



# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



SIERRA  
CLUB BC



# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2019 was a big year for Sierra Club BC. It marked our 50th anniversary, making us the longest standing environmental organization in B.C., and was filled with reflection, planning and action.

As we celebrated 50 years of protecting nature, we took the opportunity to do a deep dive into the history of our organization to better understand where we have been successful and where our greatest strengths lie. Perhaps most importantly, 2019 showed us where we need to change and grow.

We were powerfully assisted in this process of reflection by the excellent work of long-time Sierra Club BC supporter and volunteer Diane Pinch, whose five years of research and writing culminated in the publication of an award-winning book *Passion and Persistence: 50 years of the Sierra Club in British Columbia*. This detailed retelling of Sierra Club BC’s story since our formation in 1969 was eye opening.

While taking deep pride in our wins, we were profoundly aware that it has not been enough—the planet is now facing an urgent extinction and climate crisis. Additionally, we think it’s important to recognize that those most impacted by the climate crisis have contributed the least to it. These marginalized voices have historically been excluded from environmental narratives—including our own.

It’s clear that to protect the lands and waters we all know and love for future generations, we must gently move forward in a new way together.

This transformational vision, as informed by teachings from our past, came to bloom in our strategic planning process in which we outlined a course for the future. Collaboratively undertaken with our Board of Directors and staff, as well as with considerable external input,

this exercise focused on the question of how we can work effectively and respectfully to build broad-based power across diverse communities for transformational grassroots-led change. We recognized that to do this, we must engage with and learn from diverse communities and knowledge systems, including communities that are most impacted by the ecological challenges we face.

As a component of this, we committed to learning from the governance systems of the Indigenous Nations on whose territories we live and work. In the summer of 2019, we issued a statement of acknowledgement of past failures and accountability for moving forward.

In the midst of reflection on the past and intensive planning for the future, in 2019 we continued to tirelessly engage and advocate on critical issues including old-growth forest protection, climate justice, stopping fossil fuel expansion, and outdoor learning and nature education for children. We grew our team, hiring new organizers and campaigners to do this powerful work better than ever.

This year of growth, change and finding balance has been pivotal for Sierra Club BC. It seems fitting that, as we celebrated 50 years of work, a new Sierra Club BC began to emerge, transformed to address the challenges of the next 50 years. We can’t wait to continue this journey with you.

Sincerely,

*Hannah Askew*

**Hannah Askew**  
Executive Director



1 Cover photos by Jens Wieting (top) and Garth Lenz (bottom). Photo (right) by Andrew S. Wright.



## OUR STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Sierra Club BC is committed to building respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and upholding their territorial governance in the lands where we live and work together.

We acknowledge that Sierra Club BC has perpetuated harm against Indigenous peoples and communities through advocating for conservation of land by colonial governments without the free, prior, informed consent of the Indigenous Nations who have lived on and stewarded these lands for thousands of years. We acknowledge that Sierra Club BC's history of advocacy for the creation of parks and protected areas has been informed by colonial ideology. When settler governments designated some areas as parks or protected areas for enjoyment, and later for conservation, they unjustly removed Indigenous peoples from their land, interrupted their cultural practices, and left ecosystems cut off from the beneficial Indigenous management practices that had shaped and nurtured them over millennia.

We commit to forging relationships based on respect with Indigenous peoples and we recognize that this ongoing process includes education, engaging in critical reflection, seeking and acting on feedback, and changing policies and practices.

Today, Sierra Club BC staff, Board members, volunteers and members are an increasingly diverse group of people, including settlers, recent immigrants and Indigenous peoples. We have different lived experiences and different perspectives, but we all come from a place of respect for the natural world. We understand that humans are not separate from this world but are a part of a greater family that connects all living beings.

The conversations we are currently having about our role in perpetuating colonialism can be painful. We acknowledge our responsibility to create as much cultural safety as possible, within the organization and across all our initiatives, as we do this work. Our history is complex, and there are many things we are proud of—as well as some things we are not. As we move forward, we are striving to create a balance of old and new. This balance needs to honour Indigenous teachings and strength while not discarding the goodness nor all of the structure in the current Western system that is struggling to overcome a possession-based worldview. We look forward to continuing on this transformational process so that we can learn to journey well together and build a better future for all.

## OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Since Sierra Club BC's beginnings in 1969, protecting breath-taking, old-growth forests has remained at our core. These giants, with their vibrant boughs and mosaics of life, are intricately woven into our very being—this is true for us as well as countless people across what is now known as British Columbia. These old-growth forests show us that, despite climate change and stress from humans, here is a community that is still working together to stay balanced.

Forests have given us so much; they provide clean air and water, give homes to countless beings and protect our communities from climate impacts. In 2019 we continued to reciprocate these many gifts by standing up for old-growth in a multitude of ways.

### ADVOCATING FOR BOLD OLD-GROWTH ACTION AND POLICY CHANGE

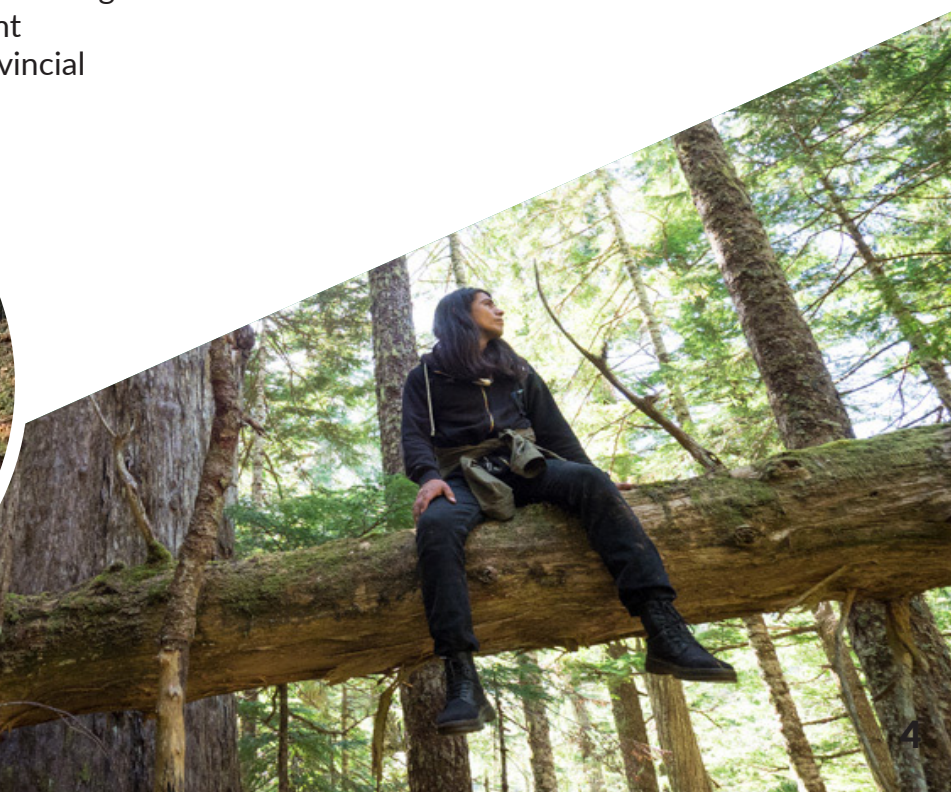
This year, we met with elected representatives to call for interim conservation and shared recommendations for lasting old-growth solutions. We met with provincial staff to review and dive into the details of mapping remaining old-growth. When the B.C. government announced the intention to revise provincial

forestry laws, we worked with other groups to submit joint recommendations for needed changes that will prioritize ecosystem values over timber profit, and offered concerned British Columbians support to do the same. When the government announced that old-growth would be considered outside the scope of these legislative amendments, we mobilized our supporters again to give input into the provincial old-growth review panel.

### FIELD ASSESSMENTS

A deepening relationship with the Nuchatlaht Nation led to a Nootka Island field assessment to gather information and document Salmon Parks watersheds, which was then shared at a public event in Victoria.

We also partnered with the Ma'amtagila First Nation to conduct cultural and ecological field assessments in their territory. The results of which are providing a foundation for emerging Indigenous-led conservation efforts in this region. *Photos from this field assessment are featured below.*



Photos by Louis Bockner/Sierra Club BC



BRINGING SCIENCE TO POLICY SOLUTIONS

True to our mandate as a science-based organization, we released three hard-hitting reports and a poll shining a light on the current state of old-growth in B.C.—and how we can turn the tide.

