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FOR OUR CHILDREN'S TOMORROWS



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FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

We, the Heiltsuk Nation, are the stewards of the lands and resources in our territory. This is ʼGvíʼilás, our traditional way, and we will ensure our lands and resources can support our people now and into the future.

Heiltsuk Territory is located in the Central Coast of British Columbia. Our relationship to this land is ancient, complex and sacred. Oral tradition, physical evidence and continued use and occupancy reveal at least fifty-five permanent villages and many hundreds of traditional camps throughout our territory. The boundaries are defined by the tribal areas of five Heiltsuk groups: the ʼWúyalit̓x̌v, Yísdaít̓x̌v, Wúíʼl̓it̓x̌v, ʼQvuqvaʼáit̓x̌v and ʼXáíx̌áís. We have never surrendered our ancient rights to these lands, nor our duty to look after them.

Our ʼGvíʼilás directs us to balance the health of the land and the needs of our people, ensuring there will always be plentiful resources. We have honoured and maintained our traditions since time immemorial and continue this covenant today by having developed a land use plan that will protect the resources that are vital to our survival and well-being.

We are pleased to present this *Heiltsuk Land Use Plan* executive summary. It represents our vision of management for our territory. It will help us govern our territory as rightful landowners.

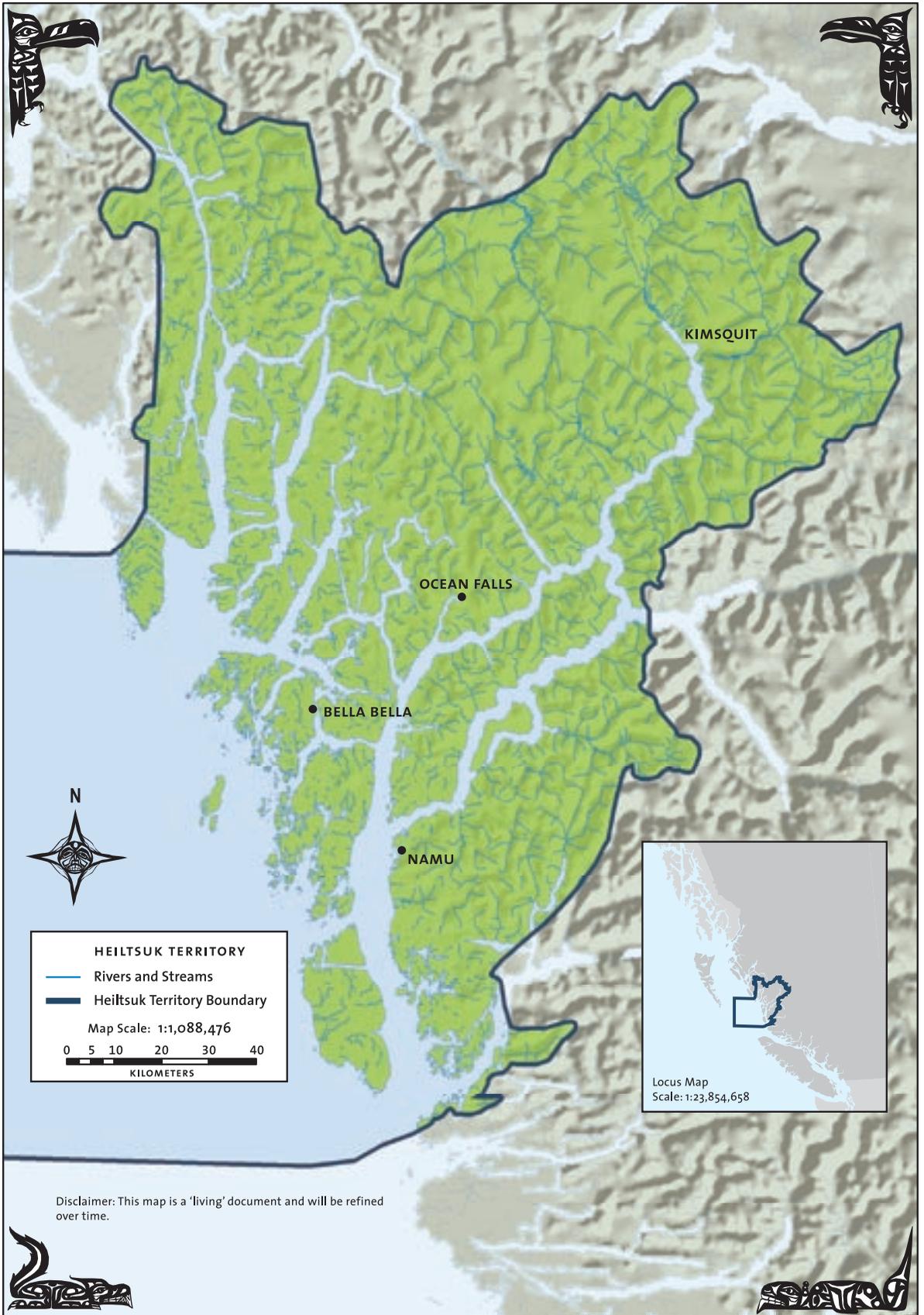
ʼWálas ʼGíáxsi̓x̌a



Ross Wilson, Chief Councillor
Heiltsuk Tribal Council



Yimas Harvey Humchitt Sr.
Heiltsuk Yimas Council



OUR VISION

Since time immemorial, we, the Heiltsuk people have managed all of our territory with respect and reverence for the life it sustains, using knowledge of marine and land resources passed down for generations. We have maintained a healthy and functioning environment while meeting our social and economic needs over hundreds of generations.

