's been incredibly helpful."

With supervision from UBC Professor Gary Bull, technical support from FP Innovations (see Sidebar, page 4) and funding from Nuxalk's Coast Funds economic development allocation (matched by a contribution from Mitacs, a national, not-for-profit organization that designs and delivers research and training programs in Canada) the students looked at a variety of forestry management initiatives of potential interest to Nuxalk. We are very appreciative of our funding partners and for the collaborative effort of multiple organizations" says Hart. "We couldn't have contemplated completing this work without the assistance of Coast Funds, UBC, MITACS and FP Innovations."

The research projects included options for Nuxalk to manage their community forest in a way that incorporates traditional ecological as well as conventional forestry knowledge to achieve a balance of economic, social and environmental objectives. Other topics were energy production from forest biomass, sawdust products, essential oil manufacturing, high-value artisanal products and culturally desirable housing design and manufacturing.

"For the students," comments Professor Gary Bull, "this is wonderful work. The benefits go both ways. We're an applied science department, and this has been a way for the students to see how what they're learning applies in the real world and how their research tools can be used in practice, not just theory."

Photographs courtesy of Sean Pledger.

WE NEEDED A CLEAR-
HEADED, OBJECTIVE LOOK
AT OUR APPROACH TO
FORESTRY MANAGEMENT
AND THE OPPORTUNITIES
BEFORE US.



FOREST PRODUCT INNOVATIONS: A TECHNICAL HELPING HAND FOR FIRST NATIONS

"We're a support team for First Nations communities," says Dave McRae of FP Innovations. "We provide technical support, we connect First Nations to world-class forestry specialists, and we offer expertise and science to help support their vision, ideas and dreams."

FPI's work with Aboriginal communities is funded almost entirely by provincial and federal government grants. First Nations contribute ten percent of the cost of any program supplied. This year for the first time, says McRae, several of the major forestry companies are also chipping in with money.

"There are no strings attached to it, which is important," he says. "This is all about the First Nations making their own decisions about the role of forestry in their future, with no pressure or influence on those decisions. It's about what's in their vision and imagination. We supply the science and the technological information required to support that vision."

FP Innovations provides on-site assistance, workshops and seminars to help First Nations and their employees develop new products, solve production problems, increase productivity, reduce costs and maximise the value of their forest resource, all with the goal of long-term success in the forest sector.

What are the key issues for First Nations to be thinking about in terms of forest management in 2015? "Clearly they need to be considering how their land management and cultural goals connect with some of the contemporary issues affecting forestry right now, like carbon sequestration and GHG management, bioenergy, new product development, new product supply chains," responds UBC Professor Gary Bull, who has worked collaboratively with FP Innovations in First Nations communities across BC, including Nuxalk Nation. "They need to understand the markets and the trends. China's the big market right now, for example. Understanding the supply chain and how it works is key."

"The First Nation should also consider economic partnership opportunities with other organizations," continues Bull, "and try and encourage their young people to go to school and learn about forestry management, wood science and business. That will have multiple long term benefits. To reach better economies of scale, building relationships with other First Nations communities to gain the benefit of economic efficiencies by working together also makes a lot of sense."

First Nations also have a real opportunity in niche markets, says McRae, because they tend to be small-scale in operation and flexible enough to adjust to changing conditions and demand. They also have a cultural appeal that has a high dollar value attached to it—the Nuxalk carved door reproductions initiative, says Bull, is a good example of that.

"It was really wonderful to see the two-way interaction between the students and community members," adds Hart. "I think it was a real eye-opener for these young people starting their careers. They learned a great deal as well from the people here. They saw what it means to live in a small community and the realities involved, and the importance of the cultural context. As for the community members, they found the students interesting and real fun to have around as well. When they presented their findings at the community hall, it was packed. There were more than 100 people there, and the students were very well-received. It was a great experience for them, and for us."

The fact that the students had no agenda or economic incentive to reach any of their conclusions was very important, says Hart. "They were completely neutral and that means we can really trust the results and feel confident about what we're going to do with them."

Community consultation on the various project ideas is ongoing, says Hart, including the optimal approach to management of their community forest licence, but Nuxalk are moving ahead on several fronts in the meantime, including building six new houses in the community using lumber harvested from Nuxalk's own trees.