Early in 2019, we released the report *Hidden, Ignored and Growing: B.C.'s forest carbon emissions*, highlighting that B.C.'s hidden and uncounted forest emissions are now much higher than the province's total officially reported emissions, and calling for transparent reporting and an action plan to reduce them. The report garnered significant media coverage.

We worked with Indigenous communities and the University of Victoria's Environmental Law Clinic to release the report *Applying Solutions from the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements to Vancouver Island, the South Coast, and Beyond*. This report provides science-based recommendations for the conservation of old-growth forest ecosystems while respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples, which can be scaled up to other parts of the province.

Our *Clearcut Carbon* report highlighted the shocking reality of "sequestration dead zones": clearcut lands that release more carbon than they absorb. We found that phasing out clearcutting in B.C.—particularly in old-growth forests—with a transition to reformed forestry that prioritizes ecosystem services is as important for climate action as phasing out the use of all fossil fuels.

To inform the evolving B.C. policy around forest management and old-growth, we conducted extensive polling on the forest-related beliefs and values of B.C. residents. Nine in ten British Columbians support action to defend old-growth forests and believe the government should keep its election promise to increase protection.

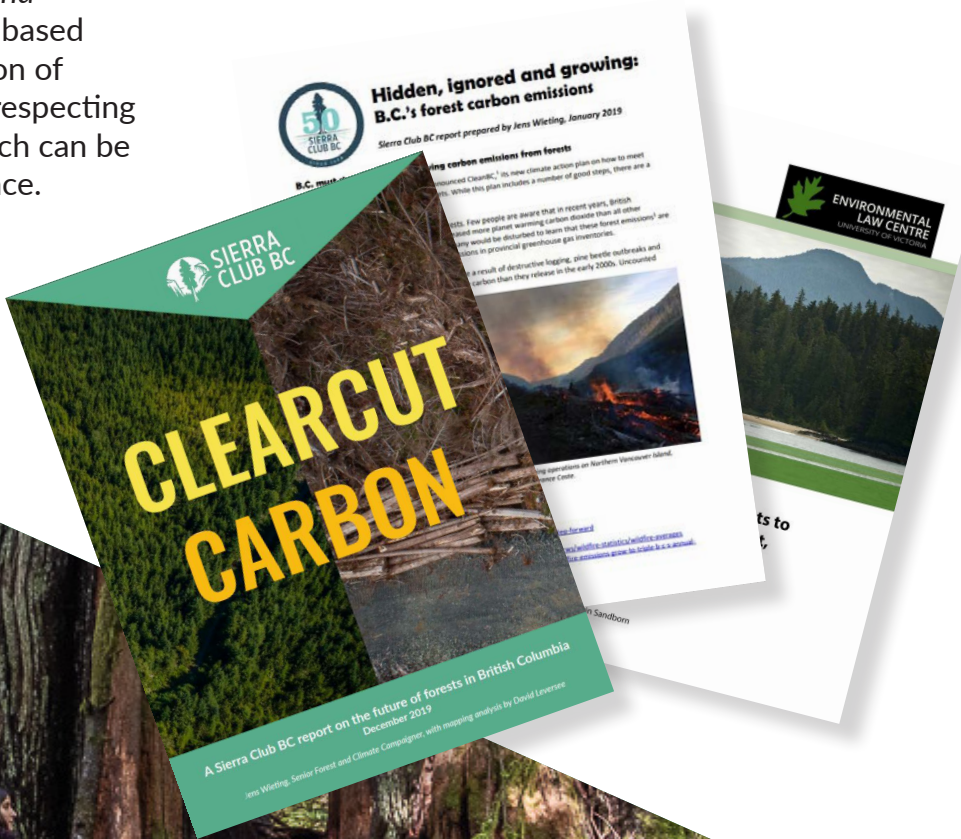


Photo: Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

To protect the last remaining old-growth forests, we understand that supporting community voices and Indigenous leadership is pivotal. That's why we hosted community events up and down Vancouver Island to bring together diverse perspectives—in addition to providing forums to build a collaborative vision for forest protection.

