

The Great Bear Rainforest



photos: Al Harvey/Slidefarm, McAllister/Raincoast, Joe Foy/WCWC

THE PLACE:

Canada's Ancient Rainforest

Here, under jagged mountain peaks, glacier-fed rivers carve narrow rainforest valleys, emptying into hundreds of fjords. Within the valleys, moss-laden ancient forests reach nearly a hundred metres tall and hundreds of years back in time. This untamed territory is home to soaring eagles, graceful whales, mighty grizzlies, and — at the centre of it all — wild salmon runs. The most unique and elusive inhabitant of all is the Kermode, a creamy white variety of the black bear. Numbering less than 400, Kermode bears are only found here, in small pockets on British Columbia's coast.

This wild and rugged country stretches along a thin band of Canada's west coast from Knight Inlet, on the south-central coast of British Columbia, to the Alaskan Panhandle. An area the size of Ireland, the Great Bear Rainforest covers 70,000 square kilometres.

The temperate forests of the Pacific Northwest coast once stretched from Northern California to Alaska. Today, only Alaska and British Columbia still contain large, undisturbed tracts. Only ever covering one two-thousandth of the Earth's land surface, these forests represent an extremely rare ecosystem, more endangered than tropical rainforests.

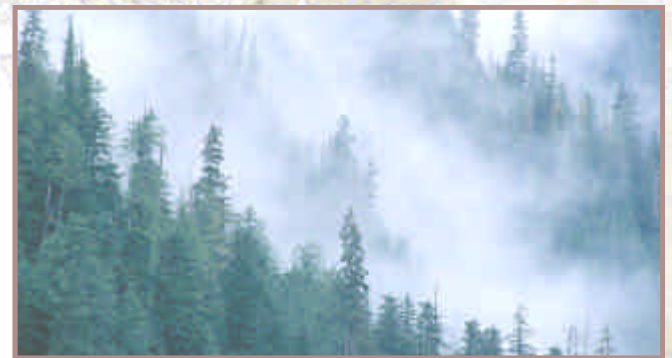
The Towering Giants

The valley floors of the rainforest are home to some of the world's most majestic trees. Douglas fir and sitka spruce can measure 95 metres tall. The western red cedar can grow six metres in diameter.

The Great Bears

Grizzly bears thrive in this untrammelled wilderness. Males, in particular, travel widely across large areas in search of food, den sites and a mate. Consequently, the health of a grizzly population is a good indicator of the health of the entire forest ecosystem. Logging in the southern Great Bear Rainforest already has radically altered or degraded much of their prime habitat.

Grizzlies reproduce at a slow rate — a female may have eight cubs in a 25-year life span. So, once a population begins to decline, it takes many years to recover. The B.C. government has placed grizzly bears on its species-at-risk list.



Coastal temperate rainforests are more endangered than tropical rainforests.

The Salmon: Lifeblood of the Rainforest

From mid-summer to late fall, teeming masses of coho, chinook, sockeye, pink, chum and steelhead churn their way up the rivers and streams that flow through B.C.'s temperate rainforests. The life cycle of the wild salmon brings them back to their birthplace to lay their eggs and die. Upon their return, bears preparing for winter hibernation, joined by wolves, eagles and other animals, feast on the salmon. Bears drag the fish carcasses up the forested slopes, adding valuable nutrients to the soil in the process. Thus, a healthy salmon population is one of the keys to the health of the entire rainforest ecosystem.

The survival of the salmon depends on supplies of clean, cold water, good spawning and rearing habitat, and stream-side vegetation to provide both shade and insects for food. Clearcut logging and roads can erode whole hillsides into watersheds, clogging and fouling these vital spawning beds.

