



**COASTAL
FIRST NATIONS**
GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2017

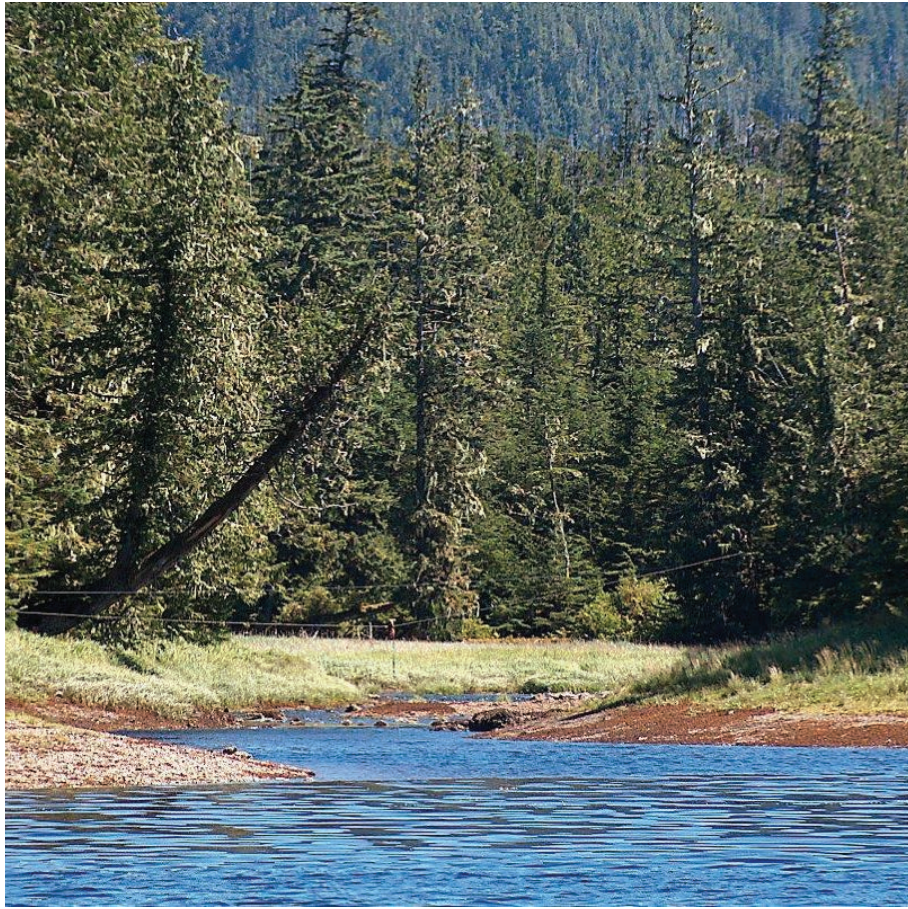
CARBON OFFSET

CARBON OFFSETS HELP BUILD A SUSTAINABLE COASTAL ECONOMY

Day-to-day activities like driving and flying emit carbon dioxide into the air and have a negative impact on the environment. They contribute to climate change. This pollution has a high cost. We are already and will continue to feel the impacts of pollution on our environment through threats such as food and water shortages, storm damage and rising water levels.

A carbon offset is created when a person, or group of people, changes a behavior or practice and this action results in a tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (the unit by which we track climate change) being removed or prevented from entering the atmosphere. Because the person or business has taken a different approach this has a positive impact on the atmosphere and is referred to as 'beyond business as usual.'





COASTAL FIRST NATIONS A LEADER IN INNOVATIVE FOREST CARBON PROJECT



For over a decade, the Coastal First Nations have been building a sustainable coastal economy. The path we have taken is both strategic and forward-looking, and has strengthened the connection between our communities, our environment and our economy.

