



# SIERRA CLUB BC

# SIERRA REPORT

## FALL 2023

## MOVING THE DIAL FOR BIODIVERSITY

Good news! Five municipalities — Metchosis, Saanich, Esquimalt, Qualicum and Victoria — have recently passed a pro-biodiversity resolution drafted by SCBC that will be voted on at the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference in September.

Community members, in partnership with Sierra Club BC, have been working with their city councils to endorse this resolution. If passed at UBCM, it would send a strong message to the province to work with local governments and First Nations to establish a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund that municipalities can access to protect and restore land. This would be a major win for healthier ecosystems and communities across the province (and the many plants and animals that call our neighbourhoods home)!

This is all happening because of our Move the Dial workshops and mentorship program that we launched this year. These collaborative sessions give residents effective tools for approaching their city councils to take action for the land and waters in B.C. So many pro-biodiversity resolutions passing as a result just further confirms that grassroots activism works!

Local community wins are especially important during this critical time for climate and biodiversity. A big thank you to the “dial movers” and councilors who are standing up for what sustains us all, and to supporters like you who are making it possible.





# NEW CASE STUDY: LOGGING IS THE BIGGEST THREAT TO ENDANGERED CARIBOU AND SPOTTED OWLS

A new independent case study commissioned by Sierra Club BC and Wilderness Committee finds logging is the biggest contributing factor for the decline of southern mountain caribou and spotted owls in British Columbia.

The case study, written by biologist Jared Hobbs, assesses wildlife decline in B.C. for six different species and the provincial and federal legal gaps responsible. You can read it at [sierraclub.bc.ca/biodiversity-report](http://sierraclub.bc.ca/biodiversity-report).

Among other findings, the report highlights that despite B.C.'s Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) requiring for some caribou and spotted owl habitat to be designated as Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs), some WHAs still allow logging and do not protect enough habitat of either species to enable their recovery.

Another example of failed stewardship is that there are no requirements to conduct pre-clearing surveys for spotted owls prior to commercial logging of suitable habitat. This continued destruction is especially worrying considering that only one spotted owl remains in the wild.

This work spotlights the limitations of the current system. It's a patchwork of laws that prioritize industrial resource extraction over the health of the land, air and water... and consequently the wellbeing of our communities. This existing framework also undermines Indigenous legal orders and governance which have maintained biodiversity for centuries.

There's a clear solution to help chart a better path forward: An overarching provincial law co-developed with Indigenous Nations that prioritizes biodiversity and ecosystem health.

The good news is that the B.C. government has committed to enacting this legislation. The bad news is that they have yet to follow through. Will you help hold them accountable?

As former chief of the Saulteau First Nation Ken Cameron points out, "This is a powerful moment in history, and it's a turning point for B.C. and Canada and First Nations. People working together to save a species from extinction—it's real and we can do this. A long-term commitment by the federal and provincial government will be necessary to save these caribou herds and other endangered species."

"This will help make British Columbia a better place to live for everyone," says Ken. "It shows that we can find ways to balance the environment and the economy. I want to invite all people to join with us, support us, and help make it happen, for all future generations to come."

It's vital that the B.C. government co-develop the promised biodiversity law with Indigenous Nations, with a clear timeline and interim measures to protect species habitat during the process. Together, we can ensure a thriving future for all beings that call the west coast home.

*Bottom - A pair of woodland caribou foraging in the snow (Photo by Jared Hobbs).  
Top - Logging is the biggest contributing factor to the decline of old-growth dependent species like spotted owls and woodland caribou (photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).*



# A BIG MILESTONE FOR FORESTS

This is a critical moment for forests in British Columbia. We are at the end of the promised three-year timeline for implementing the recommendations in the Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) – a process that set up a true paradigm shift in forest management.

The extreme regional and global climate impacts of 2023 highlight that we must act quickly, because remaining primary, old-growth and mature forests are quickly becoming our best hope to maintain natural carbon sinks, reduce climate impacts, and protect biodiversity that depends on these ecosystems.

