

Presentation re Haida Gwaii Comprehensive Forestry Strategy-April 17th 2015-Q'aay center: Old Massett Village Council Economic Development.

My name is John Disney and I'm here representing the economy of the Old Massett Village Council.

Haida Gwaii needs a comprehensive forestry strategy! This strategy should speak to ensuring every single economic opportunity that is possible should be levered from the newly gained access to the most readily accessible resource on Haida Gwaii. In parallel the strategy should address the fundamental question; 'are we leaving a healthier more vibrant forest resource for our grandchildren than the one we have today?'

Haida Gwaii's forestry history has been a continual repetition of the same issues for decades and the benefits to the islands have been minimal. The large license holders have dominated the forestry industry on island and islanders and communities have gained little more than pay cheques. Consider that approximately 100 million cubic meters of logs have left these islands since logging got serious here and Port Clements- arguably the center of the HG logging industry-has no sidewalks;

-Let alone a recreational facility

-Or other fundamentals that are installed when consideration for retaining good employees plays a role.

The reason for this is obvious, no local control. HG logs are needed to drive the Province's southern economic machine and we're just people who happen to live here.

When the Haida Nation skillfully negotiated a better way with the Province and Haico and Taan were established, Old Massett for one was jubilant. The CHN had managed to accomplish what ICSI and many other hard working well-meaning local people and groups had struggled with for decades; they gained control of our own resource.

However, I feel the present circumstance is a little too much like the Weyerhaeuser model with one profit-driven bottom line and not enough regard for the people and communities of Haida Gwaii. We need the Haida Gwaii model that would align with all the foundational documents that support the Taan operation. Everything from the Reconciliation Protocol to Haico's mission statement and the Cooperative Management Agreement are peppered with the words we've been seeking:

-Sustainable forest practices to maximize local employment

-Business partnerships so communities and local citizens can have long-term employment opportunities

-Strengthen the wood supply for value-added manufacturing,

and so on. These are the foundation blocks of the Haida Gwaii model that we must all initiate.

And Taan is our hope for the future!

With this element of local control we sit on the brink of solving all our economic problems and gaining full employment for Haida Gwaiians. We need to add in the third bottom line-the people. We have profits and adherence to respect for the environment-now we need to add in benefits to the people on island. The key factors to deliver economic benefits to Haida Gwaii and its people are 'keep it local' and 'value adding'. Limiting these factors leads to the impediment of the delivery of economic benefits from the forests to the island communities.

Supporting local means everything should go to islanders first. This includes the engineering, the area layouts, the road building, the logging, the Silviculture, the marketing, small business support, trucking, HE operators, road building, waste collection etc. In addition all financing, payroll, accounting, bookkeeping, business and succession planning, marketing etc. should be done here, not in Vancouver. Why sell a stack of logs in Vancouver when you could invite the buyers here to come look and make an offer. That alone would boost the hotel and restaurant business on island by over a million dollars a year. In addition if the means to value add is on island this must be supported and welcomed. Cutting logs into lumber in Richmond & China does nothing for Haida Gwaii. Just like Weyerhaeuser and Western Forest Products, it supports a southern or foreign economy. The south has had their kick at this can, now it's Haida Gwaii's turn. Also by shipping out those raw logs we're also shipping out the waste that can be used here to create more employment and economy.

I'm worried watching Taan grab all the easily accessible wood from the bush within easy reach of our communities. Wouldn't that be the best wood to use locally? If you are going to cut down trees and ship them to Vancouver and/or China then why not take the hard to reach inaccessible wood? You can cut down those trees and load them onto the barge in the remote locations leaving the 'easy' or 'cheap to access' wood for the communities to maximize their benefits. Isn't that what all this is supposed to be about, making it easier for the communities to gain value and generate employment from the forests that surround us?

The economy and unemployment situation in Old Massett today is the worst it's been in the last 50 years. In my position, I am the first to feel the pain and frustration from the community as they try to survive this negative reality. I have people in the community without enough to eat and our community kitchen is cooking 50,000 meals this year to nourish the children in our 3 schools. If Taan closed tomorrow, no one in Old Massett would notice. This forestry strategy must reflect these harsh realities and develop sensible economic solutions to solve them. With the formation of Taan and access to this resource at our doorstep, there should be no unemployment on island, there should be no people without food and there definitely shouldn't be any hungry children. Taan

showing a profit in their bank account in the Lower Mainland or Toronto doesn't carry any weight at all with a child who doesn't have enough to eat!

In a nutshell, Haida Gwaii's economy demands a forest strategy to ensure the benefits of our land base accrue to Islanders, especially the Haida. This strategy should be built on the following 3 foundation blocks:

1. The forestry resource of these islands should be maximized for the benefit of islanders and their communities, through value adding and manufacturing.
2. There should be local control of access to the resource.
3. Every possible employment opportunity that can be generated from the forests of Haida Gwaii should be aimed at people who make their home on island or who are prepared to make their home here.
 - a. Every aspect of resource extraction and value adding should be aimed at local businesses, individuals and entrepreneurs. We should support our banks and accountants, we should support our small business people, we should support our professionals and we should support training programs that lead to immediate local forestry-related jobs. This should include collaborating with the education systems on islands to offer forestry related programming within our schools.
 - b. People who make their home on Haida Gwaii or are prepared to move here should conduct the management of and oversight of the entire HG forestry industry. Key positions at the Provincial and corporate level, should be filled by people who live here. People who are posted here or are landing the high paying business positions but live elsewhere are looking through the wrong lens to make decisions that will most benefit Haida Gwaii.