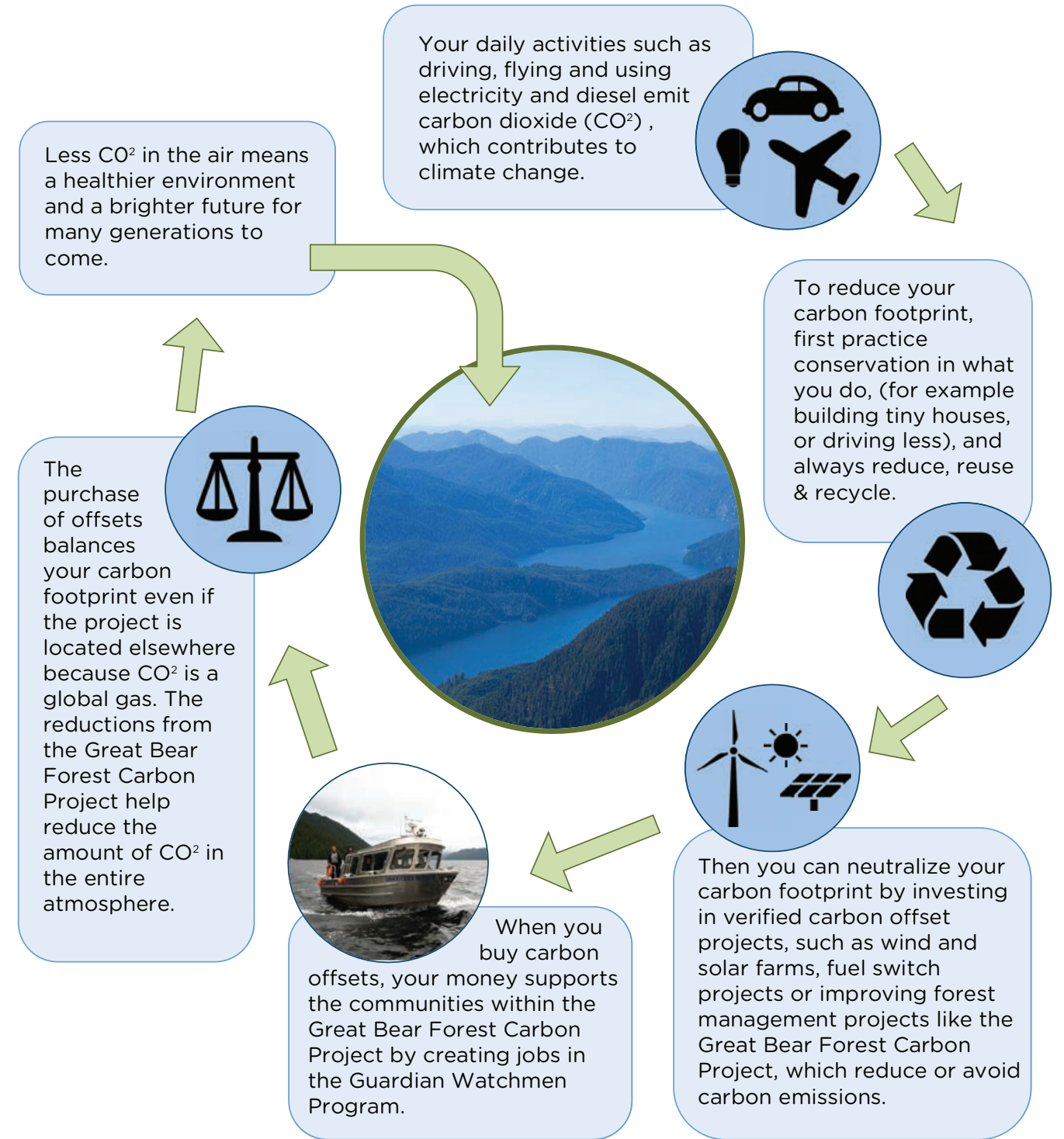
We took this path in response to a lack of economic opportunities in our communities and we looked beyond the resource extraction and exploitation models. Instead, we developed land and marine use plans that provide ecosystem-based management (EBM) over our territories and created conservancies alongside special protection areas. In addition, the Coastal First Nations have supported our communities to work on clean energy, forestry, ecotourism, non-timber forest products, shellfish aquaculture and carbon offset projects.

