



## A Conservation Economy where People, Communities & Land are Inseparable

For the first time in history, our leaders have successfully negotiated land and resource agreements government-to-government with the Province to increase our rightful authority to govern and manage our traditional lands. The Province and Coastal First Nations have committed to setting aside new protected areas that accommodate our Aboriginal Rights and Title and to managing our resources on the remaining land base using the principles of “ecosystem-based management”. We are committed to developing a thriving and diverse economy that is based on protecting ecosystem health and strengthening our cultures.

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is a land management approach that recognizes that people, communities and the land are inseparable. Our choices must consider the health of both the people and the land that sustains them. EBM has two goals: maintain ecosystem health and improve human well-being.

The overarching principle of EBM is that healthy ecosystems provide the foundation for sustaining human well-being. “Human well-being” means the health and happiness of our people and our communities. It includes economic, social, cultural and ecological health.

Improving economic opportunities and increasing the number and types of jobs in our communities is a primary concern of Coastal First Nations. Our vision is to create a “conservation-based economy”, where local economic prosperity is rooted in our First Nations values with future generations in mind.

### AN ECONOMY ROOTED IN OUR CONSERVATION VALUES

A conservation-based economy uses natural resources wisely and protects the important ecosystems and cultural features on our territories. This means encouraging low-impact activities that bring lasting benefits to our quality of life and the environment, such as lighter touch forestry, harvesting non-timber forest products, and nature-based tourism.



## CASE STUDY | NATURE-BASED TOURISM: A GROWING CONSERVATION BUSINESS SECTOR



There is untapped potential and a growing market in tourism on the north and central coast according to a recent study. Tourism success will depend directly on protecting the environment and the wildlife that live on our territories. Nature-based tourism experiences include: wildlife viewing, kayaking, sport fishing, and cultural experiences tied to the land. Tourism jobs employ the local skills and knowledge found in many of our communities.

A recent study concludes that our communities could significantly benefit by developing regional First Nations tourism packages marketed under a regional brand. Successful tourism businesses follow EBM principles and other best practices:

- ◆ Decisions are driven by First Nations themselves
- ◆ Every aspect of the business is influenced by First Nations cultural values and visions
- ◆ A clear strategic vision is shaped by the local historical, cultural and social context
- ◆ Leaders are innovative, persuasive and inspiring
- ◆ Operations are transparent and accountable to the public and stakeholders
- ◆ Solid governance structures exist, including a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the Band
- ◆ Longer-term community priorities and assets drive business strategy

Recommendations from the study are: build people capacity in all areas of tourism business; offer mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities; build greater understanding and trust with existing tourism operators; and create cultural protection policies.

## CASE STUDY | MONEY CAN GROW ON TREES! MARKETING WILD PRODUCTS FROM THE FOREST

We use more than 100 different plants and fungi for food, medicine, domestic and cultural use on the coast. Some of these plants might be good economic bets for commercial development through: gathering and selling dried raw materials; making products from plant materials; and offering interpretive walks to learn about medicinal plants and fungi. Non-timber forest products refer to the plant and fungi resources and services the forest has to offer, other than timber and wood products. These products have benefited our families for centuries, and now there is potential for locally-based economic initiatives through commercial cultivation and harvesting.



The Haisla, Heiltsuk and Haida Nations are involved in a pilot project to extract samples of essential oil from cedar, spruce and other conifers. These samples will be sent to a lab for chemical analysis to determine the quality of available oils. If the quality looks promising, market research will begin to locate potential buyers, determine quantities of oil required and carry out branding and market development research.



## FIRST NATIONS SUCCESS STORY: USING LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE HUMAN WELL-BEING

### Working to Create a Thriving and Diverse Economy

Economic prosperity means providing jobs that improve our income while being meaningful and tied to our land ethic. It means bringing revenue to our communities in ways that don't come with a cost to ecosystem health. We are improving the economic prosperity of our communities by:

**Establishing First Nations land and resource governance** — increasing our authority as First Nations governments to make land use decisions.

**Taking a regional approach to exploring new economic opportunities** — working together to improve employment and generate revenue benefits for all First Nations communities.

**Negotiating provincial and industry benefit sharing** — increasing revenue through new agreements and protocols with both the Province and industry to ensure our people have a share of the benefits derived from economic operations that occur on our traditional lands.

**Negotiating with the Province to secure new commercial tenure opportunities** — securing First Nation access to, on a priority basis, new land-based commercial tenure opportunities in tourism, forestry, wind and hydro power.

There are many successful First Nations-run community economic development ventures in BC and other parts of Canada. A recent report, "Community Health, Nature's Wealth", describes how these initiatives have improved human well-being in the community by: bringing employment and income to people who live close to the land, creating new opportunities for skills development and training, and generating capital for re-investment.

Successful initiatives celebrate First Nations values and vision and bring a sense of pride and accomplishment to the community. The key lessons learned from these experiences are that community ventures will succeed if there is: spirit of innovation, careful planning, determination, faith in the project, the courage to take risks, and a connection to community values and aspirations.



Photo by Ken Cripps

### **Developing economic and business models that work for all** —

creating new ways of conducting business to ensure that decision-making is fair, roles and responsibilities are clear, administration of funds is transparent, and that continuity occurs even as political relationships change.

### **Establishing locally-based community economic initiatives** —

diversifying the economy and creating First Nations jobs in the conservation sector by establishing new employment (such as managing protected areas and restoring damaged ecosystems through the Guardian programs), creating locally-based businesses (such as shellfish aquaculture), and negotiating local protocols with existing operations.

**Increasing economic stability over the longer term** — establishing ecologically sustainable business sectors that increase the long-term sustainability of both the economy and the environment.

## **EBM brings New Investment to Our Communities**

EBM is attracting new investment and funding opportunities to the coast. Coast Opportunity Funds will benefit those communities that have negotiated a significant portion of their land base as protected area. Two funds, totaling \$120 million, will support conservation-based initiatives such as protected area management, research and monitoring of biological and cultural resources, habitat restoration, and economically viable and environmentally sustainable businesses.



**Turning Point Initiative Coastal First Nations**

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The Coastal First Nations is an alliance of First Nations on British Columbia's North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. The Coastal First Nations include Wuikinuxv Nation, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xaixais, Holmalco, Gitga'at, Haisla, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate, and Council of the Haida Nation. More information on Government-to-Government Agreements and other Ecosystem-Based Management topics can be found on our website.