

Indigenous led Westcoast Stewardship Corridor Meeting, February 27, 2020

Located in the Community of Hitacu, at the Cix^watin Centre, home of the Yuufu^ʔit^ʔath Government

“ It feels like a threshold moment: we’ve come to the place of possibility and by coming together we’re ready for next steps.”

Key Messages:

- 1) Nitya Harris, Director, Co-existing with Carnivores Alliance: thoughts on purpose of the meeting:
 - a. Proposing a connected large-scale landscape Indigenous lead stewardship corridor, extending from southern to northern regions of Vancouver Island;
 - b. This meeting is to discuss the idea of a westcoast corridor as the first section of this bigger initiative;
 - c. Sense of urgency given the impacts from climate change and development pressure; we need to achieve this goal within the next 10 years or the opportunity will be lost.
 - d. Several examples of large-scale landscape corridors exist: 1) Yellowstone to Yukon, 2) Emerald Edge, 3) Northern BC

- 2) Chief Gordon Planes, elected and hereditary Chief of T'Sou-ke Nation: what we can achieve together:
 - a. Need to look at unwritten protocols of Indigenous people to understand appropriate behaviour in First Nations’ territory (e.g. if we leave wildlife alone, they leave us alone)
 - b. Need science for long term monitoring; there’s not enough eyes on the landscape; with stewardship guardians we can support and supplement the enforcement of animal health through health of landscape. Intentions Paper from BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources will soon be announced with more formal recognition of First Nation’s Territories & support for guardian stewardship. (See [Together for Wildlife: A Proposed Pathway for Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia](#))
 - c. Need to strengthen stewardship protocols within each Nation and develop indicators for monitoring; based on patterns of species relationships and patterns of disruption that need to be restored.
 - d. Have to speak with a united voice, we need partners and we need to focus on wellness: food health, animal health, water quality, air quality, healthy landscapes and a financial model for sustaining guardianship roles.

- 3) Bob Hansen (WildsafeBC Pacific Rim):
 - a. The westcoast is a complex landscape and it’s a shared landscape;
 - b. Between 1998 and 2004, wolf and cougar populations rapidly increased on the westcoast, resulting in an increase in human-animal conflict. However, the rapid re-integration also suggests changing prey-predator relationships and outmigration from other regions: something is broken in the landscape. The rate

of development across Vancouver Island, resulting in habitat loss for large carnivores, is pushing these populations to the west coast margins.

- c. The prey-predator relationships of wolves, cougars and bears are adapting to years of highly disrupted landscapes, such as clear cutting forestry practices and the arising problem of ungulate barrens and forest successional debt. After 15 years of 2nd growth forest succession, pioneer successional growth and prime deer feeding grounds are replaced by highly densified single age forest stands with no light penetration, no layered regeneration, little to no biodiversity and hence little to no animal or plant habitat.
- d. Deer are now occupying human use areas and large carnivores are following them into neighborhoods and adapting to human use patterns. Wolves are using shorelines/beaches more; preying on seals. Cougars are following the deer, advancing their territories into cities and suburban developments and bears are harvesting more and more human produce.

Vision (some concepts):

“I see a geographic area designated for natural processes that are not interrupted by human disturbance; also see an opportunity to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Settler people. Can see a digital map; can envision something about this corridor that is different; a threshold we perceive as special; what’s the next chapter in our social-ecological history? Maybe this is the next chapter in which we recognize our mixed-cultural histories and we do something important together.”

- Make Vancouver Island Priceless
- A corridor of shared values
- Enhance the land and wildlife
- Establish better forestry and other resource extraction practices to enable enhancement of the lands/waters
- Restore forests, lands and waters
- Learn on the land (when you come here you come to learn from the land)
- Economic sustainability without removal of habitat for wildlife
- Use the wisdom from all of us
- Combine indigenous view with scientific view
- everything is alive —lets work in that context

Long-term Goals/Objectives:

1. Learn from existing First Nations protocol agreements
2. Establish indicators of the health of wildlife/landscape
3. Find out the inventory and health of the wildlife

4. Have a 100 year plan for sustainability and enhancement
5. A First Nations led Stewardship program
6. Use Guardian Stewards to help with research and to be an eye on the landscape
7. Find sustainable financial resources for long term information collection
8. Work with municipal OCPs

Short-term Goals (1st year):

