

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)

Making Progress

Since the last issue of *The Talking Stick*, which came out in February, Coast Funds released its 2014 Annual Report (you can read it online on our website at www.coastfunds.ca).

We awarded over \$5.5 million in conservation (CCEFF) funding—the highest annual amount approved for conservation funding since we began operations in 2007. We also awarded more than \$6.4 million in economic development (CEDS) funding. **The graph on page 8** shows the total amount of CEDS funding that has been approved and spent to date, and the amount left in the fund.

The combined amount of annual CCEFF and CEDS funding is the highest approved since our inception. This reflects the progress that has been made over the last year on a variety of fronts. We have built on our considerable organizational experience to develop streamlined application processes, a user-friendly outcome reporting system, and a shared evaluation framework to showcase the results of completed projects. In March, we updated our economic development awards policy to clarify eligibility for funding of economic infrastructure projects. You can read more about that under Coast Funds News **on page 8**.

Also in March, we awarded the 100th CCEFF project to Tlowitsis Nation. You can read about this conservation project **on page 6**. **On page 7**, we tell you about the great work that the Kitasoo/Xai'xais have been doing with respect to research into bear range and habitat in their territory.



Remember that you can download these stories, and archived newsletters and stories, from the Coast Funds website if you would like to share or reproduce them in your own publication or on your website. If you have suggestions for other places we should distribute the newsletter, if you would like more copies sent to your community, or if you would like it to be emailed to you whenever it comes out, **please contact info@coastfunds.ca or call 1.888.684.5223**. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Darcy Dobell, Chair
Coast Funds Communications Committee

WHAT'S INSIDE Where the Bears Are: Kitasoo/Xai'xais' bear hair sampling project | Short Takes: Tlowitsis: 100th CCEFF project; Kitselas: Land Use Planning | Coast Funds News



Where The Bears Are

KITASOO/XAI'XAIS HAVE PARTNERED WITH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHERS TO GATHER EVIDENCE OF THE EXPANSION OF GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT ON THE CENTRAL COAST.

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.

Bears are very important to Kitasoo/Xai'xais people, says Doug Neasloss. "They are not just wild animals. Bears are highly respected."

These magnificent creatures are part of the First Nation's stories and culture. "There are many cultural stories about bears among our people," says Neasloss, a Kitasoo/Xai'xais Councillor and Stewardship Director. "Some of the stories are about bears changing into humans and back again. So there's a lot of passion in the community to protect them from harm."

Bears are also important from an economic perspective: "Kitasoo/Xai'xais have invested heavily in ecotourism to support our community's economy," explains Neasloss. "We opened [Spirit Bear Lodge](#) in 2000, and now it is the second-largest employer in Klemtu. The community supported the investment," he adds, "because with 48% of our territory in protected areas, we needed a long-term sustainable industry here that meshed with that. Tourism meets those criteria—it's sustainable, non-extractive and consistent with community values for economic development."

A threat in the wilderness

Accessible only by boat or floatplane, the community of Klemtu is located on Swindle Island. Just south of Princess Royal Island on BC's north coast, it lies about half-way between Prince Rupert and the northern tip of Vancouver Island.

It's a remote and unspoiled landscape that lends itself perfectly to wildlife watching. Seeing the legendary white Spirit Bear is a highlight for guests at Spirit Bear Lodge,

and in recent years, tour guides have been seeing more and more grizzly bears on the islands in the area as well. But the bears—and by association, the tourism business—are under threat, says Neasloss, from trophy hunting.

“The Province still permits it in parts of our territory,” he explains. “That’s been having a huge impact on us. The bears change their behaviour when it’s hunting season in April, May and September. It really limits the number of bears we see. Tourism and hunting just don’t go together.”

Several years ago, Kitsoo/Xai’xais decided to take proactive steps to bring an end to trophy hunting and to protect a greater range of grizzly bear habitat. The problem, however, was that provincial maps indicated that there were no grizzly bears on the islands around Klemtu—despite Kitsoo/Xai’xais’ experience to the contrary.

“The provincial information was based on computer modelling by government scientists based in Victoria,” says Neasloss. “It was missing huge chunks of data and just wasn’t accurate. Our guides were seeing these bears out there, but the government maps were saying they were only on the mainland, not on the islands. So we needed to find a practical way to get our boots on the ground out there and get hard data to prove to the government that these bears are here so we could get the maps changed and the bears protected.”

Getting science involved

Kitsoo/Xai’xais turned to the University of Victoria and the [Raincoast Conservation Foundation](#), inviting them to collaborate with the First Nation in a research partnership project to be co-led by Neasloss and Raincoast Science Director and UVic Hakai-Raincoast Professor Dr. Chris Darimont.