There is still a lot of work to be done to achieve all 14 recommendations from the OGSR, as promised by the B.C. government. The province must work alongside Indigenous Nations to speed up progress on deferrals for at-risk old growth; make conservation funding available to take the pressure off First Nations and rural communities who are dependent on logging revenue; prioritize ecological and community health over timber values as promised; and provide honest, transparent information on progress.

There are bright spots of hope. Some old-growth stands are on reprieve. One such example is that upon request of the Pacheedaht First Nation, 1,200 hectares of ancient forest in the Ada'itsx/Fairy Creek watershed has been temporarily set aside until 2025. The two-year deferral provides time for the Nation and provincial government to develop plans to replace logging with other revenue generation so the ancient trees remain standing.

Many Indigenous communities are leading the way in modeling a better way forward. For example, Kanaka Bar Band is establishing a protected area that covers 35,000 hectares and encompasses rare transition-zone ecosystems between coastal rainforest and drier, Interior forest types. This includes over 12,500 hectares of at-risk Interior old-growth forest, featuring beautiful, ancient Ponderosa pines (that are highly resilient to fire) and some of the largest documented Douglas Firs in the country.



Photo by Jens Wieting.

People like you from around the province are also stepping up. Following the success of February's *United For Old Growth* rally where thousands of people marched for the future of forests, we've continued building momentum. We've met with key Ministers and MLAs, and supported our members in doing the same to make sure that politicians know old-growth action is a priority. To make these conversations more accessible, over the past six months Sierra Club BC has hosted webinars busting forestry myths, shared videos de-mystifying policies and technical jargon, and have garnered hundreds of media hits on old growth. We've also worked with community leaders from around the province to foster deeper relationships with their local forests and learn how to better care for these ecosystems.

We're closer than ever to strong protections for the last remaining old-growth forests and better forest management policies across the province. Together, we can make sure that these life-sustaining forests remain standing for future generations. We are so grateful you're on this journey with us.

## YOU'RE INVITED TO A DAY OF ACTION FOR FORESTS!

On September 28, communities from across B.C. will be heading to their MLAs' offices to call for the promised paradigm shift in forest stewardship. We invite you to join with your friends, family and neighbours to help speak up for these vibrant ecosystems that sustain so much life! You can learn more about events happening near you at [bit.ly/Sept28forForests](https://bit.ly/Sept28forForests).

If you're unable to join in person, you can take action in other ways like amplifying on social media, speaking with your networks or sending a letter to your MLA at [sierraclub.bc.ca/oldgrowth!](https://sierraclub.bc.ca/oldgrowth!)



Photo by Mya Van Woudenberg.



# WE ARE BUILDING OUR CAPACITY TO RESPECT INDIGENOUS LEGAL ORDERS

This May, our team was fortunate to attend a multi-day workshop on Indigenous legal orders facilitated by the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU). The workshop was the first step in a year-long project, conceived and co-created together with MakeWay Foundation and ILRU, to explore how the environmental sector can develop more respectful relations with Indigenous legal orders. This goal includes beginning to see and recognize Indigenous law operating around us.

The ILRU team were knowledgeable guides in these important conversations. Housed in the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law, the ILRU is an academic research institute dedicated to the revitalization of Indigenous law and governance. Their vision is for Indigenous legal orders to be living and in use on the ground, and to be researched, taught and theorized about just as other great legal traditions of the world are. Sierra Club BC is committed to learning from their work and recognizing our own role within the environmental sector.

As an environmental charity and predominantly settler-run organization, Sierra Club BC must grapple with our 50+ year history of conservation work — and all its highs and lows — which has caused harm to Indigenous communities. Often, the harm stemmed from our inability to see or recognize Indigenous governance, and the tendency to only uphold Canadian legal orders. For example, in many cases parks were created without the consent of Indigenous Nations and communities were forcibly separated from their lands. This violated the human rights of Indigenous peoples, and was a disservice to the ecosystems that were shaped by Indigenous management practices over millennia. To stop perpetuating this ongoing harm, we must learn how to be in a respectful relationship with Indigenous governance and decision-making systems.