The Great Bear Forest Carbon Project we established gives new language to a traditional concept that we learned from our ancestors. So while we developed land and marine use plans we followed the principles they taught us; that if we take care of the earth then the earth will take care of us.

The Great Bear Forest Carbon Project is globally unique and in the last few years we have emerged as leaders in the development of an innovative forest carbon project and in the sales of carbon offsets.

The sustainable approach we have adopted values our forests not just as a source of lumber alone, but as a balanced system that sustains both biodiversity and an enriched community. The project will generate up to one million tonnes of offsets each year, giving monetary value to activities that reduce or prevent emissions of the harmful greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

This in turn, offers our communities the potential for sustainable economic development while helping to conserve the largest and most ecologically significant temperate rainforest in the world. The revenues from the sales of carbon offsets will be used to create new jobs in forestry planning and stewardship, manage conservation and biodiversity areas, and provide funds for clean energy opportunities, tourism and other sustainable opportunities.



In the case of the Great Bear Rainforest, carbon offsets are created because land that would have otherwise been logged is conserved thus reducing the emissions and creating offsets that can be sold elsewhere.

BENEFITS OF CARBON OFFSETS TO FIRST NATIONS



There are two significant ways that First Nations benefit from the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project — first, the forests are conserved and second, long-term sustainable income is derived through that conservation.

Sixty-five per cent of the carbon offset revenue goes towards stewardship, while the remaining thirty-five per cent is available to nations to decide how best to spend the money.

At the Nuxalk Nation in Bella Coola, Stewardship Director Megan Moody said when she first started working as a Stewardship Director, the idea of carbon credits was a bit of a dream. When they were first implemented, she was surprised, but now they come in regularly and help add stability and capacity to her office.

Some of the stewardship money is used to help pay for her position, other staff members and five crew Guardian Watchmen, Moody said. Guardian Watchmen monitor and protect the lands and waters on their territory. There are also resource technicians, fisheries guardians, park rangers and community watchmen. They work in forestry, fisheries and parks to ensure sustainable resource management is used.

Moody said the stewardship portion of the carbon offset money has also been used to start a bear safety program for the nation. 'We've got bears all over our community so we work with the community to reduce attractants and educate on safe bear behaviour,' Moody said.

In addition, the discretionary funding has been used to build a new youth centre and to renovate an Elder centre. The youth centre is a place for young people to hang out and where they can also find a quiet, safe space to be on their own. 'They wanted a washer and dryer because they can't do laundry at home they need a quiet place to study because they can't get that at home,' Moody said.

The newly renovated Elder centre is an open space for luncheons and other gatherings, with some private rooms for medical check ups and private events.

In Prince Rupert, the funding from carbon credits helps to pay for administration, salaries and rent, said Ross Wilson, who is the Stewardship Director at the Metlakatla Stewardship Society.

The Stewardship program at Metlakatla is five years old and other initiatives don't cover all the necessary costs. For example, the Stewardship office shares the cost of a Human Resource Manager and a Finance Manager with the nation's governing council. "We couldn't have done that without the carbon offset money," Wilson said.

The money also helps pay for staff training, strategic planning and board costs. "We try to spread the benefit across as wide an area as possible," Wilson said.

Not only does the carbon offset money help pay for local initiatives, it also allows the Stewardship office to pay attention to regional initiatives, such as the land conservancies and other land management arrangements in the Great Bear Rainforest.

The money adds time and capacity to the Stewardship office and allows the office to build relationships with government, Wilson said. "These projects develop over years -- not days or months," Wilson said, adding that over time the benefits will be even greater. "We didn't have anything five years ago and now we can show evidence that it is working," Wilson said. "It's got to be better, but this is a good starting place."



HOW DO FORESTS HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT?



