

# Great Bear Rainforest: Land Use Agreement Simulation Meeting Minutes

## Presentations



**Laura Olsen**  
BC Deputy Minister of the Environment

As chair of this meeting, I'm not here to present an opinion on the future land use in the Great Bear Rainforest, but rather to listen to all the stakeholders. I've asked my advisor to join us to help facilitate the decision making process. You may begin your presentations.



**Gerry Semiuk**  
Logger and union representative,  
Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada

As a logger for over 20 years, I've seen the BC forestry industry go through some significant changes. We've been hit hard with layoffs and sawmill closures the past several years. I'm here as a voice for the forestry workers whose employment outlook is grim. The decisions made at this table will affect hundreds of loggers who live and work in, or near, the Great Bear Rainforest. Logging must be part of the land use plan. Forestry workers' jobs must be protected now and in the future.



**Archie Starr**  
Coastal First Nations Representative

I'm at the table to represent a coalition of Coastal First Nations. For thousands of years, First Nations have lived in and around the Great Bear Rainforest. The health and welfare of our people have always been connected to the health and welfare of the land. Our heritage and oral tradition provide a framework for living in balance.

First Nations have lost control of the development of our traditional territory. In the past hundred years, resources have been exploited for profit resulting in vanishing forests and diminishing fish stocks. For too long, we have watched those profits flow past us to the logging and fishing companies, leaving our communities in crisis—both economically and culturally.

The Coastal First Nations are at this table to take back control of our economic, social, and territorial rights in the Great Bear region and to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.



**Elizabeth Chang**  
Earth Alert!

Logging, mining and road building in the Great Bear Rainforest is destroying watersheds and wildlife habitat. There is no such thing as environmentally sustainable development—any development has the potential to destroy this delicate ecosystem. The Great Bear is an environmental treasure and must be off limits to any activities that put wildlife and habitat at risk. Earth Alert is here at the table to insist that all development in the Great Bear Rainforest be stopped immediately.



**Douglas Brown**  
Spirit Bear Eco-Adventures

I am a guide and cultural interpreter for Spirit Bear Eco-Adventures. Our small operation is owned and controlled by our Kitsoo community. We are deriving employment and income from the Great Bear Rainforest without harvesting its resources. Spirit Bear Eco-Adventures has developed a Sustainable Tourism Policy in order to ensure wildlife and their habitat remains undisturbed. I am here to hold other stakeholders accountable for their environmental impact in the Great Bear Rainforest.



**Julia Parsons**  
Vice President, BC Forest Products

As Vice President of BC Forest Products, I am pleased to be part of the negotiations on future land use of the Great Bear Rainforest. BC Forest Products has been logging on the coast of British Columbia for a hundred years and we are proud of our record as good stewards of the environment. Forestry is the backbone of this province, and it directly employs more than 80,000 people, including many First Nations.

Presently, there is a dire situation in the forestry industry—logging contractors and lumber producers all across BC are struggling with the worst economic conditions in several decades. In order to save jobs in the forestry sector, BC Forest Products must be able to harvest old growth wood using the most economical method possible. Clear cutting is the most cost-effective and safest way to log regions like the Great Bear. Environmentally sound clear cutting is sustainable and helps generate new tree growth where second growth forests are planted. Presently, BC Forest Products cannot afford to change logging practices while continuing to employ the thousands of British Columbians who depend on this industry for their livelihood.



**Paul McDonald**

Friends of the Great Bear Rainforest

I am pleased to be at this table to negotiate a new land use plan for the Great Bear Rainforest.

The current state of resource development is unsustainable. A scientific study indicated that this region needs 40 - 60% protection to ensure that biodiversity is maintained. Widespread clear cutting is an ongoing threat to the rainforest's unique ecosystem. Tearing down some of the world's oldest and largest trees is destroying salmon streams, estuaries and critical wildlife habitat—especially for the grizzly bear, the Kermode or Spirit bear and the endangered Marbled Murrelet.

