

Groundbreaking Conservation Investment Package Goes to Coastal First Nations



COASTAL FIRST NATIONS
TURNING POINT INITIATIVE

Groundbreaking \$120 million conservation investment package goes to coastal First Nations

A \$120 million conservation fund will create extraordinary opportunities for coastal First Nations, says Art Sterritt.

The Conservation Investments and Incentives Initiative (CIII) fund will support a conservation-based economy, increase local capacity and increase economic initiatives in our communities, he said.



Sterritt, the executive director of the Coastal First Nations, said without the \$120 million it would be difficult to create a conservation-based coastal economy. "The CIII fund also allows us to move closer to our goal of restoring and implementing responsible land, water and resource management approaches on the Central and North Coast of British Columbia, and Haida Gwaii."

There is little doubt that CIII will help First Nations make economic strides that will close the gap between Native people and other British Columbians, he said. "When the Coastal First Nations organized a few years ago it was apparent that we had to work together to achieve our goals."

The fundamental economic needs of our communities and the ecosystem which sustain them, are the starting point for a different kind of economic prosperity that can endure generation after generation, Sterritt said. "It's not possible to have one without the other."

The federal and provincial contributions, totalling \$60 million, provides for economic development initiatives for coastal First Nations. The remaining \$60 million is from philanthropic organizations for conservation management and research projects.

Many didn't believe we could put this package together, Sterritt said. "It took a lot of hard work, personal sacrifice and commitment by our leaders to make the deal happen."

"By working together governments, foundations and First Nations have created a unique approach to sustainable development on BC's coast," he said.

Sterritt said that the funds will ensure the well-being of our people, lands, and waters. "It's about time that First Nations on the coast were given more opportunities to use our land and our resources."

Having the fund means First Nations will have the ability to work as equal partners, he added. "With most of our communities having unemployment rates as high as 90 per cent there is no group of people facing a more urgent economic crisis."



"By working together governments, foundations and First Nations have created a unique approach to sustainable development on BC's coast,"

~ Art Sterritt



“We’ve been waiting a very long time for this federal funding and I’m pleased it has come,” said Chief Percy Starr.

Starr, a chief with the Kitasoo/Xaixais First Nation, said this would not have happened without the leadership of the provincial government who facilitated and brokered what he hopes will be a long-lasting relationship that will bring many benefits to coastal First Nations.

First Nations, government and other groups spent a decade attempting to reach land use agreements on the Central Coast, North Coast and Haida Gwaii.

Few people expected this 10-year collaborative relationship would result in the creation of a new culture based on respect and the meaningful participation of First Nations on B.C.’s coast, Sterritt said. “That’s what exciting about the CIII funding. It demonstrates that complex issues can be resolved for the greater good of all British Columbians – not just particular groups.”

First Nations look forward to working closely with Canada and British Columbia, ENGOS and our other partners as we move forward to create an ecologically and economically sustainable coast, he said.

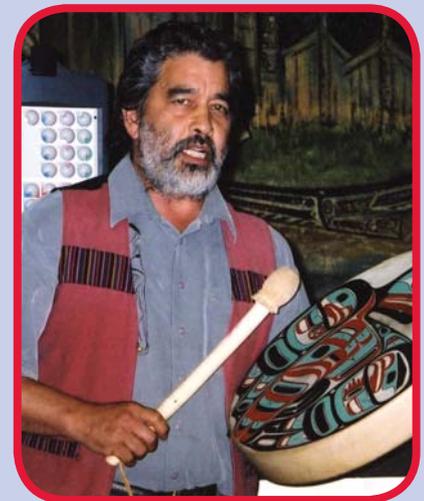
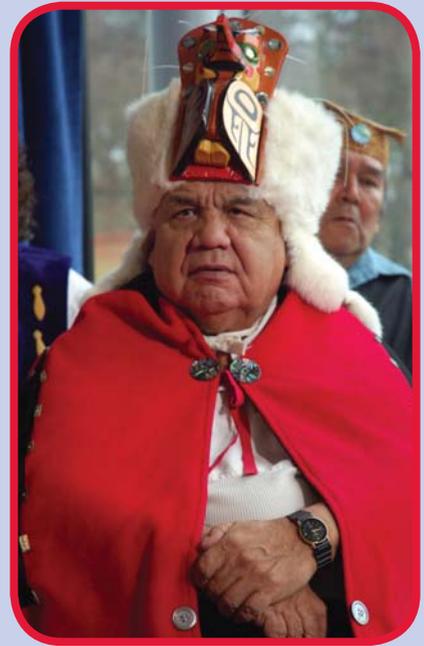