"We are also collaborating with the Coastal First Nations, Heiltsuk and Metlakatla on production of conifer oils for cosmetic use and other applications. We're hoping to be producing oil by this summer, and we have a buyer in Victoria already." That's exciting not only for the potential economic benefit but because conifer oil is a timber product that doesn't necessarily

require the cutting of trees. "It's a high-value product that can be harvested from pruned branches," explains Hart.

Two Nuxalk carvers will be attending Lower Mainland design schools to work on door panel designs that can be replicated on "computer numerically-controlled" machinery. The design is scanned into a CNC machine, which produces a replica to be finished by hand by the artist. This permits fast reproduction of a high-value product for which there is a strong market, says Hart.

"We bit off a lot, you know," he continues. "We really had our old way of thinking challenged. Where was the balance going to be between applying our traditional values to forestry management, and taking advantage of economic opportunities and thinking of the forest's non-timber values as well as the

lumber? Where do we want to be on that spectrum? All of this has helped us focus our vision and where we want to be in a very positive way."

"It's going to take several years for it all to come to fruition, of course," he concludes. "But we're already getting things under way, and that's thanks in large part to the work that the UBC students did. It's very exciting."

An article about the research projects entitled: "Culturally driven forest management, utilization and values: A Nuxalk First Nations case study," was published by The Forestry Chronicle in October 2014. For more information see <http://pubs.cif-ifc.org/doi/abs/10.5558/tfc2014-126> or contact Nuxalk Development Corporation at info@nndc.ca.

Short Takes

Gwa-yas-dums: Coming Back Home to Gilford Island

"We are a very small, remote community," says Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation band manager Jeneen Hunt. "Creating and operating our new water taxi business is going to be a huge asset to us in many ways."

About sixty members of the First Nation continue to live, as their ancestors did for thousands of years before them, in their traditional village of Gwa-yas-dums. It's not an easy place to get to. Located in a sheltered bay on the west side of Gilford Island, the nearest town of moderate size is Port McNeill on northern Vancouver Island, reached by boat over the turbulent waters of Johnstone Strait. But with the purchase of their new boat, the First Nation is hoping it is about to become much easier to travel to and from the community.

For the last five years, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis have been working on a "Come Back Home" plan to encourage the return of more of their members to the community. That requires housing, education, health and transportation amenities, and the creation of economic opportunities. Consistent with the plan, new homes have been built, the Big House has been renovated, a new dock installed, and a tourism plan developed to encourage visitors to come to the Big House and enjoy cultural tours, wildlife viewing and whale watching.

"Now with the water taxi, which in itself is going to provide employment for the operators, we can take advantage of the strong interest in visiting the area to create more job opportunities for members," says Hunt. "The boat isn't even finished yet but we're already getting inquiries for the 2015 season," she adds happily.



Gilford Bighouse.
Photo by Andrea Lyall.

Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis used a portion of its Coast Funds economic development fund allocation and a grant and loan from the Nuuchahnulth Economic Development Corporation to purchase the boat, which is currently still under construction by Daigle Marine and Welding in Campbell River. Hunt says that apart from tourism, the water taxi will fill several needs in the community, providing much-needed transportation for health and other social services. Contracts for garbage collection and transportation agreements with logging operators, BC Hydro, other government departments and private companies will also help round out revenues from the water taxi service for the First Nation.

This was the Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis's first application to the economic development fund, and Hunt emphasizes how helpful it was to discuss the concepts with Coast Funds staff before submitting the application. Hunt also offers this advice to anyone considering an initiative like this: "Get good expert advice, and plan carefully to ensure you have everything in place before you start. We did that and even though this was a learning process for us, we didn't hit any major roadblocks or anything challenging along the way."



The water taxi under construction at Daigle Welding and Marine in Campbell River.

Haisla invests in Kitimat

"When the Haisla Nation, the Province of British Columbia and the District of Kitimat came together in June last year for the signing of the sale and purchase agreement, everyone was there to celebrate," says Brendon Grant. "That tells the story very well of how collaborative the process was, and how much work had been done way ahead of time to build relationships and work with our partners and the broader community."