Participants engaging in facilitated dialogue at these events included elected representatives (provincial and municipal), logging company executives, forest workers and First Nations leadership. Following public events, our staff provided follow-up support to community members looking to engage in dialogue with representatives of their regional or provincial government.

In February and June, we took to the streets to host two province-wide days of action for old-growth forests. Here, communities from across B.C. collectively delivered over 20,000 petitions to MLA offices and the provincial government, calling for urgent protection of the last intact stands of unprotected old-growth on Vancouver Island and immediate protection of endangered old-growth forests across the province.

In 2019, we were honoured to accept an invitation to join a gathering of Indigenous hereditary chiefs and elected leaders. We presented about current politics on forestry and logging, resilience and climate change mitigation of ancient forests, and new Sierra Club BC commitments with regards to Indigenous solidarity, title and rights.

Photos: (Top) At a fundraiser hosted by the Nuchatlaht Nation and partners—including Sierra Club BC—to raise funds for the title case, Nuchatlaht Councillor Archie Little spoke about Ha-houlthee (lands, waters and resources) and governance. Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC

(Bottom): Sierra Club BC and the Wilderness Committee hosted a community forum on forest protection in Courtenay, B.C.. Photo by Louis Bockner/Sierra Club BC.





# CLIMATE AND ENERGY

## STOPPING TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE AND TANKERS

When the federal government once again approved the Trans Mountain pipeline and tankers expansion project in June 2019, we launched Pull Together 3.0 in partnership with RAVEN. This campaign works to raise financial and moral support for the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Coldwater Nations' legal challenges.

Through distributed organizing that supports individuals, businesses and community groups to organize solidarity events in their local communities, Pull Together events happened from Victoria to Toronto—bringing people

together in creative and nourishing ways, raising funds and moral support for Indigenous legal challenges, and educating people about the impacts of TMX and the importance of respecting Indigenous rights.

We want to thank everyone who came out to support the Pull Together community of allies, and for stepping up for climate justice, a thriving coast and Indigenous rights by fundraising for the Nations' legal challenges to TMX. Working together, we raised more than \$477,000 for the Nations since July 2019!



## A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION: THE NORTH COAST TANKER MORATORIUM

In 2019, the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act (Bill C-48) made it into federal law. Achieving a formal, legislated ban on crude oil tankers on B.C.'s north coast is a major victory with wide-sweeping policy effects that we have been working towards for many years! After multiple requests to present to a senate committee were denied, we provided a written submission, mobilized our supporters to submit comments and supported others who were able to present in order to make this tanker ban a reality. The ban isn't perfect—tankers carrying refined oil, articulated tug barges and LNG tankers are still permitted. However, this moratorium is very good news nonetheless.

## SPOTLIGHT ON FRACKING AND LNG

The January 2019 enforcement of a court injunction for Coastal GasLink (CGL) to pursue pipeline construction in Wet'suwet'en territory, against the wishes of hereditary leadership, incited mass Indigenous solidarity events across North America.

We raised awareness and support by educating and engaging our supporters, and we supported a Wet'suwet'en hereditary chief to travel to the U.K. to speak with investors about the financial uncertainties for the project resulting from Indigenous opposition.

Sierra Club BC also worked to amplify the voices of rural communities in the Interior. We partnered with Canadian Physicians for the Environment to organize a public event in Victoria that featured voices impacted by fracking in the Peace region, as well as along the CGL fracked gas pipeline route. Of course, we also continued to do media on the climate impacts of fracking and the billions in subsidies being offered to LNG.

## MAKING THE CLEAN ENERGY CONVERSATION ACCESSIBLE

To reach new audiences and provide Sierra Club BC supporters with talking points for difficult conversations around a sustainable transition away from fossil fuels, we produced and released Season 2 of our podcast *Mission Transition: Clean Energy and Beyond*. Episodes feature youth voices, dig into what is (and what isn't) "clean energy," focus on benefits of a Green New Deal in Canada, and question who should be paying for the energy transition—just to name a few. The series also highlights Indigenous perspectives on slowing down in the midst of urgent action on climate change, showcases the story of the energy transition underway on Haida Gwaii, and interviews leaders who are rethinking how our relationship to the land must be reflected in the transition and grounded in teachings from Indigenous laws.