By creating the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project, we conserve the trees and forests. There are two main reasons why we are able to create carbon offsets from this project because of how the forests interact with the environment.

1. Forests can remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) in a variety of ways. Carbon is stored in the trunks, leaves, branches and roots of trees and the more trees that are not cut down, the greater the benefit to the environment. Forests can store vast amounts of carbon dioxide, which means saving them is one of way of preventing carbon dioxide build up in the atmosphere.
2. The second way that conserving forests contributes to the environment is that the act of forestry itself generates greenhouse gas emissions through the use of heavy machinery, transportation of lumber and other industrial practices. When the forest is conserved and the trees are not cut down, those emissions are avoided.

The land in the Great Bear Rainforest has two landowners; it is both Crown Title and Aboriginal Title. Prior to 2009, the forest was being logged at a rapid rate and because the Crown managed the land, there were few economic benefits to the people living there.

Carbon projects have to present clear ownership of the offsets in order to be able to sell them on the market. The Province and the Coastal First Nations negotiated both the Reconciliation Protocol as well as the Atmospheric Benefit Sharing Agreements (ABSAs) that clearly identified that each Nation had ownership over 80% of the carbon offsets generated from the changes in the forest management and the amount of productive forest in their territory.

In the case of the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project, carbon offsets are measured by the difference in emissions between what would have taken place if the forestry had continued as they were and what is currently taking place under conservation. Strict rules and standards are in place that calculates the reductions and annual audits are completed to confirm that the reductions in emissions are real and genuine.

Today, 85 per cent of the Great Bear Rainforest is now protected under three regulatory tools. Areas of cultural and ecological significance are usually full conservancies, while others are governed by different land use agreements that limit logging and protect the land. The Government-to-Government agreements between the Province and First Nations are in effect in perpetuity meaning that money through carbon offsets is now generated directly from conserving the forest.

BUYING AND SELLING CARBON OFFSETS



People or companies who recognize that their operations put carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and want to address this negative impact can purchase carbon offsets. Purchasing offsets enables them to neutralize their overall emissions so that no further carbon dioxide will enter the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

The idea of buying and selling carbon offsets was established as a way to address climate change by putting a price on emissions and in turn reduce overall emissions. If we include a price on carbon dioxide into the price of using fossil fuels like coal and oil (which put a lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere when burned and contribute to climate change), most people would be motivated to emit less. We have clean energy alternatives like wind and solar, but people and businesses need a greater incentive to make the switch.

As a personal example, if you made reductions in your personal carbon footprint by not using diesel, but you still had some remaining emissions that you could not reduce, purchasing carbon offsets is the best way to mitigate your impact. With them, you can counteract your personal carbon emissions or your 'carbon footprint' and contribute to a more sustainable future.

At over 6 million hectares, the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project is the largest of its kind in the world. The project has been able to demand higher than average pricing on the voluntary market as the communities have been working together to ensure higher prices. Costs are also kept down by sharing project administration, which results in the maximum revenue being directed into the communities. While the BC Government does receive a portion of offsets as part of the agreement, the Government does not receive any portion of revenue generated by our sales of the offsets.

WHO IS BUYING CARBON OFFSETS?



Companies and individuals can voluntarily decide to offset their greenhouse gas emissions through buying carbon offsets. Since 2010, the B.C. government has required public entities, such as Crown corporations, government ministries, schools, hospitals, colleges, universities, and agencies to become 'carbon neutral.' Those entities must measure their emissions, work to reduce them, and offset any emissions that cannot be eliminated. They can offset emissions either by investing in local greenhouse gas reduction projects or by buying carbon offsets, such as those created by the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project.

A company called NatureBank (formerly Offsetters) who helped develop the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project now manages it and assists in the sales of offsets that are created by the avoided emissions in the Great Bear Rainforest. They sell them to other companies and organizations who are either mandated to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions or who chose to do so.



PHOTO BY BRODIE GUY COURTESY COAST FUNDS



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