



COAST FUNDS



Reflecting on 10 Years of Conservation Finance in
the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii

SPECIAL EDITION

Updates from Coast Funds

Welcome to the spring 2019 special 10-year edition of Talking Stick. This season we reflect on the past decade of conservation finance in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. We're pleased to share with you the achievements of First Nations as they pursue their stewardship and economic development goals.

The Coast Funds story starts much earlier than 10 years ago. For years, **First Nations leadership worked with government and industry, setting the stage for a new conservation economy.** Our former director and board chair, Merv Child—a member of the Dzawadaenuxw First Nation and executive director for Nanwakolas Council—shares his memories of those negotiations that led to the creation of Coast Funds, and of the changes our organization went through as we strove to effectively support First Nations.

At the heart of our work is our commitment to strengthen community well-being through every project our organization supports. Coast Funds was created to connect well-being with Indigenous-led sustainable development and stewardship.

The numbers reported in the “At a Glance” section of this issue offer a small, but important part of the story of growth, revitalization, and stewardship that is taking place. A bigger part of the story comes from the experiences of the people who have called this coast home for millennia. These experiences reveal that the **Coast Funds model of permanent, Indigenous-led conservation finance is one of global importance.**

Ten years is just the beginning for the stewardship and well-being efforts that will continue under the leadership of future generations. Coast Funds' mandate is to support First Nations stewardship in perpetuity and **we look forward to continuing our work in partnership with all of the First Nations whose territories span the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.**

Darcy Dobell
Communications Committee Chair

Brodie Guy
Executive Director

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SPRING 2019
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COVER

Haida women support their relatives in raising a carved monumental column by master carver Kiltnguulans *Christian White* at Hl'yaalan 'Lngee. They join their community in blessing the pole using eagle down and feathers. The pole was raised in 2017 at Hiellen Longhouse Village, a promising venture in cultural revitalization and economic development.

PHOTO BY
Brodie Guy

“Coast Funds serves as a model for how conservation finance can and should be led by Indigenous Peoples whose territories are at the centre of land, marine, and resource management decisions. Most importantly, the Coast Funds model demonstrates how to link a healthy environment with the prosperity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples.”

Merv Child, Coast Funds founding director and board chair (2010-2018)



The Haisla Fisheries Commission conducts research, monitoring, and restoration work throughout Haisla territory, and ensures Nuyems (Haisla traditional laws) are incorporated into all resource management and development decision-making.

PHOTO BY

Mike Jacobs, Haisla Fisheries Commission

REFLECTING ON 10 YEARS OF CONSERVATION FINANCE

Ten years have passed since Coast Funds' board of directors first approved funding for a First Nations-led conservation project. More than twice that time has elapsed since First Nations, the Government of British Columbia, and forestry companies sat down to negotiate what would become the Great Bear Rainforest agreements.

I was involved in those multi-year negotiations resulting in the creation of a \$120 million fund that would later become Coast Funds. **I was grateful to join the board of directors when Coast Funds was established, recognizing the opportunity it presented for permanent conservation and sustainable development in the region.**

Coast Funds was, at the time, the only Indigenous-led conservation finance organization in the world. Through sound investment of the original funds raised, the organization would operate in perpetuity, and support sustainable development and stewardship across our homelands. **To this day, Coast Funds serves as a model for how conservation finance can and should be led by Indigenous Peoples whose territories are at the centre of land, marine and resource management decisions.** Most importantly, the Coast Funds model demonstrates how to link a healthy environment with the prosperity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

To serve that purpose, Coast Funds needed to work in partnership with the First Nations we serve to support their conservation and development goals. Looking back on the past 10 years, I see we have made tremendous progress. I'm immensely proud to have been one of the many who helped shape Coast Funds.

In late 2008, the board approved its first funding application. The conservation fund invested in Coastal First Nations, an alliance of nine First Nations, to develop a model for stewardship departments along the coast and a plan for building capacity for implementing conservation-based initiatives.

Ten years later, our board of directors has approved funding for a further 352 projects—\$81.6 million in total. Each endeavour makes a difference to the long-term well-being of First Nations communities. Those benefits take many forms: 1033 permanent jobs, 108 new or expanded businesses, and management plans for 26 protected areas. **Each project grows capacity for First Nations to steward their territories and enhances opportunities for self-determination.**

During my time as a director and board chair, I have seen a lot of growth and development at Coast Funds. We have improved the way we communicate with First Nations: creating Talking Stick, a publication that celebrates stewardship and economic development successes; launching a multimedia-based website to publish storytelling and project outcomes in partnership with First Nations; and working to ensure transparency and a regular flow of information to Members and Funders. We have seen leadership transitions at both the board and staff level, with each individual contributing their own set of skills to supporting First Nations. Indeed, Coast Funds wouldn't exist without the collective work of our staff, directors, Members, and Funders.