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photos: Ben Fox

THE PEOPLE:

Endangered Place, Endangered Cultures

The ecologically diverse landscape of the Great Bear Rainforest region is the ancestral homeland of the complex, varied cultures of seven coastal First Nations (the aboriginal people of Canada). Today, First Nations' culture, history, spirituality and identity are intimately linked with the land, forests and waters of the coast, making sustainable management of the forests essential not only for protecting biodiversity, but also for ensuring cultural survival.

Beginnings

These nations — Gitga'at, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Kitsoo/Xai'xais, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuxalk and Oweekeno — have lived off this land since the glaciers of the last Ice Age receded from the continent. One of the earliest Northwest Coast villages identified by archaeologists is Namu, a 10,000-year-old site in Heiltsuk territory on B.C.'s Central Coast, at the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest.

The abundance of the region's land and sea supported the emergence of highly sophisticated, organized cultures and an intricate trade network. These people lived without the aid of agriculture — one of the very few complex societies in the world to do so — and developed a striking, intricate style of art admired worldwide.

Industrial clearcut logging has threatened some of the core values of coastal First Nations. One such value is the importance of the cedar tree. The habitat of cedar, the climax species of the temperate rainforest, equals the range of Northwest Coast culture.

The two are inextricably linked. Cedar has been utilized by First Nations for items like clothing, shelter, tools and transportation, as well as for artistic, ceremonial and spiritual activities. Canoes, woven clothing, nets, twine, baskets, boxes and totem poles are only a few examples. So impor-

tant is cedar to Northwest Coast cultures that red and yellow cedar each has its own creation myth.

At the same time, cedar products are among the most economically valuable on the wood market, and Canada's Pacific coast remains a major timber source for this increasingly threatened species.



A Gitga'at elder harvests halibut.

Colonial Legacy and Political Struggle

When Europeans explored and settled the continent, epidemics of disease swept into the region, decimating First Nations populations. Colonial powers attempted to silence First Nations. The potlatch, one of the most important practices of Northwest Coast cultures, was outlawed until 1951.

Politically, First Nations continue to fight for recognition of rights and title to their ancestral lands. No formal treaties were ever signed and this issue remains one of the most controversial political debates not only on the coast, but also throughout British Columbia and the nation.

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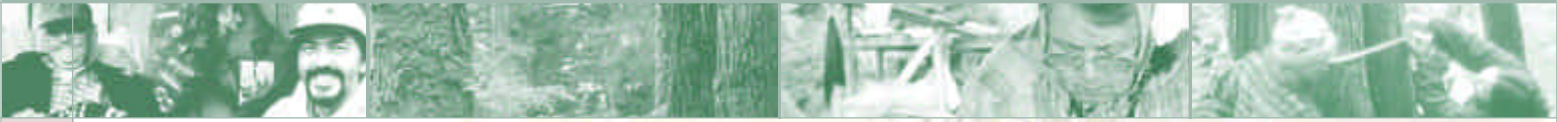
Endangered Place, Endangered Cultures

Many coastal First Nations have poured considerable resources and energy into treaty negotiations, which could enable a large transfer in land ownership to their communities and fundamental shifts in economic and political power for the province.

Environment and Culture: A Turning Point

The April 4, 2001 agreements included a government-to-government protocol between many coastal First Nations and the provincial government. This Turning Point Agreement established one of the keys to a comprehensive solution. Land-use planning on ancestral lands must be ecologically responsible and First Nations will play a stewardship role. First Nations on the B.C. coast are now engaging with ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Sierra Club of British Columbia and Rainforest Action Network to seek new economic opportunities for their communities. With the environmental groups, First Nations are seeking new business ventures to bring the world's attention to preserving not just endangered forests, but endangered cultures.

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THE PROJECT: Finding Rainforest Solutions

Who We Are

ForestEthics, Greenpeace, the Sierra Club of British Columbia and Rainforest Action Network are environmental groups working together to promote conservation and economic alternatives to industrial logging in British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest, (also known as the Central and North Coasts) and Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands).

