



SIERRA  
CLUB BC

# SIERRA REPORT SPRING 2023

## INTRODUCING MOTHER TREE SCHOOL!

We're very excited to announce that we have just launched Mother Tree School (MTS) with the first cohort of community leaders! This initial group are all faith leaders who are hearing from their congregation members that they want to step into land and water protection work. They're looking for fresh inspiration and pathways for change that feel meaningful and significant enough for the moment we're in.

That's why we started Mother Tree School. By creating a rich learning environment and supporting participants to connect with one another — and to draw from their own traditions and wisdom — we equip community leaders to catalyze their memberships to step into powerful action.

We're incredibly grateful to the teachers, all extraordinary leaders in their fields, who are helping facilitate MTS workshops. They include best-selling author and forest ecologist Suzanne Simard, renowned Indigenous legal scholar John Borrows, and many more.

Like the Mother Trees in the forest, these leaders are hubs, connectors and nurturers in their communities. The hope of the program is that these local leaders will be supported to help their communities create new pathways for land and water protection.

Stay tuned for more updates on this exciting and transformational initiative.





# UNITED FOR OLD GROWTH MARCH AND RALLY

On Saturday, February 25 a united movement of thousands sent a clear message to the provincial government: Keep your promises and protect old-growth forests!

The United for Old Growth march and rally was a huge success thanks to everyone who showed up in the cold, offered support, and made art in their communities.

We chose the 100th day of Premier David Eby's term to gather and announce the United We Stand for Old Growth Declaration, which now has more than 225 signatory organizations across diverse sectors — ranging from health care professionals to labour unions to environmental groups.

David Knox, a Kwakwaka'wakw Hereditary Chief and member of the Kwakiutl Nation, spoke in front of the B.C. Legislature: "Old-growth forests are vital for the health of our lands and waters, our salmon and our culture, and the days of cutting them down need to end. Too much land in our territory has been destroyed, and this continues without the free, prior and informed consent of our chiefs and people."

It was moving to see so many people come out to speak for all the beings that can't speak for themselves. The B.C. government has made unprecedented promises that can potentially change the future of healthy ecosystems for the better and the people of B.C. are holding them to it.



Our call for action was so strong, even Neil Young heard about it and joined the rally. Like nutrients travelling the mycelial network, the message reached him, and he arrived from L.A. by train to show up for ancient forests and share his music. A heart of gold, indeed.

We are so grateful to the many hands and hearts that helped make this day possible! We can't wait to keep building on this momentum for forests.

To watch the livestream of the event and explore more photos from the day, please visit [www.sierraclub.bc.ca/united4oldgrowth](http://www.sierraclub.bc.ca/united4oldgrowth).





# THE POWER OF ART FOR FORESTS

A true highlight of the march was the spectacular art that transformed the streets of Victoria into a walking forest.

*The Procession of Beings* was a vision led by community artists to bring a huge expression of love for the web of life to the streets. Painters, dancers, puppeteers, musicians, opera singers and creators of all ages had been coming together for months to create an artistic honouring of the life that call ancient forests home. To see towering cedars, beautiful bears, soaring hawks and swimming salmon marching, dancing and singing their way to the B.C. Legislature was truly a sight to behold.

The months of creative work needed to create these strong visuals reminded us that being together and working with our hands towards a common goal is a recipe for joy — something that can feel in short supply when we look at the challenges we face.

Art is a language that reaches past the noise and into the heart. We are so grateful for the creativity of SCBC's Artists Circle and the many other groups from near and far who upheld these beings and backed the powerful Indigenous leadership at the head of the march and on the stage.

*Photos - Top: Community members came together to create masks and hats that celebrate the many species that call old-growth forests home (Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).*

*Middle: The streets of Victoria transformed into a walking forest through the 'Procession of Beings'. Each of the banners here represents an at-risk being that relies upon old-growth forests (Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).*

*Bottom: Dancers choreographed an interpretive dance to celebrate salmon swimming through forested streams to spawn (Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).*



## LOCAL LEADER SPOTLIGHT

An important goal in Sierra Club BC's strategic plan is to support 1,000 local leaders to help their own communities take meaningful climate action by 2030. We know many people from across different sectors want to step up — including the arts, education, business, labour, faith and more — and we want to make sure we are there to support them.