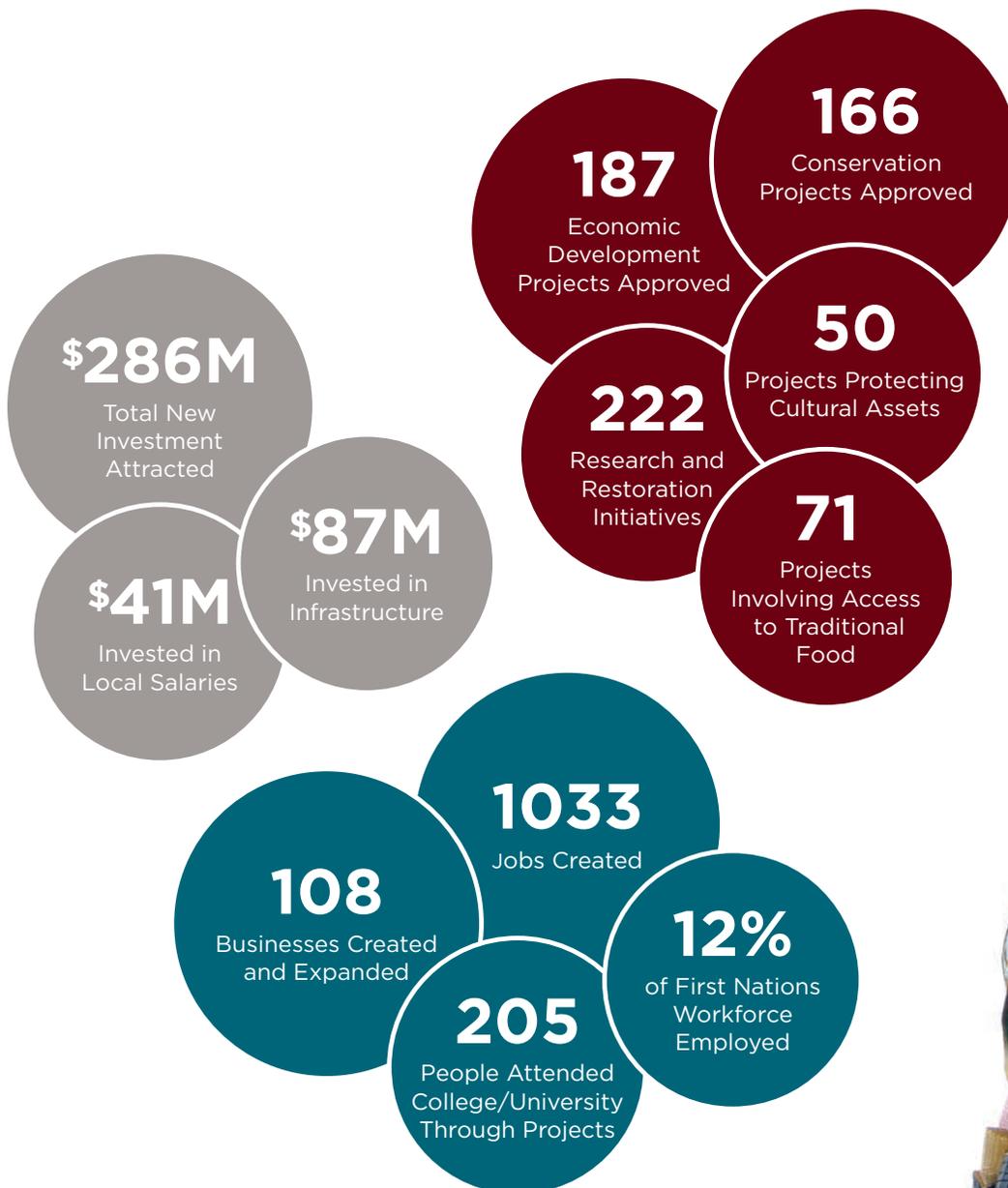
Coast Funds is thriving today because of the collaborative and focused work of many individuals from many backgrounds. **Together, we are achieving a shared vision: that the First Nations of the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii enjoy strengthened community well-being while maintaining their coastal ecosystems.** 10 years in, that vision has guided us to success and recognition as a global model of Indigenous-led conservation finance to which I am honoured to have contributed.