1) To convene a steering committee; and 2) map out key habitat corridors on the west coast

Actions:

1) Interim Steering Committee members:

- Chief Gordon Planes, S'ouke First Nation
- Anna Atleo (Maaqtusis H'al Houthi Society, Ahousaht)
- Jonquil Crosby will carry this forward to Malnuth Nations for additional Committee members

Partners:

- Nitya Harris (Coexisting with Carnivores Alliance)
- Bob Hansen (WildsafeBC)
- Laura Loucks (Clayoquot Biosphere Trust)

2) Raise funds to hire a coordinator

3) Bring together stakeholders

4) Make plan for first year including these potential initiatives:

- Establish key species for our work: salmon, cougars, bears, wolves, ??
- Develop map of land holders for the area (establish boundaries of area first)
- Develop database of stakeholders from our area
- GIS mapping of key areas of wildlife habitat
- Establish governance of core group (ethical space concept to also be considered)
- Update landscape map of 2nd growth forest succession and ungulate barrens; identify different successional stages over the next 20-30 years as a proxy for changing prey-predator relationships;

5) Bring this project into line with Province-wide Guardian Stewardship Initiatives

- Create a communication plan;
- Leverage different networks, committees and organizations that people are engaged to advance/contribute to this work
- Identify sustainable funding models? What exists already that we can learn from?

Round Table Discussion:

Question (1): Is this Idea Worth Pursuing?

"We were given these gifts and as Q'uwas peoples we are stewards and protectors of these lands. Some people try to tell us we're owners, but we're the stewards and things have been put upon us that are not our ways and not in line with our values. It's important we align with what we were originally taught and our original beliefs and values."

- Other examples show us that large-scale stewardship can occur successfully, e.g. Great Bear Rainforest, Emerald Forest, Yellowstone to Yukon. It's time we address multiple land and marine-use issues; we all have knowledge to contribute; it's a valuable idea to honour all beings here with which we share the planet.
- The diversity of players and partners is important and everyone has something to contribute.
- For millennia, Indigenous peoples have established how to co-exist with animals and plants; Indigenous lead stewardship is appropriate and we have to pursue this for the land and animals; despite the resistance we might experience. This is a valuable intention.
- Significant support for this concept from District of Tofino; need to gather data so we can implement this vision; need to identify practical actions as we develop large-scale land use policy; need to be conscientious about what we're trying to achieve and what we're actually signing-on to do; we need to identify what we each can contribute in terms of individuals, communities, First Nations and local government.
- There's value in thinking about nested scales of government, with local government aligning with other government jurisdictions connected within a web/network of a larger landscape at larger scales.
- One key idea – at the group level we can have protocol agreements for respecting the land, plants and animals; but how do we create agreements/protocols at the scale of the west coast? There is something special and different about this corridor- how do we convey this idea as it relates to local people and visitors?
- Out of all this work we're going to receive gifts e.g. all of the knowledge here going back thousands of years; but the question is: How will we use these gifts? How will we use the knowledge of how to respect all beings? E.g. the story of the way to greet the Orca with a song and why this is important knowledge. The song is about the right-of-passage and it signals a respectful way to pass through territory; it's an agreement of respect and mutually acknowledged between beings; these are key relationships between humans and animals; these belief systems are important. Spirituality and an underlying understanding of relations are important knowledge systems.
- This is an opportunity to connect a scientific worldview with an Indigenous worldview- linking quantitative knowledge with other ways of knowing and both are important; learning may be a key component of this. The idea that "everything is alive" needs to be respected; we will cross this path between science and Indigenous ways of knowing- we will learn how to do this; because we need to be willing to share knowledge; consider lessons learned; adapt our behavior to what we're learning. We'll need to celebrate our success; protocols are going to be important building blocks during this process.
- Knowledge of original stewards: Indigenous peoples, is an appropriate place to start.
- The process for creating an 'Ethical Space' as shared by Dr. Reginald Crow Shoe and his wife Rose Crow Shoe in the document "[Voice of Understanding](#)". This report outlines how an ethical space can be created within which linkages between western science and Indigenous knowledge can be found. This process was used in the Canada's Pathway to Target 1.