We are pursuing a bold new approach to the land and sea, founded on the principles of ecosystem-based management, which would safeguard areas of global biological rarity, maintain the ecological integrity of the coastal temperate rainforest, respect traditional knowledge, and provide for the long-term economic sustainability of local communities.

Marketplace Connections

For the past eight years, we have worked to raise awareness of the issues facing the Great Bear Rainforest.

In the mid-1990s, an intense global campaign was launched targeting the trade and investment of the logging companies that were linked to the destruction of the Great Bear Rainforest. As a result, dozens of companies voiced strong concerns over logging, including Home Depot, the world's largest "do-it-yourself" store, and IKEA, the world's largest furniture retailer. This market pressure drove logging companies to sit down with us to negotiate a truce in the "War in the Woods".

What emerged was the Joint Solutions Project, a collaborative initiative between the major forest companies operating in the region — Weyerhaeuser, Canadian Forest Products, Western Forest Products, International Forest Products and Norske Skog Canada — and ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Sierra Club of British Columbia and Rainforest Action Network. The Joint Solutions Project is aimed at developing new models for conservation and



Forests near the village of Waglisla (Bella Bella).

management of the coastal forests that fully integrate social, economic and ecological needs.

Rainforest Solutions

The first phase of our work culminated in spring 2001. An historic consensus agreement was signed by environmental groups, logging companies, workers and coastal communities. The agreement included the interim protection of 20 intact rainforest valleys, amounting to 1.5 million acres; moratoria on logging in 68 other valleys, totalling 2.2 million acres; and mitigation and transition funds for workers and communities. What's more, the provincial government and many First Nations signed government-to-government protocols, which embraced principles of ecosystem based management.

Furthermore, the agreement outlined a new ecosystem-based approach to land-use planning on the Central and North Coasts, and on Haida Gwaii. An independent team of scientists and socio-economic advisors was established to analyze regional options.

To implement this historic agreement, we formalized our working relationship by creating a collaborative initiative,

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THE PROJECT: Finding Rainforest Solutions

the Rainforest Solutions Project. We are now working to make the 2001 agreement a reality by engaging in the planning processes, participating in the Joint Solutions Project with forestry companies, undertaking scientific and economic analysis, and engaging with local communities and First Nations.

The Path Forward

The B.C. coast is now on the cusp of becoming an internationally recognized model of environmental and economic sustainability, a place celebrated for community and cultural revival.

The key will be change — fundamental change to the economy, with no one industry 'solving' the economic challenges of the region. Communities would no longer have to rely on cutting high volumes of timber. The coast would have a diversified economy based on greater local ownership and small business ventures based on quality, with the rich cultural legacy of First Nations and the unparalleled wilderness experiences of the region becoming major draws.

A new era of smart and innovative forest companies could emerge. Ecologically sustainable logging would be one important part of their operations. Local entrepreneurs could also benefit from non-timber forest products, like harvesting native plants. Forest Stewardship Council certification would be the norm, and value-added businesses would partner with forest companies to offer specialized wood products.

The challenge before us is leaving the old way of resource liquidation behind and engaging the diverse range of voices together to invent a new path forward. The time is now. We have a rare opportunity to do it right, before it's done wrong.



ForestEthics was founded in 1994 as the Clayoquot Rainforest Coalition. CRC was a key player in preserving much of Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island from logging. CRC then expanded its mission to seek protection of British Columbia's entire coastal rainforest as the Coastal Rainforest Coalition. In 2001, CRC was a key player in another victory - the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement.

ForestEthics is now an independent organization seeking protection of all endangered forests by redirecting markets toward ecologically sustainable alternatives. Our goals include conservation-based economic diversification in forest-dependent communities, increased decision-making power for indigenous communities and a reform of forest practices, including implementation of ecosystem-based management in coastal British Columbia.



