

NEWS RELEASE

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B.C. Aboriginal Leaders Scoop Nominations for Prestigious U.S. Award, Guujaaw Takes Prize

Portland, OR (June 23, 2006) - Ecotrust will present the 2006 Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership to Guujaaw at a ceremony in Portland, Oregon on July 19, 2006. The ceremony will also honor four other finalists for their achievements: Harold Gatensby (Dahka T'lingit), Carcross, Yukon Territory, Canada; Ilarion (Larry) Mercurieff (Aleut), Anchorage, Alaska; Tawna Sanchez, (Shoshone-Bannock/Ute), Portland, Oregon and Chief Judith Sayers (Nuu-chah-nulth), Port Alberni, British Columbia, Canada.

Supported by the families of Howard and Peter Buffett, the Buffett Award recognizes indigenous leadership that improves social, economic, political or environmental conditions. This year, the \$25,000 Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership goes to Guujaaw (Haida) of Skidegate, British Columbia, Canada (Haida Gwaii). The four other finalists will each receive a \$2,500 cash award.

The Buffett Award was established in 2001 to provide resources for the development and transfer of knowledge in indigenous communities. First Nation, Alaska Native or tribal members over 35 years of age who exhibit extraordinary community leadership within the Salmon Nation region from Alaska to California are eligible for nomination.

Guujaaw is the honored recipient of the 2006 Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership for his work as a political leader, carver, traditional medicine practitioner, singer and negotiator. Guujaaw has worked with great dedication and purpose for more than three decades to advance the political, cultural, and environmental interests of the Haida Nation located on the Haida Gwaii archipelago off the coast of British Columbia.

"Guujaaw is a warrior. We like that," said Spencer B. Beebe, President of Ecotrust, on behalf of the Final Jury Panel. "Haida Nation is at the forefront of Canadian Aboriginal Rights and Title. Guujaaw is one of the premier strategists; his leadership personifies wise traditional relationships and genuine responsibility for the Haida Nation's home."

In various capacities, Guujaaw has fought for protection of the land, economic sustainability, and Haida Rights and Title over Haida territory. Guujaaw is currently the President of the Haida Nation. He was the lead Council of the Haida Nation (CHN) negotiator on the Gwaii Haanas Agreement and has been a member of the Archipelago Management Board. At the community level, Guujaaw was involved in the establishment of the Gwaii Trust.

Guujaaw is also a talented carver with monumental works in such distant places as Indonesia and Japan. He has represented the Haida Nation at national and international conferences as well as on Canadian, British and American television specials. *The First International Forum of United Indigenous Peoples* in Pau, France recently spotlighted Guujaaw and the Haida people.

Harold Gatensby is an honored 2006 Buffett Award finalist for his advocacy efforts to protect the Yukon River Watershed and his work within the justice system for better treatment of Native people. He is one of the co-founders of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and currently serves on its Executive Committee. Gatensby has also worked as a community-based justice training facilitator with individuals, professionals, community groups and justice organizations.

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Ilarion (Larry) Merculieff is an honored 2006 Buffett Award finalist for his many contributions to increased involvement of Native organizations in scientific research and political efforts to protect Alaska's environment and the Bering Sea. Merculieff is currently the Deputy Director of the Alaska Native Science Commission. He is a co-founder of the Alaska Forum on the Environment, International Bering Sea Forum and The Alaska Indigenous Peoples' Council for Marine Mammals.

Tawna Sanchez is an honored 2006 Buffett Award finalist for her steadfast commitment and work to help Native women and children lead lives free of violence and abuse. Sanchez is currently the Family Services Director at the Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland, Oregon. She has also worked on peace and social justice issues on a regional and international level. Sanchez has served on the Board of Directors of the Peace Development Fund, the International Indian Treaty Council and the Anpo Spiritual Camp.

Chief Judith Sayers is an honored 2006 Buffett Award finalist for her contributions to aboriginal rights, treaty settlements, a sustainable future and equal rights for First Nation women. Elected in 1995, Chief Sayers has successfully worked to improve the economic, cultural, environmental and social conditions of the Hupacasath First Nation and helped move regional issues to the national stage. She has also served as the Chief Negotiator for the Hupacasath First Nation since 1993 in the British Columbia treaty process.

This year's Buffett Award Dinner and Ceremony will be held at the Portland Art Museum. The ceremony provides the tribal leaders' guests, the Buffett families, Ecotrust staff, friends and supporters the opportunity to celebrate and be inspired by these leaders. The annual event brings together current and prior honorees, and ties in with an array of Portland-based community events, speakers, and networking opportunities for the tribal community.

About Ecotrust and its Native Programs

In addition to the Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership, Ecotrust provides a variety of other projects and services through its Native Programs including land repatriation, native youth leadership, wild salmon marketing, and support of the Elakha Alliance. In collaboration with Renewing America's Food Traditions Consortium (RAFT), Ecotrust published *Renewing Salmon Nation's Food Traditions*, edited by Gary Nabhan. Ecotrust also published *Klamath Heartlands: A Guide to the Klamath Reservation Forest Plan* in collaboration with the Klamath Tribes.

Ecotrust is a non-profit organization founded in 1991 committed to strengthening communities and the environment from Alaska to California. For more information about Ecotrust and the Buffett Award honorees, see www.ecotrust.org/buffettaward. Information on Ecotrust Canada can be found at www.ecotrustcan.org.

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