Photo By Douglas Neasloss

Philanthropic Foundations Support First Nations Through Investment Funding

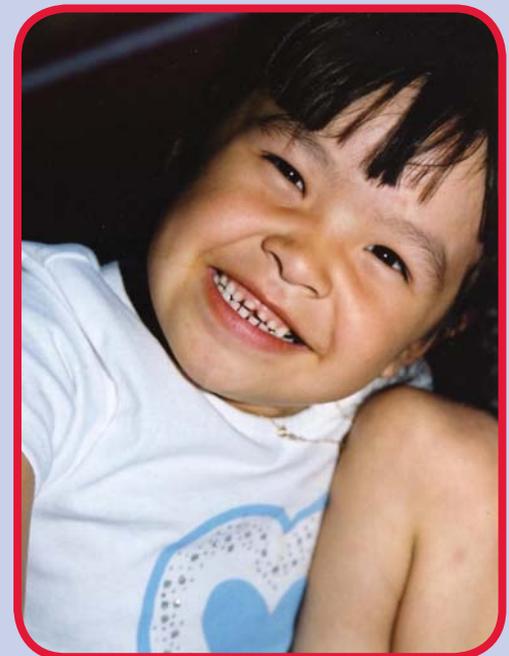
Private conservation funders believe the \$120 million Conservation Investment and Incentives Initiatives fund has the potential to transform the way people address conflicts between the environment and the economy around the globe, says Ross McMillan.

McMillan, Tides Canada Foundation's Senior Associate for Conservation, said the organizations he represents support conservation projects around the world that are focused on protecting biodiversity in some of the Earth's most treasured places.

"They have been drawn here not just because of the globally significant biodiversity in coastal BC, but because of the vision for an alternative future developed locally by First Nations, conservation groups, the forest sector and others."

McMillan formally announced private funder contributions of \$60 million to support First Nations conservation management in the Great Bear Rainforest. The federal and provincial governments each provided \$30 million to bring the CIII fund to \$120 million.

"The architects of this project – including conservation groups, First Nations, coastal communities and the forest sector – have designed a model of sustainability that is truly worthy of the international recognition and support demonstrated today," he said.



Canada announced its commitment of \$30 million on January 21, 2007, while the province announced its commitment in 2006. McMillan recognized federal Environment Minister John Baird and the Government of Canada for adopting a leadership role in supporting CIII – particularly so early in his new mandate as Minister of the Environment.



McMillan also credited the provincial government for its enduring efforts to build a comprehensive land use solution in coastal British Columbia.

In addition to Tides Canada Foundation, which leads the private fundraising initiative in Canada, a core group of philanthropic organizations and individuals have put their human and financial resources behind the work that is unfolding on the BC coast.

“I represent a growing group of Canadian and international donors who have been captivated by the model for sustainability being built here in British Columbia,” he said.

In particular, McMillan acknowledged the work and support of:

- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The Wilburforce Foundation
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- The Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- The Gordon Betty Moore Foundation,
- The US-based Nature Conservancy, which has done a phenomenal job of raising funds for the project in the US

“Coastal First Nations have designed a model of sustainability that is truly worthy of the international recognition and support demonstrated here today.”

~Ross McMillan



Photo By Douglas Neasloss



More broadly, the private funders want to acknowledge the vision and commitment to the Great Bear Rainforest demonstrated by conservation groups in British Columbia, in particular the Sierra Club of Canada, Greenpeace Canada, and Forest Ethics, he said.



“Their willingness to expand the boundaries of environmentalism, and to recognize the needs of communities and businesses in their work, is truly ground-breaking. Conservation funders will remain your partners as the land use plan implementation work in coastal BC moves forward.”

The private funders are also unified in their immense appreciation for the unwavering leadership and dedication to sustainability demonstrated by the First Nations of coastal British Columbia, McMillan said.



Photo By Douglas Neasloss



Photo By Douglas Neasloss



Conservation funding to create healthy communities and protect rainforests

Environmental groups ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club of Canada welcomed the federal government's announcement that it will add \$30 million to complete a \$120 million groundbreaking conservation management and economic development initiative in British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest.

Merran Smith said they learned from First Nations, who have millennia of wisdom in balancing ecology and economy, that conservation can't be separated from the people who live there. "A lasting solution couldn't be about people or wild places. It had to be about people and wild places. Together with First Nations and our other partners a strategy has been devised that will protect these rainforests and rebuild healthy communities."



