

Setting the Stage

Opening Remarks by Keith Moore

Good forestry is about maintaining a healthy environment. It is equally about ensuring we have healthy communities who benefit from the uses of the forest. That is the essence of eco-system based management

Based on my conversations with many people, it is pretty widely agreed that we have recently made good progress on Haida Gwaii to establish requirements that will maintain a healthy environment and cultural values in the forest. We have established a co-management approach. There is broad acceptance and support for the land use order, the new protected areas and conservancies, the Kunstaa'guu Kunstaayah Reconciliation Protocol. There are some implementation challenges and there are cost issues, but there are processes underway to address these and people are working hard to continue to improve their implementation.

But for many people, we have not made the same progress to ensure that the communities and residents participate fully and benefit directly from the activity in the forest.

This Forum is convened by the Haida Gwaii Management Council to start to address this issue. It is about initiating the development of a comprehensive forestry strategy for Haida Gwaii to achieve those objectives. It is about finding ways to generate economic benefits for communities, maintain stable business environments, provide employment for local residents and to ensure a healthy economic future for young people and families in stable economically diversified communities. We need to recover some of the people we have lost, and we need to find new ways to work together, as an Island community, to achieve these goals.

This is not new. Many previous efforts have addresses these same issues. Many people here worked on these processes over the last 20 years. They include

- Island Community Stability Initiative (ICSI)
- Community Viability Study
- Community Planning Forum
- The Human Resources Strategy of 2011
- The MIEDS Economic Development Strategy of 2013; and others.

But these are different times. There are new leaders, a new co-management governance model involving both governments, new tenure holders, different challenges, and new opportunities.

It is an opportune time for all sectors and interests on the Island to come together and to try this again.

The Discussion Paper that I prepared in 2013 was based on interviews with many different people. It presents an analysis and identifies many issues, obstacles, barriers to achieving those objectives. Some are immediate short-term concerns, and relate to local employment, availability of a local workforce, stable business opportunities and access to wood for local manufacturing.

Others are much longer-term, more related to the profile of the future second-growth forest, the need for critical infrastructure and concern for the loss of access from road and bridge deactivation or abandonment.

Others have to do with opportunities for diversification through forest-based tourism and other non-timber products.

That 2013 Paper presents a wide ranging analysis and included a set of ideas and proposals for the development of strategies under 12 headings and serves as a starting point. I am not going to provide any details now. I expect most of those issues and proposals will be discussed over the next two days.

I want to stress that many people also identified strengths and opportunities.

- The forests of Haida Gwaii are still an extensive, high quality resource supporting a significant annual cut. They can support a diversified industry and many different uses to sustain healthy communities. There are ways to generate more jobs, more benefits, more opportunities.
- The forest produces a diverse array of highly valued products - cedar, spruce and good quality hemlock, crafts, tourism, non-timber products, mushrooms, many others. We need to focus on this value, not on volume.
- We are a globally-known Haida Gwaii brand - known for the very high quality wood, but equally as an international destination for visitors, with a rich cultural context, and recently as a forest that is certified to the highest certification standard - the Forest Stewardship Council standard.
- Our communities provide an attractive lifestyle, affordable housing, good facilities and a rich environment and culture. Haida Gwaii is a great place to live.
- We have skilled and committed people with a history of getting things done

These are real strengths. We should not lose sight of those as we address the challenges. We need to build on these strengths.

In listening to the many comments, I think the discussion falls into three broad categories

- First, we need to find ways to create more security for local contractors and more local employment in all parts of the traditional primary logging sector. This sector will remain an important part of our local economy. We need to make sure it is viable. But we need to have more of it based here, and employing more people here.
- Second, we need to find ways to develop and expand a secondary manufacturing sector using local wood and local people. Too much goes away in round log form. Essentially we need to create more activity and employment, more value out of less volume. This involves finding access to wood for existing and future local manufacturing businesses, and developing new facilities.
- Third, we need to find ways to develop new businesses in non-timber sectors – forest based tourism and recreation, non-timber products, education. This is about diversification.

Addressing these requires collaboration. No-one is going to address this alone. I encourage you to use this event to network – there are representatives of municipalities, band councils, tenure holders, contractors, educational and training organizations and many more. Look for partnerships and opportunities to work together.

Our objectives for the Forum are to focus on three things – Three Ps

- Priorities – What are the short-term priorities where the Management Council might take immediate action? But also What are the key long-term priorities to be addressed in a strategy?
- Process – What should the process for developing a comprehensive strategy be?
- People – Who are the people who should lead this initiative with the HGMC?

We will address these in break-out group discussions and by bringing the results of those back to the whole group for comment. By tomorrow afternoon, I hope we have some clear and specific proposals for the Management Council in all three of these areas.

Our first break out this afternoon will focus on the Priorities and three key questions.

- What are the most important factors that limit the delivery of economic benefits from the forest to the island communities?
- What are the best ways to improve the situation?
- What are the top three priorities or opportunities for immediate action?

To start that discussion off, we have a number of people to present their different perspectives on the three questions.

From a personal perspective, I am excited to be a part of this. I look forward to a very intense couple of days with some clear outcomes. I urge you to be respectful, to focus on issues, and to refrain from negative comments about individuals, organizations or companies.

Before we move on to the next session, I want to acknowledge all the hard work of our convenor, Paula Varnell, who pulled this all together and talked with many of you. My assistant, Alan Moore, met with many of the groups here and assisted in taking notes. We will also be assisted through the Forum by three students who have been here with the Haida Gwaii Semester Program – Colleen Fuhrman, Claire Heggie and Acacia Meyer.

Haawa. Thank you