That's why Sierra Club BC has committed to growing our capacity to recognize and engage with Indigenous legal orders. We are honoured to have made this year-long commitment to work with ILRU to learn how to embody these perspectives in our strategies and work in good ways. For our team, this includes having bi-weekly staff training and discussions. We will also create a resource for our supporters so you can join us in this process, aiming to enable iterative change across the sector and beyond. While we are still in the early stages, through this vital work, we can help create a more just and life-sustaining world for all beings — both human and non-human.

We want to express immense gratitude to our colleagues at both ILRU and MakeWay for their invaluable partnership in co-developing this project, enabled through funding provided by MakeWay Foundation – Pacific Program.

# OUR FIRST MOTHER TREE LOCAL LEADERS PROGRAM COHORTS HAVE WRAPPED!

We're very excited to announce that we have wrapped the first phase of our flagship Mother Tree Local Leaders Program (MTLLP)! At its heart, MTLLP aims to empower local leaders to catalyze their community networks in creating tangible, positive change and stepping into healthier relationships with the lands and waters. We are so grateful to the first two cohorts of youth climate activists and faith leaders for joining us in this journey.

Over the past several months, participants grew their relationship with the more-than-human world and started planning community-based solutions that are grounded in their own traditions and wisdom. These plans focus on mobilizing their networks — consisting of over 3,600 people across church congregations and community groups in the Lower Mainland — to step more deeply into environmental stewardship. They range from planting pollinator gardens, to helping collaborate with local Indigenous Nations on watershed protection, to donating to Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, and everything in between.

"I think about [the Mother Tree Local Leaders Program] all the time. It's given me a new place to park my focus and energy," shared MTLLP participant Reverend Deb Walker. "It's helped me narrow in and feel not so overwhelmed. I make more deliberate choices to find more life-giving messages than the activism we were doing before — it was so depleting."

We are thrilled to call these folks our partners for the next year. SCBC will be working closely with MTLLP graduates to help bring their restorative visions to life. Stay tuned for all that blossoms from this exciting program!



SCBC organizer Ashcher Goodman presents Squamish Elder Siamshun with a gift in thanks for sharing time and knowledge with the MTLLP youth cohort (photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).



# LEAVING A LEGACY

Your legacy can include protecting the land, water and all living beings by making a bequest to Sierra Club BC. This can help ensure future generations are left with a healthier world.

By making a legacy gift to Sierra Club BC, you'll join the Red Cedar Circle of honoured legacy supporters. Like the Western red cedars, Red Cedar Circle members are deeply rooted to this place and to Sierra Club BC's work to protect it. The support these gifts provide is invaluable, no matter what size.

If you want to leave a positive legacy for future generations, let's talk about leaving a gift in your will or estate. If you'd like to discuss your vision for the future, please contact our office by phone at 250-386-5255 ext. 224, via email at [gifts@sierraclub.bc.ca](mailto:gifts@sierraclub.bc.ca) or visit [sierraclub.bc.ca/legacy-giving](http://sierraclub.bc.ca/legacy-giving).

## A SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY CHANGE-MAKERS

As part of our strategic goals, we're working to empower local leaders to create positive change. We know that acting in the face of the climate and biodiversity crisis can feel overwhelming. That's why SCBC leverages our networks and resources to help communities step into action in ways meaningful for them. Here are a few communities we've supported that are helping create a better future for all.

### Birding to help safeguard old-growth forests!

Led by avid birder Royann Petrell, a dedicated group of birders and bio-blitzers through Friends of Carmanah Walbran have worked tirelessly during the last three years to monitor and document old-growth dependent species at risk on Vancouver Island. Their documentation of birds, including endangered marbled murrelets and Western screech owls, is helping to inform forest management strategies in areas proposed for logging.