Smith, BC Coast Program Director for ForestEthics, said Canada needs places of hope. "Canada needs people with the courage to face complex challenges head on and it needs innovative ideas to take root. The Great Bear Rainforest will be that place. We need to succeed here, because if we do, we can succeed in other places, like turning the tide on climate change and species extinction. The Great Bear Rainforest is our place of possibility."

The \$120 million fund will put into action a program to secure both the protection of Canada's rainforests and the health of the communities that live there, she said. "The world is looking for solutions, and while the idea – raising \$120 million – sounded improbable to some at first, it is exactly these kind of out of the box solutions that are needed to solve today's complex and unprecedented environmental problems."

British Columbia has incredible wealth in our ecosystems – our natural capital – and it is valuable not only as pulp, paper and wood, Smith said. "The commitment by First Nations, environmental groups, government and other groups makes it clear, once and for all, that these rainforests are worth much more - as a legacy of biodiversity and to support the future of local communities."

Canada's Great Bear Rainforest is part of the largest coastal temperate rainforest left on the planet, and is home to 20% of the world's wild salmon, grizzlies, white spirit bears and ancient forests over a thousand years old.

Economic Initiatives Permitted Under CIII

Some examples of sustainable businesses that may be eligible for funds include:



Tourism



Non-timber forest products



Green building projects



Fisheries

Economic Initiatives NOT Permitted Under CIII

Some activities that will not be eligible include:



Open net-cage



Trophy hunting



Extraction of Subsurface Resources



Non Sustainable Practices

CIII Frequently Asked Questions



What is the current status of the Conservation Investments and Incentives Initiative?

While the federal government has now committed to make a \$30 million contribution to the Conservation Investments and Incentives Initiative (CIII), much work remains to be done before both public and private contributions can flow formally into the new institutions that will oversee CIII funding. These institutions include a non-profit economic development society that will distribute \$60 million in public funds to support sustainable economic diversification and economic infrastructure, and a registered charity that will distribute the proceeds of a permanent \$60 million endowment created through private donations to support conservation management and related job creation. These new institutions are collectively known as the Coast Opportunities Funds (COF).

First Nations, private foundations and the province are working with federal officials to finalize funding agreements and establishment documents for the new institutions. It is anticipated that the federal commitment will be included in the upcoming budget (tabled in Parliament on March 19th), and a formal letter of

cont.

commitment will follow before the end of March. Barring a federal election before the budget is passed, federal funding could flow into COF by June of 2007. Provincial funding will likely be transferred before the end of March. Private funds will be deposited in an escrow account after public funds are in place.

Q How much money will go to individual coastal First Nations?

The amount each First Nation will receive depends on a number of factors, including the biodiversity values and size of protected areas, population, traditional territory size and timber harvesting land base. A formula that incorporates these factors has been developed to ensure that the funds are fairly and objectively distributed. Digital maps are being prepared based on government-to-government discussions and final boundary adjustments; when these are complete, a final run of the formula will be conducted and the results shared with all coastal First Nations.

First Nations will share an initial public contribution of \$2 million to help prepare regional economic plans or joint business proposals. The remaining \$58 million of public funding will be distributed by COF to participating First Nations on the basis of the formula and once COF due diligence requirements are satisfied.

First Nations will also receive an up-front contribution of \$2 million in private funding to help prepare joint conservation management strategies. The balance of \$58 million in private funds will be invested in a permanent endowment once final conditions are met by the Province and other parties.

Q What are the final conditions of private funders?

The private foundations and donors funds will be deposited in an account and will be released to COF once the following conditions are met:

- 1 A specific percentage of protected areas are legislated as conservancies or Class A Parks;
- 2 All parties commit to full implementation of EBM by 2009;
- 3 The EBM Working Group is established and funded;
- 4 An operational transition plan for EBM implementation is in place;
- 5 The initial suite of legal objectives for the North and Central Coasts has been legally enacted.
- 6 Matching public funds are in place.

Investment income from the endowment will be distributed by COF under guidelines to all participating First Nations that have signed land use agreements and endorsed EBM and protected areas within their territories.

Q When will the money be available?

Federal and provincial funding could be available to First Nations as early as the late summer of 2007. In part, this depends on how quickly the new board and staff of COF gets up and running, and also on the work that First Nations do to prepare for regional economic projects.