Merv Child
Founding director and board chair
(2010-2018), Coast Funds

AT A GLANCE: 10 YEARS OF STRENGTHENING WELL-BEING

Numbers provide a glimpse at how First Nations are investing to strengthen the well-being of their communities and ensure the permanent stewardship of their territories; they demonstrate the positive change that is happening throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. In the last 10 years, with conservation finance support from Coast Funds, that change is happening rapidly. Below are a few outcomes from Coast Funds' first 10 years of operation.



A welcome pole greets visitors in Klemtu, Kitasoo/Xai'xais territory.

PHOTO BY
Laura Hope

A DECADE OF DEFINING MOMENTS



2006

FEBRUARY

A New Vision for BC

First Nations, the BC Government, environmental groups, and forest companies stand together to announce land-use management plans for a 6.4-million-hectare region known as the Great Bear Rainforest, including nearly two million hectares of protected areas.



2007

JANUARY

\$60M for Sustainable Development

The federal and provincial governments each commit \$30 million for First Nations-led sustainable development. The funds match \$60 million previously pledged by philanthropic donors for stewardship and conservation.



2007

MAY

Creation of Coast Funds

Coast Funds—a global model of Indigenous-led conservation finance—was established with a \$120 million fund that would support the development of a sustainable coastal economy and stewardship of the region in perpetuity.



2008

OCTOBER

First Funding Approved

Coastal First Nations (CFN) invested to build capacity for economic development and stewardship forming the Coastal Stewardship Network and Great Bear Business Corporation. The nine member Nations of CFN continue to safely steward their territories and manage corporations that operate regional shellfish aquaculture, carbon credit and essential oil businesses.



2009

NOVEMBER

First Guardian Start-Up Funded

Wuikinuxv Nation, with support from Coast Funds, starts a Guardian Watchmen program to monitor and protect important cultural and ecological resources in its territory.



2012

DECEMBER

Independent Comprehensive Review Conducted

To improve its effectiveness, Coast Funds commissioned an independent review. The review found Coast Funds to be responsibly managed and providing support to ensure project success. It made 15 recommendations, including the tracking and reporting of well-being outcomes which was implemented by 2015.



2014

JUNE

Guardian Presence Raised Throughout K'ómoks Territory

As part of their Guardian Watchmen start-up, K'ómoks First Nation consulted with Elders to develop a plan for raising 10 Guardian poles throughout the K'ómoks traditional territory.



2014

SEPTEMBER

100th Project Funded

Gitga'at First Nation invested in high-speed broadband internet throughout the community of Hartley Bay. The investment had many positive benefits including helping local businesses increase their online presence, introducing tele-health provisions to the remote community, and positioning the Nation to provide ongoing emergency response services in the region.



2016

FEBRUARY

Great Bear Rainforest Agreements Announced

First Nations sign the Great Bear Rainforest land-use order which ensures 85% of the forests in the region will be protected from industrial-scale logging. The agreements also address cultural resources, freshwater ecosystems, and wildlife habitat. The region would continue to be stewarded by First Nations, with support from the Coast Funds conservation fund.



2016

SEPTEMBER

First Nations Announce over \$200M Invested

First Nations and Coast Funds announce over \$200 million in total new investment has been made since Coast Funds' inception to develop and diversify British Columbia's coastal economy.



2010 MAY

First Economic Development Corporation Funded

The Haitzaqv (Heiltsuk) Tribal Council transferred its businesses to the recently formed Heiltsuk Economic Development Corporation, thus building a solid foundation to continue growing and sustainably pursuing prosperity for its members.



2011 JULY

First Entrepreneur Funded

Bonnie Stanley worked with Coast Funds to expand her catering business and start a seafood restaurant in the Nisga'a Village of Gingolx. Her restaurant, U See Food U Eat It, has gained international attention and each year customers return from across the world.



2011 JULY

Eleven Protected Area Management Plans Published

With support from Coast Funds, the Council of the Haida Nation worked with the province to produce protected area management plans through its new heritage and natural resources program.



2011 SEPTEMBER

First Talking Stick Published

To share the successes, challenges and lessons learned from First Nations' projects, Coast Funds created the Talking Stick, published in communities throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.