Experts with the help of a group of citizen scientists detected endangered marbled murrelets nesting in the Fairy Creek Ada'itsx watershed (photo by Royann Petrell).

### Working to protect the elk herd of Naramata Bench

Community members are coming together to help protect an elk herd whose winter home on the Naramata Bench is at risk of being clearcut. This beautiful area is in the territory of the Syilx Okanagan People, near Penticton. Developers are proposing new construction on approximately 126 acres of stunning land that is inhabited seasonally by over 140 elk. The proposed development would clearcut their home. If you are interested in getting involved, please reach out to Gjoa Taylor of the Society for Preservation of the Naramata Bench at [preservenaramatabench.com](http://preservenaramatabench.com).



An elk herd grazes on the hills of Naramata Bench (photo by John Bilodeau).



# HEAR FROM TEACHERS WE'VE WORKED WITH!

"One of the best presentations I have seen in a very long time. Super engaging, uplifting and inspirational for all age levels."  
- Kindergarten teacher in SD 61 (Victoria)

"This was a wonderful experience for our learners to be a part of. Most children love being outdoors and often as non-Indigenous educators, we are not comfortable with teaching Indigenous lessons or taking the risk to be outside of the classroom due to time constraints and having to cover "curriculum" in the traditional sense. This experience opened my eyes to a new pathway that I can structure my teaching so that learners are still learning the lessons they need to with a place-based focus."  
- Grade 1 teacher in SD 39 (Vancouver)

"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."  
- Kindergarten teacher in SD 41 (Burnaby)

"Our youth are our future and the future of the earth. The younger we have them caring about the environment, the more likely change will occur."  
- Grade 6/7 teacher in SD 39 (Vancouver)

## THE IMPACT OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

The 2022/23 school year has come to a close! In looking back, this year was filled with so many memorable moments: we formed new relationships, participated in inspiring conversations, visited new learning communities, and built more bug homes than we could have ever imagined.

Since 1998 we have offered a variety of free environmental education workshops directly in your community — in your classroom, school yard, homeschool neighbourhood, or a local outdoor space. We are grateful for yet another year of doing this work. Without your support, it would not be possible!

Our environmental education programs are designed to offer experiential learning opportunities that centre diverse ecological and cultural knowledges. They are deeply rooted in the principle that empowering and educating youth is vital to stewarding abundant ecosystems and a stable climate — as well as building resilient, equitable communities. As we respond to deepening environmental crises, our programming becomes increasingly important!

Your support has allowed us to...

- Increase our service to reach more learners across B.C. — particularly in underserved, urban neighbourhoods and remote communities. This year, we delivered over 300 in-person, outdoor workshops and 4 *Learn to Draw* webinars. Through this work, we reached over 9,000 people from more than 25 different cities and school districts! These include the North Island, qathet regional district (formerly Powell River), Burnaby, Haida Gwaii and Surrey (just to name a few).
- Deepen efforts to incorporate invited local Indigenous traditional knowledges and connections into the learning process; through collaboration and reciprocal relationship building.
- Increase access to professional development opportunities and resources in place-based environmental education for formal and non-formal educators across the province (including online resources). We ran 5 Pro-D workshops for teachers with over 100 participants!
- Fill gaps in environmental education and build capacity for learners to consider their relationships with the many beings just outside their doors in a different way, emphasizing their responsibilities towards stewardship.

*Photos: Students taking part in a forest ecosystem workshop. Through these programs, youth are able to better connect and build relationships with the lands and waters of their community (Photos by Mya Van Woudenberg).*





# PULLING TOGETHER TO STOP TMX

Looking over the Burrard Inlet from the shores of Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN), it's impossible not to see the huge oil drums and refinery across the water.

On June 25, TWN Sacred Trust hosted a water ceremony at Whey-ah-Wichen (Cate's Park) in North Vancouver. Sacred Trust is an initiative of Tsleil-Waututh Nation focused on stopping the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMX), a project approved by the Canadian government without the consent of the Nation. This ceremony invited the public to connect and deepen their relationship with water and recognize the threat posed by TMX.