Friends of the Great Bear is not against forestry. However, we support a kind of forestry that is ecologically and culturally sustainable, and one that brings long-term benefits to BC communities. Also, this approach must be practiced in conjunction with a strict land protection plan.

## Arguments



**Laura Olsen**

BC Deputy Minister of the Environment

We have heard presentations from all of our stakeholders on future land use in the Great Bear Rainforest. In the interest of negotiating an agreement that meets the needs of all stakeholders, further discussion is needed. Each of you will now present your arguments and any compromises your organization is willing to make in order to reach an agreement.



**Gerry Semiuk**

Logger and union representative,  
Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada

Logging must continue in the Great Bear Rainforest or many jobs will be lost on BC's west coast. Whether we continue to clear-cut or change to a more ecologically friendly logging practice—it doesn't matter to front-line workers. Most workers are willing to learn new techniques and practices. Our concern is that the forestry industry recovers and that workers have job security.



**Archie Starr**  
Coastal First Nations Representative

The future of the Great Bear Rainforest cannot be separated from the future of the coastal First Nations. Our participation in this land use process is grounded in the ongoing negotiations of aboriginal territorial rights in the region. Conservation means more than wilderness protection. This agreement must protect ecosystems, respect First Nations' culture and traditions, and strengthen local economies and communities. To satisfy Coastal First Nations, the rightful landowners in the Great Bear Rainforest, the following points must be implemented in a land use agreement. Firstly, fifty percent of the rainforest must be protected to restore and preserve important ecosystems. This area must also protect medicinal plants, culturally modified trees, bear dens, and eagles' nests. Areas for First Nation food and ceremonial uses need to be established. And finally, any development in the remaining fifty percent of the Great Bear region must bring income and new sustainable economic opportunity to First Nation communities.



**Elizabeth Chang**  
Earth Alert!

Why are we allowing old growth forests like the Great Bear Rainforest to be logged for products such as toilet paper, magazines, newspaper and disposable diapers? Why are we allowing mineral exploration in biodiversity areas? Agreeing to any compromises with regards to development in this rainforest will put this delicate ecosystem at risk. How can any of us, here at this table, jeopardize the future of the Great Bear Rainforest by allowing development that will result in nothing less than ecological extinction? All 6.4 million hectares must be protected.



**Douglas Brown**  
Spirit Bear Eco-Adventures

The KITASOO people are creating our own land use plan. We will set aside forty percent of our traditional territory in the Great Bear Rainforest to protect fish, wildlife, as well as our culture. This will ensure that there will always be land and resources for our community, and a natural area where we can educate visitors about rainforest conservation. Many First Nations in the Great Bear Rainforest are also protecting land and managing resources in a sustainable way. It is time that the provincial government

follows our lead and protects at least forty percent of the entire Great Bear Rainforest. We will support development in the remaining sixty percent of the region, but only if ecologically sustainable practices are employed.



**Julia Parsons**  
Vice President, BC Forest Products

As we are facing the worst economic climate in years, clear cutting old growth forests is the logging industry's most cost effective way to do business, keep BC workers employed, and safeguard the province's economy. Forestry companies must be allowed to continue this method of logging in the entire Great Bear region. Research and development of new sustainable practices is expensive and can take years to make a profit. Unless the provincial government is willing to provide millions of dollars in subsidies for companies to change their logging practices, there is not much that the forest industry can offer for compromise.



**Paul McDonald**  
Friends of the Great Bear Rainforest

In order for my organization to support a land use plan, the following points must be addressed. We would like to see sixty percent of the Great Bear Rainforest protected, including key sensitive watersheds as well as wildlife habitats for the Spirit Bear, Marbled Murrelet, and other unique or endangered species. There must be an immediate end to clear cutting. Sustainable forestry practices must be implemented in the remaining forty percent of the rainforest. Lastly, a new conservation-based economy must provide long-term livelihoods for communities in the Great Bear Rainforest.