2017 MARCH

Economic Fund Continues

After engaging with First Nations along the coast, it was evident the economic fund continued to be a well-managed and vital source of financing in the creation of a sustainable economy. First Nations expressed many plans to fully invest their allocations and so Coast Funds and the Province of BC agreed to continue the fund's operation.



2017 MAY

Planning for Sustainable Stewardship

Coast Funds Executive Director begins engaging with First Nations and Funders to discuss their vision for the conservation endowment fund and sustainable, long-term finance for stewardship programs in the region.



2018 OCTOBER

Conversations on Recapitalizing Coast Funds

Dialogue on the success of stewardship programs, the need for sustainable finance solutions, and the success of the Coast Funds model lead First Nations and Funders to a discussion of options for raising new funds to build on Coast Funds' future conservation finance capacity.



2018 DECEMBER

10 Years of Conservation Finance

After 10 years of approving project funding in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii, \$81.6 million from Coast Funds has been invested into 353 First Nations-led conservation and sustainable economic development projects.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

Every Coast Funds-supported project contributes to strengthening well-being in First Nations communities throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. Together with First Nations, we measure outcomes by tracking 20 indicators of environmental conservation, economic prosperity, social empowerment, and cultural vitality.

Social Empowerment

As a key element of conservation and economic development initiatives, **First Nations have invested \$40.5 million in local family-supporting salaries through projects supported by Coast Funds.**

Incomes provided from sustainable economic development and conservation projects help ensure that First Nations members don't have to leave their communities to find jobs. Eddie Walkus, a Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw member, works for his Nations' water taxi business. He used to drive a truck, having to travel long distances from his community.

Today, he says he is thankful to be working in an important role for his Nations that allows him to spend so much time in his homelands.

In the Nass Valley, an oolichan research project undertaken by Nisga'a Lisims Government provides year-round employment for technicians who were previously seasonally employed. Fisheries work is often seasonal, points out researcher Cam Noble, who worked on the oolichan project. He says year-round employment is "almost unheard of in our business up [in the Nass Valley]."



Kawatsi Construction is one of seven distinct businesses owned by the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations' economic development corporation.

PHOTO BY
Coast Funds

Economic Prosperity

First Nations in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii are leading the revitalization of their economies and ensuring resilience through diversification.

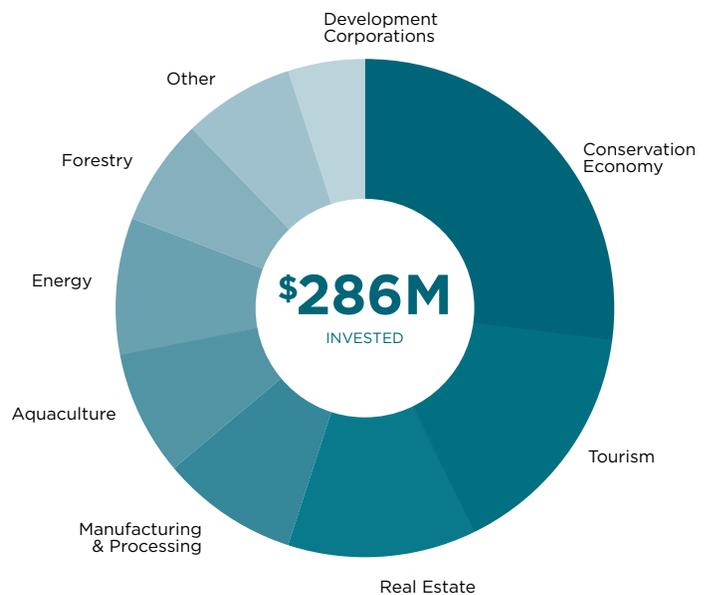
With support from Coast Funds, First Nations have invested over \$286 million into the diversification of their economies.

Diversification means supporting innovative businesses, creating conservation capacity, growing employment and skills training for community members, and ensuring benefits from businesses are returned to the Nations and their community members.

Tourism has been a growing sector of many First Nations' economies. Spirit Bear Lodge, for example, is the second largest employer in the Kitisoo/Xai'xais community of Klemtu (Klemdulxk). It provides employment for youth and women that may be under-represented in other sectors.

By investing in a range of economic sectors First Nations in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii are strengthening their economies and reducing community reliance on single industries.