SCBC has stood with Tsleil-Waututh Nation in their fight against TMX since the beginning. From supporting the Pull Together campaign, which raised funds for legal challenges against TMX, to practicing ceremonies, we are honoured to be in this work together and participate in this recent ceremony.

In an incredible gathering of solidarity, hundreds of people witnessed and joined in the day. In three 35-foot ocean-going canoes, we paddled towards the Burnaby TMX Westridge Marine Terminal. On the waters, next to the terminal, matriarchs voiced powerful words, songs, and prayers to their ancestors and offered sacred earth to the waters. We moved as one, paddling and singing together.

"We are Tsleil-Waututh, People of this inlet," said Tsleil-Waututh Xaliya (Ta7ah – Amy George). "We've been here for more than 30,000 years. We are the generation that our ancestors depended upon to take care of this inlet. We need to stop dirty tar sands oil."

We returned from the water and came together in a circle of over 150 people to join in the ceremony led by Elder Minnie (Grinder) Kenoras, Red Hummingbird Woman (Judy

Wilson), Sun Woman (JoAnne Buffalo), Xaliya (Ta7ah – Amy George), Ts'simtelot (Charlene Aleck) and Roxanne Charles.

Over 30 billion taxpayer dollars are being spent on this dangerous pipeline and tanker project that puts the water, salmon, orcas and human health in peril. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation's assessment of the proposed project, in collaboration with leading risk assessment experts from Simon Fraser University, estimated up to 87 percent likelihood of a spill over a 50-year period. The expansion is a direct threat to the Tsleil-Waututh community and way of life.



*Xaliya (Ta7ah – Amy George) stands with Ts'simtelot (Charlene Aleck) (photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).*

Their fight continues and as water protector Kayah George said to the crowd, "I remember when there was just a handful of people and now thousands have come out. Someday we can say we fought our hardest and we won. That's what's going to happen."

TMX is not a done deal, and we are not giving up. Stay tuned for updates on this important initiative, and we invite you to visit [twnsacredtrust.ca](http://twnsacredtrust.ca) to learn more about how to paddle together.

*Canoes paddled from Whey-ah-Wichen to the TMX Marine Terminal as part of the ceremony. Once at the terminal, Tsleil-Waututh matriarchs voiced powerful words and offered sacred earth to the waters (photo by Mya Van Woudenberg).*



## CATCH UP ON RECENT WEBINARS

To make environmental conversations more accessible than ever, we continued hosting fun and informative online webinars. These virtual discussions reached thousands of people and invited them to dig deeper into the issues we all care about. You can watch all our webinars at [sierraclub.bc.ca/webinars](https://sierraclub.bc.ca/webinars).

- **The grace of Interior forests:** A conversation with UBC Professor and 'Finding the Mother Tree' author, Suzanne Simard, on the wonders of Interior forests. We chatted about 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.
- **What's up with old growth in B.C.?:** Building on the momentum of the February *United For Old Growth* rally, this webinar explores how much old growth remains, what is being done to keep it standing, and how to separate facts from government and corporate spin.
- **Learn to Draw Kelp Forests:** As part of our popular art lesson series, scientific illustrator Julius Csotonyi taught participants more about kelp forest and the abundance of life they hold.

# THANK YOU!

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



Photos by Mya Van Woudenberg.

## YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We'd love to connect with you this October! Sierra Club BC will be hosting its Annual General Meeting (AGM) with an open invitation for members to attend (virtually). We'll be going over our highlights from the past year and speaking towards our vision for the future. You'll also have a chance to vote for the Board of Directors who will oversee operations for the next year. We hope you can make it!

**Date:** Thursday, October 19, 2023.

**Time:** 5:30 p.m. PT

**Location:** Online via Zoom

You can register at [sierraclub.bc.ca/agm2023](https://sierraclub.bc.ca/agm2023) or contact Liz Reed at [liz@sierraclub.bc.ca](mailto:liz@sierraclub.bc.ca).



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