Darimont had been working on grizzly bear population dynamics in the territory south of Kitsoo/Xai’xais since 2009, and since the late 1990s on other central coast wildlife. He was a logical choice to oversee the science. PhD student Christina Service would undertake the field work to collect research data, with the assistance of field technicians drawn from both the University of Victoria and from within the Klemtu community. With funding support from Coast Funds, Raincoast, the University of Victoria, [Tides Canada](#), and the [Hakai Institute](#), among others, they set to work in 2012.

“AS A FIRST NATIONS GOVERNMENT, WE’RE BEING PROACTIVE IN MAKING SURE WE KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR TERRITORY. USING LOCAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE COMBINED WITH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, WE’VE PROVED THAT THE GRIZZLY BEARS ARE MOVING FROM THE MAINLAND ONTO THE LARGE ISLANDS HERE. NOW WE CAN USE THAT DATA TO GO BACK TO THE TABLE WITH THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND SHAPE DECISION-MAKING ABOUT THE BEARS AND PROTECTION OF THEIR HABITAT. THAT’S HUGE.”

DOUG NEASLOSS, KITASOO/XAI’XAIS COUNCILLOR AND STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR

Chantal Pronteau at a hair snag



Hair snag with Spirit Bear hair



**"THIS WAS A GREAT
PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
CONVENTIONAL SCIENTIFIC
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KITASOO/XAI'XAIS PEOPLE
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**DR. CHRIS DARIMONT,
RAINCOAST SCIENCE
DIRECTOR AND UVIC HAKAI-
RAINCOAST PROFESSOR**

The research team utilized a passive DNA hair-snagging techniques for capturing bear data. Hair snags—basically, barbed wire corrals surrounding a scent pile irresistible to bears—catch a few tufts of hair from the animals in a non-invasive manner as they enter the corral. The hair provides scientists with valuable information about each bear that includes its species, sex and even its individual identity, as well as diet and genetic information.

More than 4600 samples have been collected in the last three years from 153 different black bears and—to no-one's surprise in Klemtu—from 44 grizzly bears. Thousands of images collected from infrared cameras set up in numerous locations on the islands verified the presence of grizzlies and other bears, as well as many other species including wolverines, cougars, and wolves.

The important role of local knowledge

"This was a great partnership," says Chris Darimont, "between conventional scientific approaches and community knowledge. We have hard scientific data that we have collected since 2012, but Kitasoo/Xai'xais people have been observing the bears for decades, and that is also information that's invaluable to this project."

Grizzlies were originally creatures of the mainland, not the islands around Klemtu. But many years ago Klemtu locals started seeing them more and more frequently on the islands. "That's a historical perspective that science simply can't bring to the table," says Darimont. Christina Service and her associates therefore conducted interviews with knowledgeable members of the community about their grizzly bear experiences on the islands, and documented the results scrupulously alongside the data gathered from the hair snags.

Community involvement key

"The community was completely involved with this project," says Doug Neasloss. "They helped shape the discussion about the process, and have seen all of the results. That's been a very good experience for everyone."

Neasloss says it was important to the community that the project helped build capacity among Kitasoo/Xai'xais people. A key goal was to train Klemtu community members, especially youth, in the research techniques being used. Throughout the 2014 research season, six Klemtu community members were employed as field technicians and skippers. These employees were given training in biological technician skills, including proficiency in data recording, sterile sampling procedures, remote camera deployment, and non-invasive research methods. "I think it's inspired a whole new generation of young people here who are now interested in science careers," Neasloss says.

It was a two-way street in terms of learning. The researchers, says Christina Service, also gained a great deal of knowledge from community members. Darimont notes: "My observation is that Christina and her associates traded scientific information for cultural knowledge on a very equal basis, with both sides learning a lot from each other."

It's a research partnership model that's unique, says Service and Neasloss. "Our community was fed up with researchers that would just come in to get what they needed to do their PhDs and leave again without leaving anything of value behind for Klemtu," says Neasloss. "This process was completely different."

Service affirms: "This is a very different model to the usual PhD research process. It was up to us to answer the community's questions and as researchers to add value to our work by spending time in the community to support training and relationship-

building and working with the youth. That made it logistically a little harder—we needed more time than a straight-up project might need, and had to wrangle logistics like organizing feasts and community meetings, and so on—but it was exceptionally rewarding, and made for a much better program overall.”

Taking the science to the policy table

The research work and analysis of the results will be continuing over the course of 2015 and into next year. In the meantime, Doug Neasloss now has the evidence his community needs that there are grizzly bears on the islands around Klemtu. Kitasoo/Xai'xais will be taking that evidence to governments to work on expansion of habitat protection.