Founded in Vancouver in 1971, Greenpeace is an independently funded international organization that works to protect the world's environment. Greenpeace challenges government and industry to halt harmful practices by negotiating solutions, conducting scientific research, introducing clean alternatives, carrying out peaceful acts of civil disobedience and educating and engaging the public.



Rainforest Action Network was established in 1985 to protect the earth's rainforests and support the rights of rainforest inhabitants through education, grassroots organizing and non-violent direct action. For the past several years, RAN has focused on the home construction and home improvement retail industries in an attempt to foster the protection of endangered forests and the adoption of sustainable forestry practices.



The Sierra Club of BC was founded in 1969 by a small grassroots group working to protect British Columbia's famous West Coast Trail. Today, SCBC is a widely recognized and respected organization committed to protecting British Columbia's wild lands and wild life. SCBC is a chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada, an independently operated affiliate of the Sierra Club of the United States.

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THE FACTS:

The Great Bear Rainforest

The coastal temperate rainforest is a globally rare ecosystem that once covered 60 million acres from Northern California to Alaska. More than half of the original forest cover has been logged, and in California, Oregon and Washington states, large-scale forest conservation can no longer occur.

(Rainforest Solutions Project)

Coastal temperate rainforests once flourished on every continent except Africa and Asia. Today, they survive only in fragments in Chile, Tasmania, New Zealand, Norway, Alaska and British Columbia.

(Greenpeace, Sierra Club of British Columbia)

Coastal temperate rainforests are more endangered than tropical rainforests.

(World Resources Institute)

The Great Bear Rainforest represents the world's largest unprotected area of intact temperate rainforest - nearly 25% of what remains globally.

(World Resources Institute)

The rainforest of B.C.'s coast contains tremendous biodiversity and species richness. Ecologically rich valley bottoms sustain more biomass than any other terrestrial ecosystem on Earth, including grizzlies, black bears, Kermode bears, wolves and 6 million migratory birds.

(Rainforest Solutions Project)

Eighty percent of the large rainforest valleys in British Columbia have already been destroyed.

(Greenpeace)

The Great Bear Rainforest is a cradle for B.C.'s critical salmon runs - all six species of Pacific salmon spawn in the region's numerous rivers and streams.

(Sierra Club of British Columbia)



Despite the gains of the 2001 agreement, clearcut logging continues in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Pacific salmon have disappeared from almost half their original range. B.C.'s 3,000 genetically distinct salmon stocks are increasingly endangered.

(Rainforest Solutions Project)

The grey wolves inhabiting the Great Bear Rainforest are genetically distinct from other wolves in Canada.

(Raincoast Conservation Society)

The rare white Kermode, or Spirit Bear, a genetic variant of the black bear, is only found in B.C.'s coastal region, particularly on Princess Royal Island.

(Sierra Club of British Columbia)

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THE LEADERS:

From Opposition to Opportunity

Environmentalists

Catherine Stewart and Tamara Stark, Forest Campaigners, Greenpeace Canada; (604) 253-7701. Longtime leading campaigners for Greenpeace, Stewart and Stark have gone from blockading multinational companies to complex negotiations to creating new models of economic and environmental sustainability. They built the consensus agreements, forged new partnerships and continue as leaders of the Rainforest Solutions Project.

Merran Smith, B.C. Coast Director, ForestEthics; (250) 847-4764.

For the past decade, Smith has been a leading environmentalist working on the B.C. coast. She was a creative force behind the formation of the Joint Solutions Project, the Coast Information Team and the April 2001 consensus agreement. She continues to work with government, First Nations, communities, industry and investors as a leader of the Rainforest Solutions Project.

Robin June Hood, Outreach Coordinator, and Lisa Matthaus, Forest Policy Analyst, Sierra Club of British Columbia; (250) 386-5255. The Sierra Club of British Columbia has played a vital role in the Great Bear Rainforest campaign for many years. Its sophisticated mapping, and scientific and land-use planning expertise were key to the 2001 consensus agreements. Ongoing community outreach and dialogue with government and industry make them leaders of the Rainforest Solutions Project.