- One idea is to build upon each of our existing networks in order to extend and connect these networks through a shared landscape: 1) BC Land Trusts; 2) Federal & Provincial parks & protected areas; 3) First Nation Land title and rights, 4) Crown Lands
- Need to consider the tools we will need: e.g. land-use moratorium to protect areas (Great Bear Rainforest). Opportunity to learn from other large scale natural area corridors: are there data gaps? How do we identify people & partners to assist with filling these gaps?
- Need a document and numbers to assist local government/Provincial/Federal gov't and leaders with decision-making.
- Our shared love for the land and these beings is what will hold us together and will also challenge us as we have to make decisions about human use versus animal and plant use of the land.
- Development in the last 20 years on Vancouver Island has resulted in fragmented land and habitat loss; Parks are not an answer on their own; we need connectivity and this collaboration is a significant network of connectivity.

Question (2): What could this Indigenous Lead Stewardship Corridor look like?

“With each conversation we have more shared values; see this as a corridor of shared values and shared learning that can lead us.”

- A continuation of meetings like this, either on-line or travel to other communities.
- Can see these larger landscape-level discussions at a scale to share with Malnuth Treaty Nations and an opportunity to collaborate with other Nations/partners.
- Need more conversations to connect people and spaces as opposed to creating more islands of extinctions; need to connect First Nations + Districts + Federal Parks + BC Parks, people who use the land respectfully e.g. Hiking groups. Opportunity to create ethical space for all these conversations: establish a foundation of respect across belief systems.
- Need buy-in from multiple jurisdictions; need tools and policies aligned with this vision e.g. Official Community Plans; it's possible if we work together. Need to consider who else needs to be in the room and part of our next conversation. With each conversation we have more shared values; see this as a corridor of shared values and shared learning that can lead us.
- This could be a movement; such that if we're successful here – to develop a healthy understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and beliefs- we can show the way for others wanting to do the same. I see our Indigenous youth giving talks in 10 years from now to visitors about how we did this and how we have a protected corridor; I see this as a lot of work in order to find links and connections between our different beliefs.
- Like to visualize/imagine and intend this: if we can visualize it, we can create it.
- See a geographic area designated for natural processes that are not interrupted by human disturbance; also see an opportunity to improve relations between Indigenous

and non-Indigenous or Settler people. Can see a digital map; can envision something about this corridor that is different; a threshold we perceive as special; what's the next chapter in our social-ecological history? Maybe this is the next chapter in which we recognize our mixed-cultural histories.

- We have to first understand the damage that has been done to these watersheds/ecosystems e.g. wildlife corridors that we know from our oral history; e.g. how many deer were on Vancouver Island historically? We want to see this again in the future: we want to restore these animal travel corridors such as the deer trails/travel routes and look at where they have been disrupted.
- If we did the damage, don't we have a responsibility to restore the landscape? Can we restore wildlife highways; look at mechanisms such as ecosystem service fees for water withdrawal, slow down resource extraction + speed-up habitat enhancement - need to invest money in long term funds for restoration + stewardship; for example, looking back at Jordon Meadows – where you used to have to walk hours to get there, and in the middle of nowhere you would find over 300 deer gathered in the meadow. To restore this, we need to have a long term view, a 100 year plan for enhancement/restoration. We want to become self-sustaining, we need a healthy territory- that's the foundation.
- We have to discuss livelihoods, have to deal with loss of jobs in resource extraction and invest in enhancement-based jobs. For example, what's the new economy if it's not forestry jobs? Therefore, we need change in BC legislation and we need to create sustainability and re-balance.
- We know we have a problem, we're seeing the signs everywhere e.g. Killer Whales preying upon halibut, wolves feeding on seals. We want to address these problems with stewardship. A place where people focus on responsibility, sharing contiguous connectivity across species; surrounded by buffer zones and working together.
- Need to also consider places that have been degraded and restored which can be linked-into the corridor; These areas will be base-line for teaching and learning; where we can measure the value of not removing ecosystem services; opportunities to challenge fundamental assumptions of 'economic value'.
- Can imagine that we name the animal travel corridors, so they have names on our land use maps and planning processes;
- Can imagine areas of long-connected pathways for species travel, on land and coastlines, as well, we can imagine clean water; forestry practices that support habitat, restore habitat, supports the enhancement economy, this would be an example that is copied elsewhere; extends the entire length and breadth of Vancouver Island; we need a meaningful and impactful name for this corridor.
- Naming is very important.