“It’s still challenging,” he says, “because the trophy hunt is still continuing. But now we can prove these bears are there, and do what is needed to protect them. We have sound science behind us.”



Safety training, left to right: (Rosie Child, Christina Service, Ashley Stocks, Chantal Pronteau, Douglas Neasloss)

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

What should a First Nation and science researchers contemplating a collaborative research partnership keep in mind?

Having protocols in place that spell out very clearly the expectations of the partners is vital, says Doug Neasloss. “Our community has watched a lot of scientists come and go without satisfying our expectations that they would leave us with value. So it’s important to set out what is expected very clearly.”

Darimont agrees. “A guiding document is essential to help both parties understand the respective work they have to do,” he says. For example, he says: “Science can progress much more slowly than you think. It’s not like the movies where the answers are available in a few key strokes. That’s something to be aware of in managing expectations.”

Darimont also encourages First Nations to help scientists understand the value of relationship-building in advance. “Scientists are better than they used to be in understanding how important it is to get to know the community they are working in and incorporating local knowledge into their research, but it doesn’t hurt to remind them from time to time that collaborating with First Nations isn’t like working with a traditional colonial institution like a university he says.

To his fellow scientists, Darimont suggests: “Be reliable, be considerate and move at a pace consistent with building trust and a strong relationship. Scientists in the past century have done some pretty damaging things to First Nations, so we all have to work hard to overcome that and earn respect. Do everything possible to build the relationship. That,” says Darimont, “includes visiting for the sake of visiting, sharing meals and fishing together—just being with your partners in their place, and getting to know them properly. The research process will be duly rewarded by taking that time. So too will our personal lives, which will be enriched with lasting friendships.”

Short Takes

"EVERYBODY THINKS IT IS A GOOD IDEA. I MEAN, FOR US, WITH NOBODY GOING BACK TO OUR ORIGINAL COMMUNITIES SINCE THE 1960S, IT'S INCREDIBLE TO BE GOING BACK TO WHERE WE ARE FROM."

DANIAL SMITH, COORDINATOR
TLOWITSIS GUARDIAN
WATCHMAN PROGRAM

Reconnecting to Kalugwis: Start-up of the Tlowitsis Guardian Watchman Program

"We are a very small, remote community," says Sherry Thomas, Tlowitsis First Nation Administrator. The Nation's dispersed population of 410 members and the isolated location of its eleven reserves makes monitoring and managing the resources in its territory a significant challenge.

Currently, a revitalization is underway to reconnect Tlowitsis members to each other and their traditional territories, an initiative partially supported by the start-up of the Tlowitsis Guardian Watchman Program. Danial Smith, coordinator of the program, explains: "Everybody thinks it is a good idea. I mean, for us, with nobody going back to our original communities since the 1960s, it's incredible to be going back to where we are from."

Tlowitsis Nation territory is located over an expansive area of Northern Vancouver Island and adjoining islands and mainland inlets. Traditionally, the ancestors of the Tlowitsis people travelled widely throughout their territory, eventually coming to settle in the village of Kalugwis on Turnour Island. Kalugwis remained the central residence of Tlowitsis members until the 1960s, when closures of the local school and loss of the hospital boat led to dispersal of members into urban centres on Vancouver Island and the mainland.

"I think that people think that we haven't been there. We've always been there," says Thomas. "That's why having the visual presence of the Guardians there in their uniforms, letting people know that we are there, will be important."

Using a portion of its Coast Funds conservation allocation and grants from Tides Canada and Nanwakolas Council, the start-up of the Tlowitsis Watchman Program will include training in marine safety, cultural protocol, and data gathering. It will also support the purchase of necessary equipment and wages for the pilot phase of the program. In turn, the program will reinvigorate Tlowitsis Nation's connections to its traditional lands and customs, allowing it to monitor and take stock of resources, and to protect its territories.

"There have been a lot of commercial activities in our territories and we don't know what's been going on," says Smith. "Especially with our seafood, we don't know what's been taken out of there. But we've taken the initiative to collect the data and find out exactly what's been removed so that we can ensure that our people and the next generation are going to have seafood to live on."

The program will be part of a collaborative information-sharing and data-gathering initiative of Nanwakolas Council member Nations. The joint effort, which will include shared training models and best practices, will help create a bigger-picture understanding of marine resources in the region and support decisions around marine planning. "It's exciting that there's going to be current information gathered by the Guardians," says Chris Roberts, Nanwakolas Regional Economic Development Coordinator. "It will eventually be incorporated into the referrals system for ease of planning and coordination for member Nations."

Tlowitsis echoes the value of the Guardian Watchman Program to building partnerships within the region. "Being present in our territory is going to strengthen our partnerships with various groups that are within our territory," concludes Thomas. "We are really excited about it."