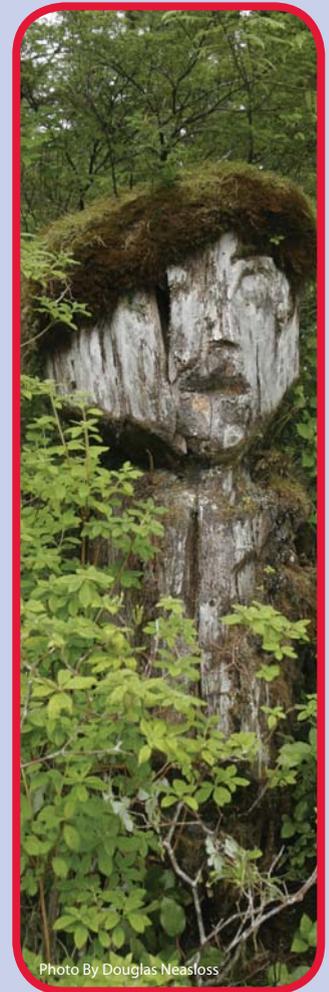


Photo By Douglas Neasloss

Private funding will be available once conditions are met and after a reasonable amount of time to allow a return on the endowment investments.

Q Who will be in charge of COF?

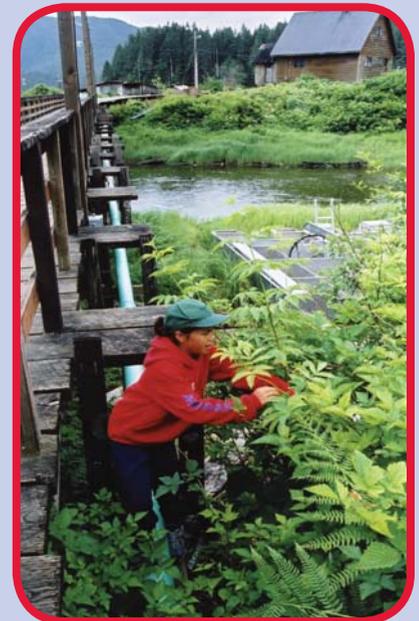
Public funders, private foundations and First Nations will share equally in the membership for COF. The board of directors will be selected by these founding parties, based on a list of competencies, including knowledge of coastal First Nations, business skills and environmental grant-making. COF will ensure that all projects that receive funding are economically sound, with solid business plans and diverse funding in place. The parties hope to build a team at COF that can be an ongoing resource to coastal First Nations and other communities to support economic diversification and future private investments and donations.

Q When will COF be up and running?

The initial board and members will be appointed before the end of March. In April and May, the board will receive orientation and will develop operational policies with the participation of First Nations and other founding parties. The board will also recruit initial staff between April and June. So, barring unforeseen delays, COF should commence operation by mid-summer.

Q What about Haida?

The founding CIII parties have always recognized that land use planning on Haida Gwaii would unfold on a different timeline than the mainland coast. Accordingly, funding agreements will ensure that private funds nominally designated for the Haida will be held until land use outcomes are formalized. Current agreements would require a certain percentage of protected areas on Haida Gwaii to be legislated and a form of EBM generally consistent with the mainland coast to be in place on Haida Gwaii before private funding is released. It is anticipated that public funds could flow to the Haida for economic projects prior to these conditions being met.



Q What about First Nations that don't sign land use agreements?

Private funds will be held for a reasonable period of time to allow First Nations that have not signed land use agreements further time to consider their options. In the event that some private funds are not brought into COF because individual First Nations choose not to participate, then private funders will assess how to redeploy these funds.



Photo By Douglas Neasloss

Coastal First Nations Turning Point Initiative

The Turning Point Initiative Society operates under the direction of a Board that approves the annual work plan for the office and gives final approval to all policies and procedures. The Board of Directors consists of a representative from each of the participating First Nations - Wuikinuxv Nation, Heiltsuk Nation, Kitasoo/Xaixais First Nation, Gitga'at First Nation, Haisla Nation, Metlakatla First Nation, Homalco First Nation, Old Massett Village Council, Skidegate Band Council, and Council of the Haida Nation.

The Turning Point board meets quarterly to review progress and provide direction on future activities. In addition, the Executive Committee of the Board meets more frequently to review administrative issues and monitor project work.

Our Vancouver office provides strategic regional planning, negotiation and administrative support to Coastal First Nations on environmental and socio-economic issues. The Executive Director provides direction for office activities and staff, following the strategic plan approved by the Board of Directors.

Contact Us



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