Ecotrust Case Study: Kitlope Ecosystem, BC

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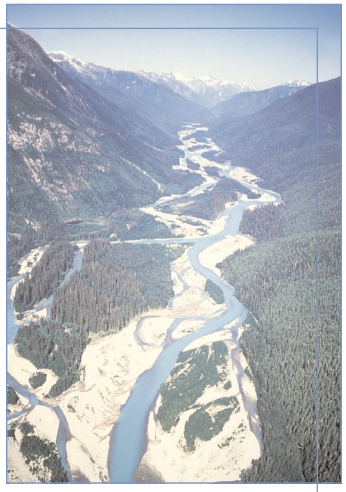
The Challenge:

In 1990, as heavy logging advanced through British Columbia's valleys and youth suicide rates escalated, the Haisla people found both the spiritual foundations of their Nation and their continued existence in peril. Meanwhile, the flagging of a logging road into the Kitlope Valley posed an imminent threat to the largest pristine coastal temperate rain forest watershed in the world.



Actions:

- Ecotrust makes contact with Haisla leadership, based upon *Inventory of Watersheds* assessment of the 275,000-hectare Kitlope as the largest unlogged coastal temperate rain forest watershed in North America.
- Ecotrust support for the founding of the Haisla Woman's Society for Rediscovery, which convenes annual Rediscovery Camps to bring Haisla youth to the Kitlope to learn traditional skills from elders.
- Convening of stakeholders by the Haisla and Ecotrust brings together independent scientists, the West Fraser Timber Co., holder of the Kitlope logging rights, and representatives of local, provincial and federal agencies.
- *The Greater Kitlope Ecosystem: A Wilderness Planning Framework*, a consultant report commissioned by Ecotrust and the Haisla, suggests management guidelines and a governing structure for the region.
- The Haisla incorporate the non-profit Nanakila Institute to facilitate management and coordinate research in the region.
- Press campaign along with Western Canada Wilderness Committee and Sierra Club of Canada focuses media attention on the region: *Time*, Discovery Channel, etc.
- BC Premier Michael Harcourt announces a co-management agreement with the Haisla for the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy Protected Area, assuring permanent protection to the region. West Fraser relinquishes its logging rights.

Principles & Tools:

- Building of long-term relationships; respect for indigenous culture and sovereignty.
- Scientific and technical analysis based upon a whole-watershed perspective.
- Careful and patient collaborative work among diverse stakeholders.
- Communications support through a variety of publications and media outreach.

1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000

- *More Than the Sum of Our Parks* (Ecotrust & Ecotrust Canada) applies lessons learned in the Kitlope to a proposal for a Protected Areas Act that emphasizes joint management agreements throughout BC.
- A series of Ecotrust-Haisla publications documents the traditional ecological knowledge of the region: *A Cultural & Ecological Assessment*, *An Initial Survey of Alternative Silvicultural Practices*, and *An Ethnobotany*.
- Haisla leader and founding Ecotrust board member Gerald Amos initiates Kitlope Ecotours.
- Haisla elders and Ecotrust Canada negotiate the recovery and resurrection of an 1872 totem pole from the Swedish Ethnographic Museum.

Outcomes:

- Provincial Parks Act protection of the 275,000-hectare Kitlope River watershed, the first co-management agreement of its kind.
- Protection for wild runs of all five species of salmon as well as steelhead, sea-run cutthroat and dolly varden trout.
- Enhanced local capacity in science, education and cultural restoration.
- Dramatic reduction in Haisla teen suicide rate.
- Birth of a new energy and optimism around First Nations/environmental community collaborations.