

# About Coast Funds: Part I in a series

In the late 1990s, First Nations, environmental groups, private conservation foundations and the federal government began exploring ideas to meet conservation goals in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. Everyone agreed that it would only be through successful partnering and collaboration with First Nations communities that viable solutions would be found.

It was also recognized that the key to a durable and healthy environment in the Great Bear Rainforest is the maintenance of the link between the environment and the First Nations, and supporting a sustainable economy and healthy communities. The First Nations made it clear they did not want to rely on unsustainable government program funds to support those goals. Discussions culminated in the groundbreaking signing of historical land use agreements with the First Nations and the 2007 establishment of the \$120 million Coast Opportunity Funds, including both conservation and economic development funds allocated to each First Nation community.

Coast Funds is responsible for approving awards from the allocations to the First Nations for projects that meet the goals and criteria agreed to by the creators of the funds. By the end of August 2011, Coast Funds had approved economic development awards of \$18 million and conservation fund awards of \$5.8 million, and allocated conservation funds of \$9.35 million. Eighteen First Nations had utilized all or a portion of their economic development allocations, and twelve had utilized conservation allocations. Coast Funds now supports conservation management efforts in First Nations whose traditional territories in total cover over 80% of the Project Area and include more than 110 of the 126 conservancies.

In Part II, we'll describe in more detail the unique vision and mandate of Coast Funds, as stewards of the funds allocated to every First Nation to support durable and long-lasting economic and conservation outcomes.