First Nations leaders

Guujaaw, President, Council of the Haida Nation; (250) 559-4468. Guujaaw has worked for his people and his land throughout his life, and now as the elected leader of the Haida Nation of Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands). Guujaaw is well versed in the traditions of his people, especially as an accomplished singer and carver. He has worked with the Council of the Haida Nation for the past 20 years to protect significant areas of the islands and forge strategic alliances with environmentalists, communities and loggers as well as, coastal First Nations, who together make up the Turning Point initiative. After a precedent setting court victory over Weyerhaeuser — one of the world's largest logging companies, the Haida nation launched a major suit against the government of British Columbia. This case for aboriginal rights and title to Haida Gwaii is shaping up to be one of the largest lawsuits in Canadian history.



Environmentalists Merran Smith and Catherine Stewart.

Harvey Humchitt, Chief of the Heiltsuk Hemas Society - the Council of Hereditary Chiefs; (250) 957-2941. The Heiltsuk Nation is based in Waglisla (Bella Bella) on B.C.'s Central Coast. The Hereditary Chiefs of the Heiltsuk Nation work with the elected council to determine the Nation's vision for their lands. The Hemas Chiefs have organized logging protests to stop development in the Mooto/Ingram watershed, worked to support the Heiltsuk watchman program, and are actively involved in the children's cultural rediscovery camp on the Koeye River and the development of a management plan for the Koeye.

Pamela Reid, Chief Councilor, Heiltsuk Tribal Council; (250) 957-2381. The newly elected Chief Councilor of the Heiltsuk, Reid is among the diverse range of women leaders working on the coast. The Heiltsuk opposed the logging and development of the Koeye River valley, a culturally and ecologically important watershed still under threat. They also have stated their zero tolerance for environmentally damaging fish farms within their traditional territories.

Percy Starr, Chief Negotiator, Kitasoo First Nation; (250) 839-1255. A retired fisherman, Starr has been a leader on the coast for 40 years. In 1996, Starr was awarded the Order of Canada, the country's highest honour for lifetime achievement. Starr was the driving force behind the construction of a new long house for the Kitasoo/Xaixais Nations and the burgeoning cultural renewal in Klemtu. Under his leadership, the Kitasoo/Xaixais now operate one of the first community-owned and operated wilderness and cultural tourism ventures (see "Klemtu Tourism" below).

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THE LEADERS: From Opposition to Opportunity

Art Sterritt, Treaty Negotiator, Gitga'at First Nation; (250) 841-2641.

Sterritt plays a vital role in the solutions process underway on the coast. He is co-chair of the Turning Point First Nations initiative and co-chair of the Coast Information Team, an independent body of scientists and socio-economic analysts advising the land-use planning processes on the coast.

Ecotourism entrepreneurs

Frank and Kathy Brown, Owner/Operators of See Quest

Adventures; (888) 905-2611. This Heiltsuk couple offers aboriginal heritage and ecotours. The Canadian Tourism Commission chose See Quest Adventures as a "best case example for sustainable tourism."

Evan Loveless, Klemtu Tourism; (877) 644-2346; web: www.klemtu-tourism.com; email: info@klemtutourism.com. This new community-owned venture, based in Klemtu, offers guided tours of Kitasoo/Xaixais traditional territory, including Kermode bear viewing, kayaking to ancestral sites and accommodation in huts designed in the traditional Kitasoo/Xaixais style.

Michael Uehara, King Pacific Lodge; (604) 987-5452. King Pacific Lodge, located in Gitga'at territory on Princess Royal Island, is one of the coast's luxury wilderness lodges. This year, *Outside* magazine named King Pacific one of the top ten wilderness lodges in North America. Uehara is a vocal supporter of wilderness protection in the North Coast land-use planning. He has led the way in the tourism sector by negotiating a protocol with, and financial benefits for, the Gitga'at.