In the lead up to the United for Old Growth March and Rally, we had the pleasure of working with Tim Gosley (featured on the far left of the photo), a puppeteer known for his work with the Muppets. Tim opened his home for community art sessions and worked around the clock to create a giant mother tree that held a key place in *the Procession of Beings* for the walk from Centennial Square to the B.C. Legislature.

We are so thankful for Tim's leadership and commitment to protecting old growth. He is an active member in Victoria's art scene, where he has collaborated on many community theatre projects including *The Peace Dancer* with Roy Henry Vickers and countless productions in the cozy theatre he built in his home. His art strengthens the community and relationships with the more than human world. It is truly art at work.





# COP15 AND 30X30

In the early hours of December 19, a glimmer of hope for the world's biodiversity emerged. Negotiations for COP15 concluded in Montreal and a deal was ratified by roughly 190 countries around the world committing to protect 30 percent of the planet by 2030 and prevent further loss of biodiversity.

The 30x30 goal is central to Sierra Club BC's strategic plan. With proceedings wrapping up in Montreal, we also witnessed an important shift at the provincial scale: during the first week of COP15, Premier David Eby issued a clear mandate for the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship to protect 30 percent of lands in B.C. by 2030, and support Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) — an opportunity to modernize land-use designations so they fully respect Indigenous rights and law.

This means that, along with the COP15 commitment, there is now a global, federal, and provincial 30x30 goal. This is a huge step in the right direction and with the right level of leadership can become a much-needed boost for conservation, the rights of Indigenous Peoples and climate policy in B.C.

There's still more to do — the COP15 agreement is missing some big pieces that we still need to work toward.

- The agreement doesn't specify which ecosystems will be protected – here in B.C. we must protect the most biodiverse and at-risk areas, a big portion of which should be the precious remaining old-growth forests.

- The 30x30 target means 30 percent of the planet should be protected but much work remains to ensure the right areas are prioritized, human rights are respected, habitat is restored, and species declines are halted. Timely and strong B.C. legislation to protect biodiversity and ecosystem integrity could play a significant role contributing to the global 30x30 target.

The more than 1,900 species and ecosystems at risk in B.C. are a constant reminder that without immediate change, the window of action to safeguard biodiversity as we know it is rapidly closing. Temporary steps like logging deferrals for all at-risk old-growth forests are crucial to avoid the loss of irreplaceable ecosystems during implementation of the 30x30 goal.

Moving forward, how do we help build the social and political will to meet these important targets?

Four SCBC members attended COP15 this year. We knew that none of the targets made at past conferences have been reached and did not gloss over this tension. We asked ourselves: "What more can we do, or do differently, to ensure the 30x30 targets are met?" While we continue to hold leaders accountable, we recognize it's going to take all of us to make the needed paradigm shift.

This is why our second strategic plan goal is to support 1,000 local leaders to help their own communities take meaningful action by 2030. So many people from across different sectors want to step up — from the arts, education, business, labour, faith and more. We will need all hands on deck to create the momentum for bold targets like 30x30 to succeed.





# CLIMATE LAWSUIT

On January 17, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled on the landmark 2022 climate case brought by Sierra Club BC, represented by Ecojustice. Our goal was to require adequate reporting by the B.C. government on its progress to reach its climate targets, as required by the province's own climate law.

The ruling in January was a mixed bag: it contained good news, bad news and an inconvenient truth.

The good news is that the Court agreed with us that people in B.C. have a right to go to court to hold their government accountable to following its climate law. This means that, in a first-of-its-kind milestone for climate accountability in Canada, the Court ruled that the reporting requirements of B.C.'s climate law are enforceable by the court. This sets an important legal precedent not only for B.C., but also across Canada, as it means that climate change accountability legislation can be interpreted and enforced by courts when governments fail to meet reporting requirements.

The bad news is that the Court found the B.C. government's reporting to be sufficient to meet the law's requirements, even though that reporting does not tell us whether B.C. is actually on track to meet all of its climate targets.

The Court agreed that B.C.'s progress to date on meeting its climate targets has been "disappointing," that B.C. is not likely to meet its 2030 target, and that the information we were asking for "may be useful and may contribute to [B.C.] actually meeting one of the enumerated targets in a break from the consistent history of missing its targets."