Photos: (Left) A humpback whale surfaces in the waters of the Great Bear Rainforest. Photo by Andrew S. Wright. (Right) A windfarm. Photo by Jeff Kubina. (Bottom) A bird's-eye view of the forests of Nootka Island's Inner Basin. This photo was captured as part of the Nootka Island field assessment in partnership with the Nuchatlaht Nation. Photo by Sierra Club BC/Wilderness Committee/Stand.Earth.



## TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION: CLIMATE JUSTICE PROGRAM LAUNCH

An important aspect of our organizational transformation is the recognition that we must engage with communities that are most impacted by the ecological and climate challenges we face. In fall 2019, we hired climate justice campaigner Anjali Appadurai and climate justice organizer Flossie Baker, and launched our Climate Justice relational organizing program.

This new program aims to engage immigrants and faith groups to get involved in climate justice initiatives in their communities. We are encouraging people to speak and act for climate justice in a way that is grounded in their traditions and worldviews, and to find ways to get their networks involved. To this end, we have started working to build partnerships with local organizations in Victoria and the Vancouver/Lower Mainland regions.

Taking Sierra Club BC to an international stage, climate justice campaigner Anjali Appadurai attended the UN climate convention COP25 on behalf of the organization. Here, Anjali built relationships with climate justice leaders from around the world and shared stories of the global climate movement to ensure that our B.C. campaigns integrate and uplift broader messaging and demands. Learning and sharing the stories and political demands of regional social movements—particularly in the Global South—that are connected to diaspora communities in Canada will help us communicate in ways that resonate with those communities in our local work.



*Photos: (Top) Community members sharing their stories at a Green New Deal Townhall sponsored by Sierra Club BC. Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC.*

*(Middle) A university student at the Youth Climate Strike. Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC.*

*(Bottom) Stunning mountains in Garibaldi Provincial Park. Photo by Jens Wieting.*

## SITE C

In early 2019, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) recognized that continued construction of the Site C dam is a serious threat to fundamental human rights. In response, we partnered with other organizations to support and amplify the Treaty 8 Nations' request calling for the B.C. and Canadian governments to respect the UN Committee's findings and suspend construction.

## PETRONAS CANADA DAMS

In October 2019, Ecojustice lawyers representing Sierra Club BC appeared before B.C.'s Supreme Court to challenge the provincial government's decision to exempt two Petronas Canada dams from environmental assessments—after the company had already gone ahead and built the dams unlawfully. The Town Dam and Lily Dam are located north of Fort St. John, B.C. Both dams store water used in fracking operations, making them a key part of a network of infrastructure linked to LNG development in the province. Even though we lost this legal challenge, we will continue to fight to ensure B.C. follows environmental assessment laws.

## RELEASE OF THE PROTEST PAPERS

Four years ago, our campaigns director Caitlyn Vernon testified at the secret spy hearings about reports that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) had unlawfully spied on Sierra Club BC and other environmental organizations, as well as Indigenous groups opposed to the now-cancelled Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline and tankers project. Even to this day, Caitlyn is prohibited from telling the public what she said in the hearings because of a gag order.

In July 2019, with our lawyers at the BC Civil Liberties Association, we released the Protest Papers, thousands of pages of heavily redacted information that CSIS collected in relation to the Northern Gateway project. The thousands of pages of documents seem to contradict the claim of the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC)—the CSIS watchdog—that *CSIS didn't spy on us*. SIRC also said the information was shared with oil companies, but that this was "okay"—despite it being unlawful for CSIS to share information with anyone other than the Canadian government and law enforcement.





# EDUCATION

For 21 years, Sierra Club BC's Education Team has fostered a love of nature in youth across B.C. In 2019, we were busy throughout the school year providing outdoor-based and hands-on learning experiences to thousands of students and teachers.

In May, we welcomed our new Education Program Manager Ciera DeSilva who has helped take our education programs to the next level. In 2019, we reached 6,753 students from K-8 with our province-wide, school-based workshops and offered a pilot 'Nature Kids' after-school program at a CRD community centre. Of course, we also continued offering our popular French language programs for K-2.