INVESTING TO DIVERSIFY BRITISH COLUMBIA'S COASTAL ECONOMY



The Súa Performance Group was started by youth with a keen interest in interacting with local tourism at Spirit Bear Lodge in Klemtu, and of maintaining the Kitisoo/Xai'Xais tradition of performance.

PHOTO BY
Mike Brown, courtesy Spirit Bear Lodge

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

Environmental Conservation

Through their Coast Funds investments, **First Nations have established 14 Guardian Watchmen and regional monitoring programs.** Those programs cover an average of 2.3 million hectares annually.

Coast Funds' conservation endowment fund was created to provide resources to operate stewardship programs, like the Guardian Watchmen, in perpetuity. It has proven to be a hugely successful model for financing First Nations stewardship.

Guardian Watchmen have often been called the “eyes and ears” of their communities. Patrolling the lands and waters of their territories, **the men and women of the Guardian programs protect and monitor their Nations' resources and cultural assets.**

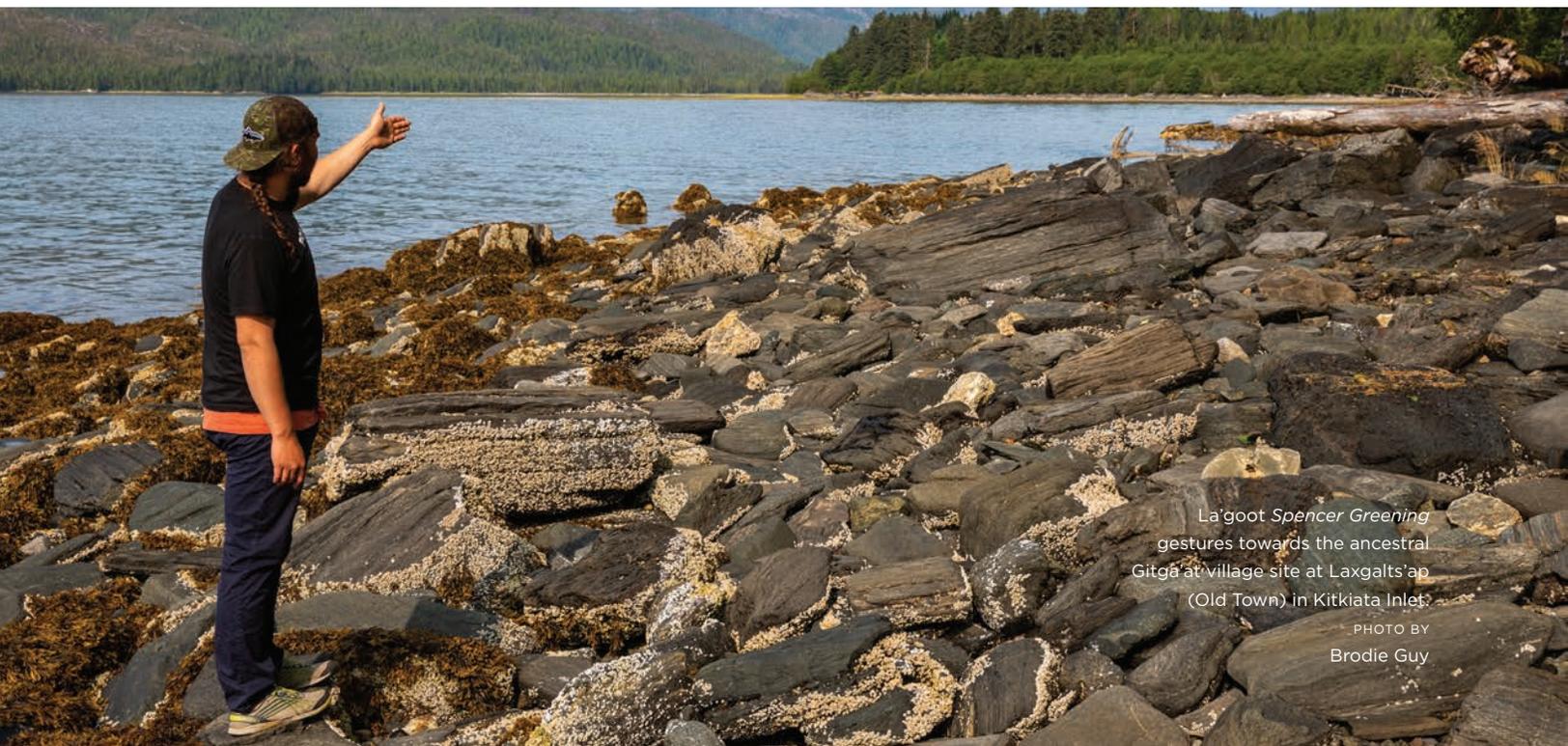
Wii Hai Waas *Arnold Clifton*, Chief Councillor of the Gitga'at First Nation emphasizes the importance of the Guardian work: “It's now more important than ever to ensure that the traditional use knowledge we possess, as Gitga'at people and as Tsimshian people, is passed on so that future generations can continue to protect our natural resources.”