The inconvenient truth is that without greater transparency and stronger action plans, people in B.C. cannot trust that this province will meet its climate targets and prevent even more catastrophic climate impacts.

Canada is among the top ten global polluters and like Canada, B.C. has failed to meet emission reduction targets for over a decade. And despite the climate emergency, the B.C. government continues to support and subsidize the expansion of fracking operations and construction of LNG terminals.

With all of this, why do we still consider the Court's decision a positive step overall? As lawyer and strategic advisor to SCBC Kate Kempton explained, this decision represents progress because it leaves the door open for future cases on reporting transparency, and because the judge was clear that the government's progress is not nearly adequate to reach climate targets. Sierra Club BC will not give up on pressuring B.C. to take climate targets seriously.



# SPECIES-AT-RISK REPORT

In November, we released our latest independent report about species-at-risk recovery in B.C. Written by biologist Jared Hobbs and co-commissioned with Wilderness Committee, this audit of provincial and federal policies highlights the legal gaps contributing to biodiversity loss and species extinction in B.C., and how a biodiversity law co-developed with Indigenous Nations can help chart a better path forward.

Currently, the provincial legal framework for biodiversity protection consists of a patchwork of inadequate laws and predominantly voluntary compliance from industry. As a result over 1,900 at-risk species that call B.C. home — like spotted owls, tiger salamanders and southern resident orcas — are falling through the cracks.

While this report focused on Canada and B.C.'s legal frameworks, it is just one part of the story. Indigenous laws that help maintain rich biodiversity have never ceased to be practiced and are continually undermined by Western government laws. Indigenous-managed lands make up around 20 percent of the planet and contain 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity.

Within the context of federal and provincial legal systems, some of the core findings of this new report include:

- The mapping of at-risk species habitat in B.C. is consistently years overdue based on legal deadlines, or still incomplete, for 97 percent of the focal species. In the case of the spotted owl, critical habitat maps are 18 years overdue despite there only being one known wild owl left.
- B.C.'s existing laws do not address all the threats that cause species decline. For example, under B.C.'s forestry law, logging companies are not even required to survey for endangered or threatened species when laying out their cutblocks — so we have no way of knowing how many sensitive species are endangered by any given logging project.
- B.C.'s park system is falling flat in safeguarding biodiversity; the ecological zones with the highest biodiversity are significantly underrepresented in B.C.'s park system.

It's time to address the gaps highlighted in our report and ensure all beings and the ecosystems we collectively rely on are restored, cared for, and thriving. That's why we are calling for a law to be co-developed with Indigenous Nations that prioritizes biodiversity and ecosystem health across lands and waters, addresses all economic activities, and is in line with commitments the province made to implement in the Old Growth Strategic Review recommendations (2020).



## THE GRACE OF INTERIOR FORESTS: A CONVERSATION WITH DR. SUZANNE SIMARD

While coastal forests are often in the spotlight, their Interior neighbours are just as spectacular. From Douglas-firs to Ponderosa Pines to ancient cedars, Interior old and primary forests in B.C., like the inland temperate rainforest, contain some of the rarest ecosystems in the world. There is much these vibrant forests have to teach us if we only take the time to listen.

SCBC Director of Campaigns and Programs, Dr. Shelley Luce, joined UBC Professor and *Finding the Mother Tree* author, Dr. Suzanne Simard, for a conversation on the wonders of Interior forests. We chatted about everything from the beings that call them home, their resiliency, the economic opportunities forest restoration holds, and our collective responsibility to better care for these vital ecosystems.

You can watch the webinar at [sierraclub.bc.ca/InteriorForests](https://sierraclub.bc.ca/InteriorForests).



# EDUCATION PROGRAM UPDATES

Sierra Club BC's Education team continues to provide learning opportunities for learners of all ages, especially children and youth, across the province. The team uses a place-based approach that invites learners into a relationship with all beings.

Our education staff also continues to work towards decolonizing the learning process by respectfully incorporating invited local Indigenous knowledge into the workshops and materials we offer. By working with Indigenous partners to incorporate traditional ways of learning and knowing, and meaningfully engaging with place, our workshops are hands-on, experiential, interconnected, support healthy childhood development and cultivate care. This helps ensure that future generations are well versed in stewarding abundant ecosystems, equitable communities, and a stable climate.

