



## GREAT BEAR CARBON CREDITS: BENEFITTING COMMUNITIES

The Great Bear Carbon Credit Corporation is in the process of renewing another five-year agreement with BC's Climate Investment Branch to sell carbon credits from the Great Bear Rainforest. Sales will provide conservation monies to coastal First Nations communities in the first year.

The renewed agreement will protect forests for the future and ensure continued funding for stewardship and community projects in the region. The Kitasoo/Xai'xais Stewardship Society is an example of how funding from carbon credit sales has helped its office grow from a small staff only a few years ago to 30 employees today.

"We're very dependent on carbon credit money, it's helped a lot in our work," says Stewardship Director Doug Neasloss. "We're able to take that money and reinvest it back into stewardship of our territory."

The Great Bear Carbon Credit Corporation has more than 1-million tonnes of carbon credits to sell every year. That represents more than \$40-million in sales over the past decade. Sixty-five per cent of net revenues go back to communities for conservation and 35 per cent for human well-being and other projects.

"It's really important to have a stable source of funds to do this work," says Neasloss. "We're making sure we're driving the science that will inform decision-makers in federal, provincial or First Nations governments."

With 85 per cent of its rainforest protected, the Great Bear Forest Carbon Project is one of the largest carbon credit programs in Canada. More than 6-million hectares of coastal temperate rainforest act as lungs for the planet – inhaling and storing carbon from the atmosphere that causes climate change, and releasing oxygen for people to breathe.

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# GREAT BEAR CARBON CREDITS: BENEFITTING COMMUNITIES *(cont'd)*



## How do carbon credits sales work?

Companies can work to reduce their carbon emissions through greener practices. They can also purchase carbon credits to lower or 'offset' emissions they can't entirely eliminate. For every tonne of carbon a company emits, it can purchase carbon credits that represent the same amount of carbon stored by trees in Great Bear conservation areas.

By choosing Great Bear carbon credits, clients – including the provincial government, Harbour Air Seaplanes, Port Metro Vancouver, Vancity Savings and Desjardins Bank – are proudly supporting ecosystem-based conservation of coastal First Nations' lands and waters.



## Benefit to Communities

In Kitsoo/Xai'Xais territory, funds support six Coastal Guardian positions on the land and water that help implement a management plan co-developed by the Nation and BC Parks. The Guardians monitor heavy-use inlets, including grizzly bear habitat and crab fishing areas. "We used to have a lot of illegal activities up here and now we have zero," says Neasloss.

Neasloss says carbon credit proceeds are reinvested into science and research work to support policy change. The Nation's seven-year bear study has identified an important new trend in grizzly bear movement from a traditional mainland habitat to the islands. A creek walker program counts salmon in more than 130 rivers in the territory. And a salmon DNA research project will help identify where salmon are being caught, providing vital information to inform fishing policy.

"We want science to do something. We want it to work for our community and see that it's tied to policy and management change," Doug emphasizes.

Heiltsuk Chief Marilyn Slett says carbon credit sales have helped support a new governance meeting space for their Hemas in the Big House that opened in Bella Bella in October. This supports traditional governance that flows from our traditional leadership, says Chief Slett, ensuring Heiltsuk Title and Rights, and protection measures in the territory.

# HEILTSUK HORIZON RECRUITS FOR JOBS ON THE WATER



A job fair in Bella Bella in late February will offer Heiltsuk members opportunities for jobs and training at sea with Heiltsuk Horizon Maritime Services. A recruitment event in Vancouver in mid-January was the first in an effort to ready a local workforce for a potential \$8-million in infrastructure contracts over the next four years.

A Marine Infrastructure Standing Offer awarded last year puts the Heiltsuk majority-owned company first on the list for Oceans and Fisheries Canada contracts on the Central Coast.

The offer is good news for the partnership formed by the Heiltsuk with global marine and offshore company Horizon Maritime in 2018.

After really taking the time to develop the partnership, it's paying off, says Heiltsuk Chief Marilyn Slett. "For us, it means a lot that we're able to take this next step to get people to work for Heiltsuk Horizon."

She says the company is recruiting for positions starting in March and is also informing community members and high school students about training opportunities for careers at sea. People are needed who have existing skills or the desire to train as project managers, deck-workers, barge and tug operators, engine room crew, and in excavating, pile-driving, rock-drilling and a range of trades positions.