Forest industry vanguard

Cameron Brewer, Eco-lumber Co-op; (604) 708-0507. The Eco-lumber Co-op is the first venture in British Columbia linking small-scale, certified producers with markets. In August 2002, the co-op made its first sale of wood harvested in British Columbia and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international body that follows strict environmental and socially responsible standards.

Linda Coady, former Vice President of Environmental Enterprise, Weyerhaeuser; (604) 737-4702. Coady has been involved in seeking solutions to the conflicts on B.C.'s coast since the early 1990s when intense controversy arose over the fate of Clayoquot Sound's ancient forests. She has been a leader of the Joint Solutions Project and a member of the management committee of the Coast Information Team, an independent body of scientists and socio-economic analysts advising the land-use planning processes on the coast.

Cindy Hazenboom, Iisaak; (250) 726-2446. Iisaak is an innovative First Nations-led forest services company operating within Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island. In the Nuu-chah-nulth language, "iisaak" means "respect". Through a joint venture agreement, the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation owns 51 percent of the company and Weyerhaeuser owns the remaining 49 percent. Iisaak is a new model of forest management built upon respect for traditional ecological and cultural values. Wood products are FSC certified.

Scientists

Jody Holmes, Science and Planning Director, Rainforest Solutions Project; (250) 847-6194. Holmes has a long-standing interest and expertise in conservation biology and ecology. With the Rainforest Solutions Project, Holmes has developed scientific studies, such as the Conservation Areas Design for the entire mainland B.C. coast (known as the Great Bear Rainforest), and negotiated logging deferrals of key ecological areas in the region. She now serves on the management committee of the Coast Information Team, an independent body of scientists and socio-economic analysts advising land-use planning on the coast. Holmes received a Ph.D. in botany from the University of British Columbia.

Richard M. Jeo, Round River Conservation Studies; (801) 364-5147.

Jeo is a research associate for Round River Conservation Studies and a senior ecologist for the Cheetah Conservation Fund. He recently led a team of scientists in the development of a Conservation Area Design for the coastal temperate rainforest of British Columbia and Southeast Alaska. Jeo received a Ph.D. in Biology from the California Institute of Technology.

Reed Noss, Conservation Science; (407) 971-9503. Noss is chief scientist for Conservation Science, Inc., past President of the Society for Conservation Biology and science editor for *Wild Earth* magazine. He is also an Adjunct Professor of Biology at the University of Oregon. After receiving his Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida, he spent 30 years working as an ecologist for such organizations as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He has published nearly 200 articles and an award-winning book, *Saving Nature's Legacy*. In 1995 he won the Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award of the Society for Conservation Biology. Noss is currently the leading the Ecosystem Analysis project for the Coast Information Team, a group of scientists who are identifying priority areas for biodiversity conservation on the B.C. coast.

Wayne McCrory, Valhalla Wilderness Society; (250) 358-2333.

McCrory is a biologist and founder of the Valhalla Wilderness Society. He has spent over 25 years studying bears and bear habitat in Canada. He co-authored a report on the preservation and management of grizzly bears in the B.C. Provincial Park system and was a member of the B.C. Ministry of Environment Grizzly Bear Science Advisory Committee. In the realm of advocacy, McCrory has developed campaigns in British Columbia to create the Khutzymateen Grizzly Sanctuary, the Spirit Bear Conservancy and the Goat Range (White Grizzly) Provincial Park.

Chuck Rumsey, The Nature Conservancy of Canada; (250) 479-3191. Rumsey is responsible for developing regional conservation plans in British Columbia for The Nature Conservancy of Canada. Previously, Rumsey worked on conservation plans in Nevada and a transboundary region of Canada and the United States. He is currently managing the Ecosystem Spatial Analysis project, part of the Coast Information Team, which is identifying priority areas for biodiversity conservation on the B.C. coast.