For the 2022/23 school year, we've been focusing on delivering programs in mid/north Island communities, Metro Vancouver, the CRD, and Powell River. This school year, we have already engaged over 120 learning communities (both in-person and online) and connected with over 2,500 learners. We look forward to the opportunity of continuing this work in the coming months. In addition to our workshops for children and youth, the education team has also been providing valuable learning opportunities to formal educators, non-formal educators, and community leaders.

If you or a learning community in your local area is interested in our education workshops, please visit the education page on our website for more information: [sierraclub.bc.ca/education](https://sierraclub.bc.ca/education)

*Photo: We are grateful to the kindergarten class at Brentwood Park Elementary who learned about ecosystems and reciprocity while exploring the lands around their school with us (Photo by Haya Aldoori).*



## HEAR FROM TEACHERS WE'VE WORKED WITH!

"Having others share their knowledge and perspectives on nature helps me and my students grow in our own understandings and builds on our connection with our place where we live and learn. It was so amazing to sit on the ground with my students, not caring about the dirt and learning along with them."

"The outdoor workshop was an engaging interactive way for the students to learn about the environment around them. They were able to observe and learn how our relationship to the land and ecosystem and the relationship between various organisms in our environment are reciprocal. Building the insect homes pushed them to treat their local environment with more care, knowing that these insects were living all around us."

"We were all engaged and enjoyed the activities that our facilitator lead. The students and I learned a lot about the plants in our neighbourhood."

## THANK YOU!

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



# LEARN TO DRAW ART LESSONS

Our popular *Learn to Draw* webinars with scientific illustrator Dr. Julius Csotonyi continue to delight participants. These art lessons share both Western and Indigenous knowledge about our non-human relatives. You can enjoy the recorded webinars at [sierraclub.bc.ca/draw](http://sierraclub.bc.ca/draw) or join an upcoming event.

The SCBC Education team has created additional education resources that support the webinar conversations, as we continue to blend Indigenous and Western understandings. These resource packets are informed by some of the perspectives from SENĆOTEN speaking peoples and include different ways to engage with the material, from watching videos to making art. Our most recent educational packets feature Frog, Solstice, Lamprey, Octopus, Mutualism, Shark, and Hummingbird.



## LEGACY GIVING

Legacy giving means leaving Sierra Club BC a gift in your will or estate plan that will help us protect critical biodiversity in your honour. Your legacy will be linked with the Western red cedar.

The Western red cedar can grow to be a thousand years old. The coastal temperate rainforest ecosystem in which these trees thrive took tens of thousands of years to develop. We all know how essential the biodiversity is that exists within these forests. These forests are irreplaceable. And in the last 150 years, humans have reduced this ecosystem to its last fragments.

Stand amongst the Red Cedars and link your legacy to SCBC. Your investment will help keep the red cedars standing for another millennium. Your bequest will safeguard the future sustainability of SCBC and our work to ensure these trees remain standing. Thank you for your trust by entwining your legacy with the red cedar.

For more information regarding your legacy planning, please visit [www.sierraclub.bc.ca/legacy](http://www.sierraclub.bc.ca/legacy).

If you name Sierra Club of BC Foundation in your will, please let us know. It helps us plan for the future and recognise your generosity, and you will be automatically enrolled in the Red Cedar Circle. Please contact [gifts@sierraclub.bc.ca](mailto:gifts@sierraclub.bc.ca) with your plans.



Artwork by Julius Csotonyi. Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg.



301-2994 Douglas St, Victoria BC, V8T 4N4  
Ləkʷəŋən Peoples Territory  
P: (250) 386-5255

Support our work at [sierraclub.bc.ca/give](http://sierraclub.bc.ca/give)

Follow us at [@sierraclubbc](https://www.instagram.com/sierraclubbc)



**Go paperless!** If you only want to receive digital communications, email [social@sierraclub.bc.ca](mailto:social@sierraclub.bc.ca) to let us know and we'll add you to our email list!

Printed on FSC-certified  
post-consumer recycled paper