

A Unique Creation

Merv Child, Chair, Coast Opportunity Funds

"I've been a director of Coast Funds since it was created in 2007, and have been honoured to be the Chair since 2010. As we always tell people ask about us, we're a unique organization born out of mutual recognition by conservationists, First Nations governments, resource industries and governments alike that a sustainable economy for First Nations is vital to conservation efforts in the Central Coast, North Coast and Haida Gwaii areas of the Great Bear Rainforest of coastal British Columbia."

It was the excitement and challenge of being part of such a unique organization that led Child to say yes when he was asked to be on the Board. Child had been involved in the early discussions leading up to the creation of Coast Funds, as a representative of the eight First Nations of the Nanwakolas Council. "I knew it would be a lot of work, but I

also thought it was very important to take up the opportunity to continue to share the perspectives of those First Nations with the other directors," says Child.

Like the rest of the Board, Child is a strong advocate of Coast Funds' core values of accountability, integrity and consistency in decision-making, inclusiveness and a collaborative approach to working with the communities, and respect.

"When we were discussing how to design the structure of the organization, everyone shared a common goal that we did not want to create a program or something that looked like a government bureaucracy handling these funds. This money was invested exclusively for the use of the First Nations, the first time anything had been created like this



here. Everyone involved agreed on strict accountability requirements in how the funds were to be utilized, but we also knew that we would need flexibility and a different approach," says Child. "Coast Funds needed to be an organization that works with the First Nations we serve as a partner that supports the realization of their goals and dreams for conservation and sustainable economic development, and I think that's what we've achieved. I'm proud to have been part of that process."