Tlowotsis Guardians

Planning for All: Development of the Kitselas Land Use Plan

In 2011, the community of Kitselas First Nation came together to produce a unique vision for management of their lands.

Kitselas engaged leaders, staff, youth and elders in a comprehensive planning process. "Preparing this plan gave us the opportunity to come together and share our vision for the development of Kitselas reserve lands," explains Judy Gerow, Kitselas Band Councillor. "It was based on the values, vision, and desires of those involved in the process."

The process began by introducing or reconnecting community members to the reserve lands. "This was probably the most fun for the community," says Lands Manager Sonja Foss. "We travelled to each reserve to actually walk on the lands we were planning for. We learned about the historical creation of the reserves, the land use planning process, the resources available, and the importance of land controls and efficient governance structures."

From there, the planning process continued with a Charrette workshop, a unique process for generating agreement while integrating diverse interests. It sought to create unique visions for the use of each reserve. This included heritage sites limited to traditional uses, land designated for economic opportunities, and protection for environmentally sensitive habitat.

Ultimately, the Kitselas Land Use Plan was produced from this work. The plan outlines frameworks to make informed decisions that reflect the community's interests with respect to land use and resources.

OTHER NEWS

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw's economic development website goes live

In March, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw launched its new website for k'awat'si Economic Development Corporation, <http://kedc.ca/>. KEDC was created as a result of a strong community desire to grow opportunities for Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw. Its mandate is to bring in revenue, prosperity, jobs, skills and development to the community. Coast Funds has contributed award funding for planning and start-up of KEDC, as well as several of its businesses.

'Namgis also has a new website

In May, 'Namgis First Nation launched its new website: www.namgis.bc.ca/.

Marine plans

Marine plans have been jointly developed by 18 First Nations on the North Pacific Coast, working with the Province of British Columbia through the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP). The four plans, which cover Haida Gwaii, the North Coast, the Central Coast and North Vancouver Island, can be viewed on the MaPP website at <http://mappocean.org/>. (You can also read approved management plans for conservancies and parks in the Coast Funds Project Area at www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/mgmtplans/man_plan.html).



COAST FUNDS NEWS

Changes at the Board of Coast Funds

Cameron Brown has stepped down as a Director after having served for eight years on the Board. Cameron helped shape the vision and structure of Coast Funds and contributed his knowledge and experience with passion and unfailing commitment. We wish him all the best for the future.

At the Annual General Meeting on June 23, Larry Greba was elected to fill the vacancy. Larry has extensive experience in fisheries, oceans and economic development. He has worked closely with the Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nation, Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance, the First Nations Fisheries Council and the Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative. Chair Merv Child was re-elected to his third term in office.

September Board regional visit

The Board's annual visit to a region of the Project Area will take place this year in the Nass Valley in September. We look forward to seeing some of the projects to which Coast Funds has contributed in action.

New infrastructure policy

In response to feedback from Participating First Nations, on March 23 Coast Funds updated its economic development awards policy to clarify eligibility for funding of economic infrastructure projects. You can read the full policy at <http://bit.ly/1GbZtMU>.

A number of new applications have since been received for telecommunications, transportation, and tourism-related infrastructure. In the next issue of *The Talking Stick*, we will feature an infrastructure project story so you can learn more. In the meantime, we welcome your questions any time about potential eligible infrastructure projects in your community.

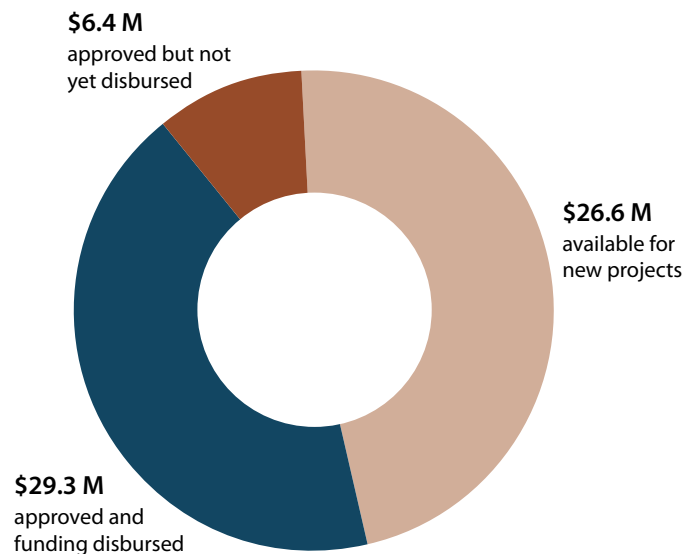


Top: Cameron Brown retires from the board



Left: Merv Child
Right: Larry Greba

Status of Economic Fund, June 2015



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 communications@coastfunds.ca

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