



Photo by Stafford Reid

Ecosystem-Based Management & Human Well-Being

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.

A principal goal of ecosystem-based management (EBM) is to improve human well-being. “Human well-being” means the health and happiness of our people and our communities. For us, human well-being encompasses many elements: our physical health and our economic prospects, our mental state and our spiritual connection. It also means the pride we have to express our culture, our traditions and our customs, and to develop our communities, raise our families, and prosper.

EBM: Healthy Ecosystems = Healthy Communities

New protected areas and the implementation of EBM approaches to forestry give us greater control over our economic future. We can create a future that includes meaningful jobs and businesses in sectors that have a lesser impact on our environment, such as tourism and shellfish aquaculture. A thriving and diverse economy will only be sustainable if we understand that caring for the land and our prosperity are inseparable.

Economic development is only one component of a healthy community. We share many concerns for our well-being that will be addressed by ecosystem-based management:



Economic concerns: Can my daughter find work she enjoys close to home? Can I learn new skills to better support my family? Do my children and grandchildren feel secure and hopeful about their future?

Social concerns: Do our elders and young people want to participate in determining what will happen on our territories? Do we celebrate our successes as a community? Can my mother access the traditional medicines that she needs for good health?

Cultural concerns: Is my granddaughter proud of her First Nation heritage? Does my son know about the medicines that nature provides us?

Ecological concerns: Does our community have control over food sources such as salmon? Is there enough high quality cedar left for future uses?

We will monitor new initiatives implemented under EBM to ensure they bring new economic opportunities to our people while at the same time addressing some of our social and cultural concerns for human well-being.

CASE STUDY | KOEYE WHERE LEADERSHIP, SPIRIT, AND WILDERNESS COME TOGETHER

Nestled on a remote estuary along the coast of the Great Bear Rainforest is Koeye, a place where spirit and wilderness come together. On the Koeye estuary, grizzly bears still roam white sand beaches with the open Pacific ocean in view. Each summer, Heiltsuk youth also roam in nearby Koeye camp, renewing their spiritual connection to the natural environment, experiencing Heiltsuk culture, and learning the traditional knowledge that has sustained their ancestors for centuries. It is a place where western science and tradition have converged. Heiltsuk youth learn the principles of conservation biology, the foundation of modern land use planning and protection. In this safe and nurturing environment, 100 young people grow their self esteem and leadership skills each summer.



The Qqs Project Society manages Koeye. Qqs means “eyes”, and the society is dedicated to opening the eyes of young people to the richness of their culture and their responsibility to sustainably use the resources from the land and sea.

Qqs programs embrace the principles of EBM and speak to all aspects of human well-being. The Qqs Project Society is instilling a strong cultural identity and self-image in a future generation of Heiltsuk leaders, along with a commitment to stewarding Heiltsuk territory.



How does EBM Improve Human Well-being?

Coastal First Nations have increased our authority over territories and we are now more engaged in planning and decision-making.

- ▶ Coastal First Nations and individual First Nations are negotiating access to new commercial tenures and business opportunities in forestry, tourism, renewable energy, and other sectors.
- ▶ First Nation community leaders are negotiating benefit sharing protocols and agreements with existing operations on our territories to ensure that revenue, jobs and capacity is shared with our people.
- ▶ New protected areas, called conservancies and biodiversity areas, have been legislated to sustain the health of our ecosystems – ensuring we have fresh water, clean air and healthy populations of our traditional use plants.
- ▶ Protection of areas with our traditional foods and medicine mean greater self-sufficiency and health in our communities.
- ▶ Access to new sources of funding (Coast Opportunity Funds) will provide First Nations training for jobs in conservation fields as well as seed money for new businesses.

EBM: New Opportunities for Training and Skills-Building

Our success in implementing EBM will depend on ensuring we have a healthy, well-educated and well-supported workforce. To address our training needs, Coastal First Nations is leading several initiatives.



Photo by Jens Wieting

The **Ecosystem-Based Management Learning Forum** brings together resource practitioners from communities throughout the coast and Haida Gwaii to learn, network and share their experiences of applying EBM on territorial lands. Participants are learning about new legislation and the implications of the strategic land use agreements, how to implement Land Use Objectives, and managing new protected areas.



A comprehensive training program for **Guardian Watchmen** is offered by Northwest Community College in the region. Through the certificate program, Guardians learn about various aspects of monitoring, from conducting resource inventories and monitoring land use impacts, to caring for archeological sites and resolving conflicts.



The **Great Bear Training Institute** will build capacity through a virtual training centre. It will deliver relevant and responsive training programs that integrate the cultural, language and economic needs of First Nations communities throughout the central and north coast region and Haida Gwaii.



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.