Candidates will also receive training in emergency response to support plans for an Indigenous Marine Response Centre (IMRC) in Heiltsuk territory. Taking advantage of programs offered by the Coast Guard, BC Institute of Technology, and the province, Chief Slett says, "we're trying to leverage as much as we can to achieve our vision of the IMRC."

IMRC Technical Director Diana Chan says the future response centre will employ staff equipped to respond to a range of scenarios – including search and rescue, basic firefighting and small vessel towing.

"You hope that people train for emergencies and never have to use their skills," says Chan. "Between emergencies, skilled staff could also support resource monitoring and other types of work."

The Heiltsuk met with Transport Deputy Minister Michael Keenan in December to agree to a phased approach to creating the IMRC. After a first strategic planning phase, plans will be put into action on the ground with a community response team ready to respond to any type of marine pollution incident in the territory.

Councillor Megan Humchitt sits at a Heiltsuk joint marine response table with Transport Canada and Canadian Coast Guard. She's excited about the progress made since talks began last May.

"From when we started meeting to where we are now is really encouraging," Humchitt enthuses. "I feel like there's a lot of collaboration happening at the table and a lot of creative planning for a vision that we all have for marine safety on the coast."

She says the Heiltsuk want to ensure full-time work for future IMRC staff and to engage master mariners in the process. "There's a need for Indigenous mariners to be empowered to protect the territory in ways that are effective and that they understand."

In the wake of the Nathan E. Stewart oil spill in Heiltsuk waters, Humchitt says the table is also finding creative ways to improve how communications happen between the Coast Guard and an Indigenous nation. "When the Nathan E. Stewart incident happened in our territory, we were largely uninformed. We never want to feel the helplessness that we felt in response to that spill."

# ALL NATIVE BASKETBALL - WOMEN ON THE COURT



At this year's All Native Basketball Tournament (February 9-16), 16 women's teams hit the court, marking almost three decades of women's basketball in the event.

Judy Carlick-Pearson was there from the beginning. The 42-year-old mom has played in all tournaments except one since a women's league began in 1993.

Basketball runs through her family. "All my older cousins, male and female, played. My grandfather was a very short man and a good basketball player. And our community Metlakatla was always big in basketball."

Her older sister Roberta Edzerza pioneered the way for women to play in BC's largest Indigenous sports event. "Growing up we used to play against men, it wasn't a big deal for us," Carlick-Pearson says.

"One year, my sister announced, 'I'm playing in the tournament this year.' We said, you kinda can't, it's a men's tournament. Roberta said there were no rules to prevent women from playing and got herself on a local men's team."



The next year, the first women's teams were invited to the All Native Tournament. At 15, Carlick-Pearson played for Kaien Island, beating Edzerza's older team to win the first women's competition. "I remember only the last ten minutes of the entire tournament. It was a huge debut, so much pressure. We ended up beating my sister's team by 2 points in the final second."

The inclusion of women in sports is about equal opportunity, fairness and equality, says Carlick-Pearson. For First Nations women, she stresses, it's a very empowering situation in which women get to represent their families, teams and villages.

"There's a lot of pride that's instilled in this tournament. People are playing their hearts out for their villages. We're superheroes to our own kids."

ANBT President Peter Haugan was her high school coach and on the committee when a women's division was first proposed. "It wasn't a hard decision for me," Haugan says. "I knew they would entertain and play hard. We added the women and it was a big success."

When not on the court, Carlick-Pearson is the project manager of the Coastal First Nations' Great Bear Rainforest Essential Oils. She also recently opened West Coast Best Coast Designs in Prince Rupert and is creating designs for six ANBT team uniforms.

"We're actively involved in basketball, hockey and baseball as a family so we're trying to provide people with clothing they might need locally. Our logo is a whale tail – the majority of Tsimshian people are killer whales and being on the water is significant to us."

Carlick-Pearson and her sister have been role models to inspire many women to play the game. In 2009, she was the first woman inducted into the All Native Tournament's Hall of Fame. Edzerza followed in 2015.

While still competing in 2020, she says the average woman player's age is about 35, so "my generation is getting ready to hand the torch off."

"There are tons of young women's teams and really amazing talent coming up. It's crazy to see how far we've come since 1993," she says. "Teams are playing harder, training harder, and taking it more seriously."

Carlick-Pearson, who coached for six years, says if players want to beat the top dog, they have to work hard. Asked who to watch for in 2020, she points to teams from the Okanagan, Haisla, Kitkatla and, of course, her team Rain from Prince Rupert.

"But you can never underestimate any team in the All Native tournament," she cautions. "We've been beaten by some teams you'd never think were contenders."



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