To further support educators and caregivers in connecting youth with nature, we continued our unique Teacher Mentorship and Support Program at 20 Capital Region schools. This program builds skills and confidence in incorporating regular outdoor learning into their school routine. This included eight monthly teacher gatherings and customized support for each teacher.

For those outside the Victoria area, we offered professional development workshops for teachers across B.C., engaging 236 teachers.

*Photos: (Left) Nature educator Amira Maddison teaches a school group about cedar in our "People and Plants" workshop.*

*(Right) Two kids exploring their school's green space as part of a nature scavenger hunt in our "Nature and Play" kindergarten program.*

We also supplied free educational resources at science and climate action outreach events reaching over 250 more. To make these teachings even more accessible, we also provided resources and tips for educators and caregivers through our website, articles in Island Parent magazine and our monthly Education E-Newsletter.

Our myriad of outdoor learning opportunities remains free to all learners thanks to the support of our generous donors. Through this work connecting kids to nature, our goal is to promote healthy development and help foster the environmental stewards of tomorrow.





# OUR TRANSFORMATION

2019 was a year of reflection, change and growth. At the same time, we've remained committed to protecting ecosystems and supporting communities in climate resilience. These core elements won't change dramatically—what will change is how we do the work, by shifting our organizational culture and how we engage with people, communities and governments, both non-Indigenous and Indigenous.

To move forward, first we must look inward to acknowledge and learn from our past. We recognize and take responsibility for the fact that Sierra Club BC's history of advocacy for the creation of parks and protected areas largely disregarded Indigenous governance and jurisdiction over their territories. In many cases, parks were created without the consent of Indigenous Nations affected, and Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from their land. This violated the human rights of Indigenous peoples. It also harmed the land, by cutting ecosystems off from the beneficial Indigenous management practices that had shaped them over millennia.

These reflections over the course of 2019 resulted in the creation of our statement of accountability that acknowledges our history as we change course for the future.

This transformation also means finding shared values and common ground with diverse communities that we have not traditionally worked with. It means approaching new communities with humility, acknowledging that we do not have all the answers, and that we can learn and grow stronger as we try new ways of engaging the perspectives and wisdom of diverse knowledge systems and lived experiences.

Our transformation, learning—and unlearning—will be ongoing as we redirect our thinking and act as stewards of the land and waters we all know and love. We must think and make decisions keeping in mind future generations and all the interlinked relatives—both human and non-human—that will follow.

As an example of bringing this transformational thinking into all areas of our work, we've prioritized budgeting for Indigenous knowledge. This is key forward thinking that moves our work towards equity and social justice.

2019, and the relationships that have bloomed within it, has set an adjusted direction for us that will impact our work for years to come. We look forward to consolidating and strengthening these changes, learning from each other and growing with you.

Photo: The forest, freshwater and marine ecosystems meet at the Nuchatlaht's Shoomart estuary and Salmon Park. This photo was captured as part of the Nootka Island field assessment in partnership with the Nuchatlaht Nation. Photo by Sierra Club BC/Wilderness Committee/Stand.Earth.





# TREASURER'S REPORT

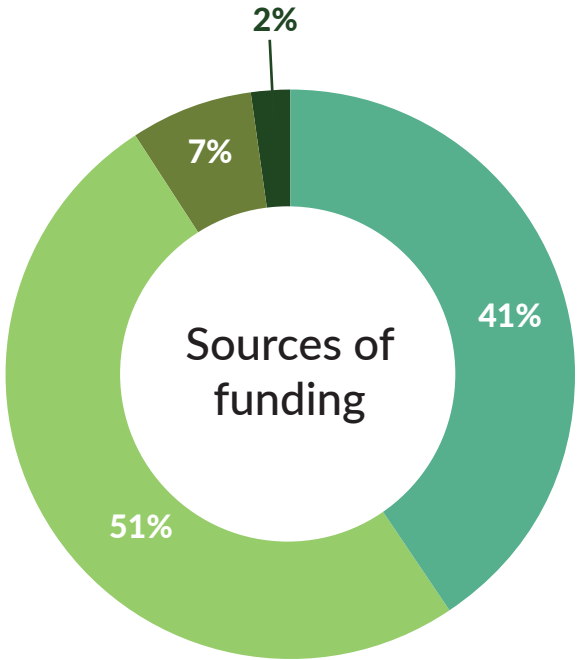
Grant funding continues to be vital to the organization; however, due to significant contributions from numerous key members, donations became the largest source of funding for the entity at 51% of total contributions. Thanks to our generous benefactor, the 50th Anniversary celebration gala was an enormous success that netted well over \$100,000 in a single evening! This event generated a significant amount of interest in Sierra Club BC, our mission and the work we accomplish. In addition, we received a generous bequest from a patron desiring to leave a legacy of environmental stewardship.