Grant, who is Haisla, acted in a financial advisory role to the Nation in negotiations to buy a large parcel of vacant land in downtown Kitimat from the provincial government, using part of Haisla's Coast Funds economic development allocation.

Grant was on-site last June to witness the successful culmination of four years of negotiations, and to listen to Haisla Chief Councillor Ellis Ross tell the enthusiastic crowd of Haisla members, Kitimat businesspeople and provincial government representatives: "This is an example of how things should be done. Today's agreement returns a key piece of Haisla traditional territory to the hands of the Haisla people. It is

our intent," concluded Ross to resounding applause, "to develop this land for the benefit of everyone in the Kitimat Valley—Haisla and non-Haisla alike."

A multimillion development on the land is planned, including three residential buildings, a hotel, new office space and a restaurant. Interest from various retailers and local industrial players is already high. Haisla are also excited, says Grant, about the extensive opportunities for employment and entrepreneurial activity, not only for Haisla people but for other local residents as well.

Inset: Haisla Chief Councillor Ellis Ross.

Below: Street view of proposed condominium sites.



"We're looking at between 20–30 permanent fulltime jobs for locals," he says. An equal number of temporary jobs will be created as construction proceeds, as well as part-time and seasonal work. "Employment is a very important aspect of this investment," he adds. "Training and certification programs will be undertaken in advance to give people the best chance of success."

With an investment of this size and nature, says Grant, business planning, and working constructively with permitting authorities like the Regional District are critical factors for long-term success. "You want to make sure the asset is feasible and going to provide the returns needed. Business models look at who your customers are going to be and what they will expect from you, which are both essential questions to consider. An organization's financial resources need to be ready to go when

the time is right and an experienced project manager is vital to get permits in place and ensure deadlines are met."

Perhaps most important of all is the collaborative aspect of the development, which is going to have a significant impact not only on downtown Kitimat, but on everyone who lives in the region. "I think Haisla's collaborative approach to working with everyone potentially affected by this, from Haisla community members, to business partners, to the District of Kitimat, has been key to our progress and success," reflects Grant.

"That's showing up now in the level of support for the development that Haisla is enjoying now," he concludes. "This entire process has created a great model for the future and I believe that will continue in a very positive way as Kitimat continues to develop."



Birds-eye view of Haisla Town Centre.

OTHER NEWS

'Namgis First Nation Kuterra product wins accolades

Congratulations to 'Namgis First Nation, whose Kuterra Land Raised Atlantic salmon, produced on Vancouver Island in a recirculating closed-containment aquaculture system, recently won a "Best Choice" top sustainability ranking in the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program. This ranking from the world's leading independent eco-ranking program also gives Kuterra salmon automatic approval for the Vancouver Aquarium's Ocean Wise program.

"We are delighted that the third-party assessment conducted by the Monterey Bay Aquarium has validated Kuterra operations as one of the most sustainable Atlantic salmon aquaculture operations globally," says Garry Ullstrom, Kuterra CEO. "Environmental sustainability is the goal at the heart of Kuterra's mission, and this ranking shows we're achieving that."



Online tool makes for easier access to valuable government data

In January the provincial government launched the BC Economic Atlas (accessible at www.economicatlas.jtst.gov.bc.ca/home.aspx), a free online tool providing economic development professionals and potential investors with access to information from multiple government sources, and the ability to link with third-party, open-source data.

The BCEA uses geographic co-ordinates to connect it to BC locations, allowing for the selection of various types of data that is important when making business investment decisions, identifying investment opportunities and undertaking business case analysis, including natural resource data such as land status, proximity to services and access to transportation, and economic data such as major projects inventory and employment and investment information.

Words of wisdom

from the 2015 Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur of the year, Kendal Netmaker, founder of Neechie Gear:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFzcEDG0n7s#t=39>

COAST FUNDS NEWS

New staff at Coast Funds

This month we welcome Meaghan Hume in the position of Client Services Coordinator. Meaghan formerly worked in international development, education, and leadership programming for First Nations youth. You can read more about Meaghan here:
www.coastfunds.ca/about-coast-opportunity-funds-staff.

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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 communications@coastfunds.ca

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