The Gitga'at Guardians, for example, have collected audio samples to establish an acoustic baseline for their territory. The measurements help indicate ecosystem health and can help track the impacts of industrial activity. That information can be used to guide future decisions.

“We aren't just talking about traditional stewardship, we are living it, strengthening our ability to govern and watch over the territory, and ensuring that our vision for it is alive and well.”

- LA'GOOT *SPENCER GREENING*, GITGA'AT RESEARCHER

Whether it's collecting DNA from the genetically unique Spirit Bear, working closely with Elders to pass on traditional knowledge, creating jobs for community members, or protecting species from illegal poaching and over-harvesting, **the Guardian programs of the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii play an integral role in strengthening community well-being.**



La'goot Spencer Greening gestures towards the ancestral Gitga'at village site at Laxgalts'ap (Old Town) in Kitkiata Inlet.

PHOTO BY
Brodie Guy

Cultural Vitality

First Nations are enabling Elders to transfer cultural and stewardship knowledge to youth through a wide range of projects.

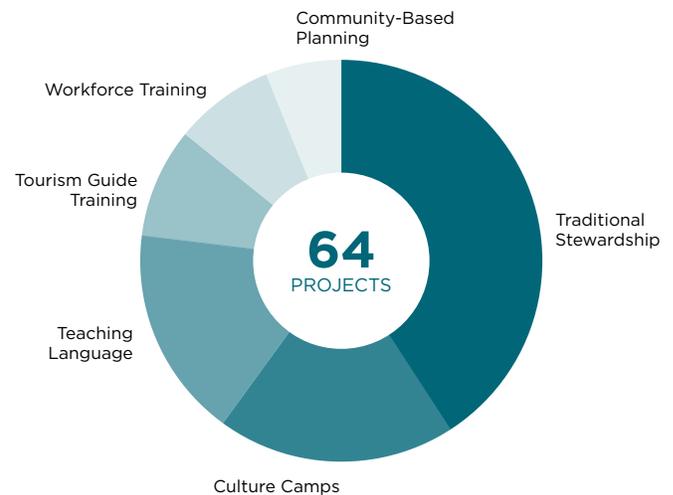
First Nations have led 64 projects with support from Coast Funds to facilitate the transfer of Elder knowledge to youth.

First Nations have rich oral traditions and customs which make up their unique cultural identities. **First Nations are working to ensure that the lessons, history, language, and knowledge of their cultures are passed from Elders to youth to maintain the traditions of each Nation into the future.** The teachings of Elders and education of youth enables young people to become the future stewards of their territory and knowledge-holders of their Nations' cultures.

Projects like the Homalco Wildlife Tours train staff, made up largely of youth from the community, to run cultural tours that showcase the history, language, songs, stories, and dances of Xwémalhkwa (Homalco)

First Nation. The three-week training program for staff helps to reinvigorate members' connection to their culture.

PROJECTS WITH KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FROM ELDERS TO YOUTH



“We have drumming practices that are open to everyone. The number of participants is increasing every time, especially with youth joining. Knowing that they will grow up knowing our culture makes me very proud of the work that we do. Reviving our culture would not be possible without a supportive team, including contributions from Coast Funds.”

Dorothy Andrew, former Councillor, Xwémalhkwa (Homalco) First Nation



Dorothy Andrew and Maryanne Evenoldsen, former Councillor and former Chief Councillor of Xwémalhkwa (Homalco) First Nation.

PHOTO BY
Tricia Thomas, Salish Eye

Standing at Tallio hot springs in the Talyuunc territory of the Nuxalk Nation, Chief Nuximlayc *Laurence Pootlass* looks out over logging taking place in South Bentick in 1994. The Nuxalk were integral in standing up to industry practices that were harming the well-being of local First Nations communities.

PHOTO BY
Myron Kozak/Greenpeace



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