Total expenditures were \$1,739,839, a 25% increase over the prior year, of which 70% supported our core mission operations and program costs. The remaining 30% was used for development and supporter engagement activities. Engagement activities were proportionally greater as a percent of total expenditures in 2019 compared to 2018 due to the costs incurred for the major event.

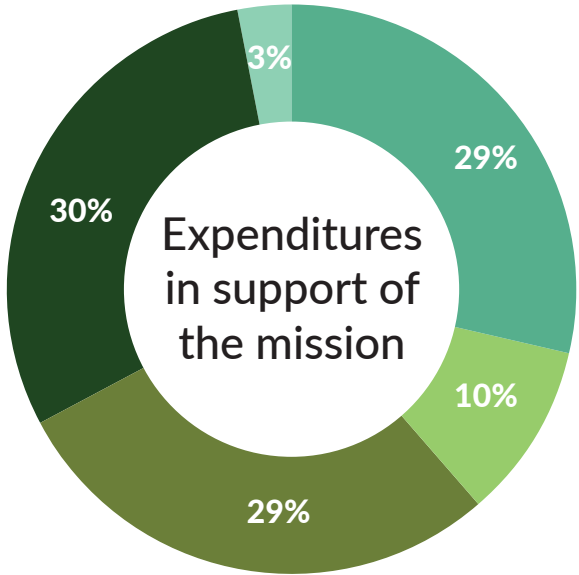
Strong financial oversight combined with the substantial increase in donations has helped us generate a \$94,458 unrestricted surplus for the year which increased the total unrestricted net assets to \$413,385 by year end.

In 2020 we will have a continuing emphasis on connecting with members, donors and the general public. Our plan is to maintain ongoing information technology upgrades using the unrestricted net assets to support those improvements. Our goal is to provide a deep engagement for visitors and patrons to our organization and the important work we accomplish.

Sincerely,  
**Gordon Stewart**, Board Treasurer



- Grants
- Government Grants
- Community Gaming Grant
- Donations



- Environmental Advocacy & Awareness Programs
- Indigenous knowledge
- Development & Supporter Engagement
- Core Mission Operations
- Education K-8 Programs

# THANK YOU!

We offer deep gratitude to our funders, partners, supporters and major donors for their significant contributions in helping steward the land and water. Thank you!

## MAJOR DONORS

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\*In support of our partnership with Canopy  
\*\*In support of our partnership with Ancient Forest Alliance



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MakeWay (formerly Tides Canada Foundation) - Dragonfly Fund  
MakeWay (formerly Tides Canada Foundation) - Full Circle Small Grants Fund  
MakeWay (formerly Tides Canada Foundation) - Indigenous Authority & Leadership Fund  
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Anonymous

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Canopy  
Indigenous Climate Action (ICA)  
Ma'amtagila Nation Cultural Revitalization and Conservation Initiative, Ma'amtagila Nation  
Wilp Luutkudziwus, Gitxsan Nation

LEGACY GIVING

Estate of Mary Gay Brooks  
Estate of Geraldine Irby  
Estate of Jo-Anne Thornthwaite

These individuals contributed substantial legacy gifts to Sierra Club BC. We are so grateful to have been chosen to receive these gifts as we celebrate them in memory.

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Please note that we have done our best to acknowledge all supporters as they wish to be recognized when the Annual Report went to print. Our sincerest apologies if there are any errors. We encourage you to be in touch to confirm how you wish to be recognized in future publications.



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WE'D LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND THANK ALL THE HANDS AND MINDS WHO HELPED BREATHE LIFE INTO THIS REPORT.





# SIERRA CLUB BC

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