Our vision for this area remains unchanged. We will continue to balance our needs while sustaining the land and resources that support us. We will continue to manage all Heiltsuk seas, lands and resources according to customary laws, traditional knowledge and *núym̓* (oral tradition) handed down by our ancestors, with consideration of the most current available scientific information.

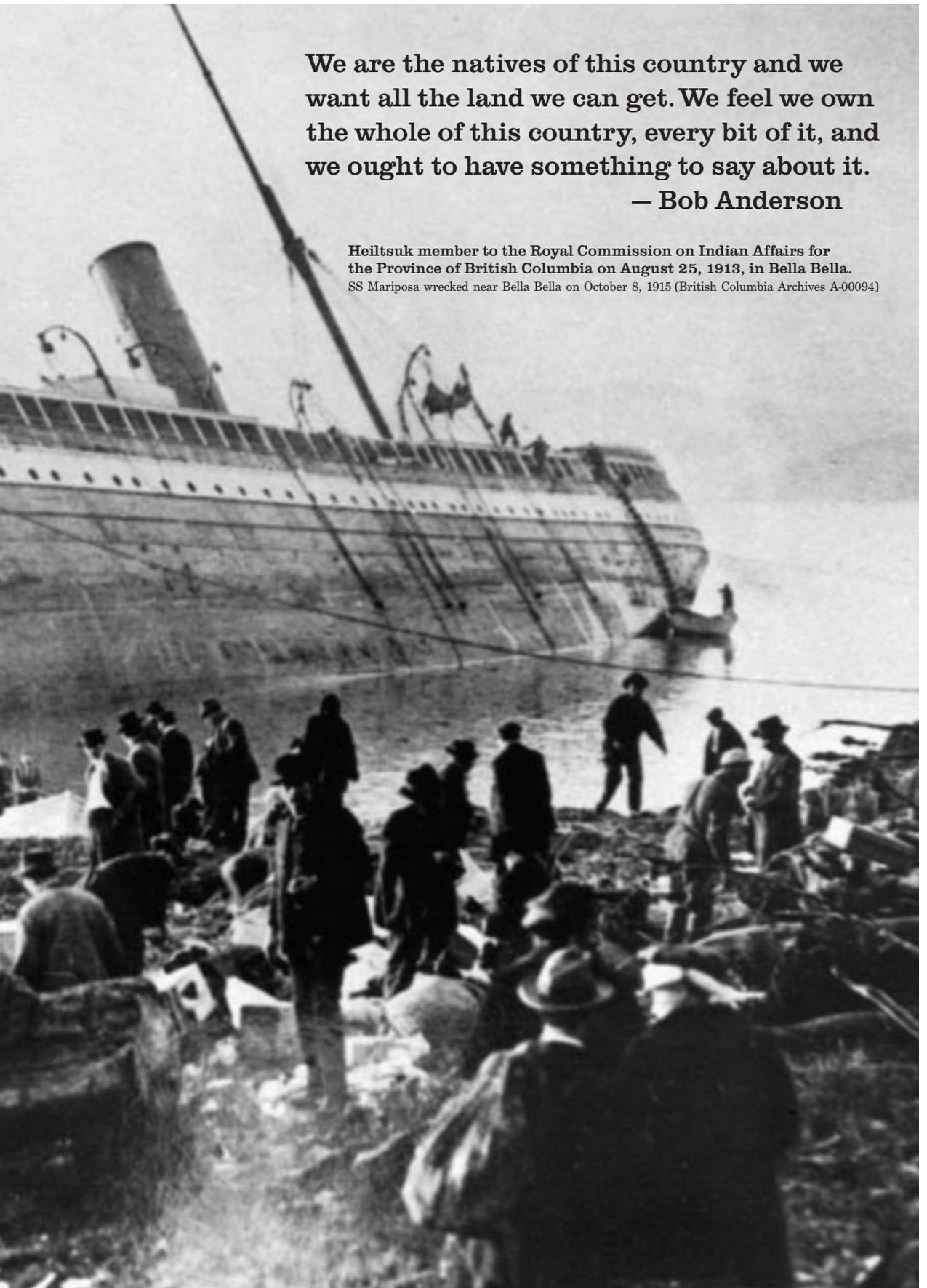


**We are the natives of this country and we
want all the land we can get. We feel we own
the whole of this country, every bit of it, and
we ought to have something to say about it.**

— Bob Anderson

**Heiltsuk member to the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for
the Province of British Columbia on August 25, 1913, in Bella Bella.**

SS Mariposa wrecked near Bella Bella on October 8, 1915 (British Columbia Archives A-00094)





We are defined in a large part by our territory. We have a relationship with it that goes back thousands and thousands of years. That is where we get our strength.

— Philip Hogan

A Living Document

We have been creating a vision for Heiltsuk Territory for several years. The *Heiltsuk Land Use Plan* (the *Plan*) was developed from numerous interviews and meetings with Heiltsuk members, resource staff, leaders and technicians. It is supported by a great deal of technical work and data with assistance from other sources.

The *Plan* is a reference tool for Heiltsuk leaders and resource staff, assisting us with government negotiations, development referrals and land use decisions. It covers a wide range of land and resource issues. The *Plan* also provides a general guide for non-Heiltsuk proposed developments. A marine-use plan is being developed and will be integrated with this land use plan.

A “living document,” the *Plan* will evolve over time and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, as new information is gathered. It is not intended to set in stone a rigid collection of rules. Rather, the *Heiltsuk Land Use Plan* is a guide that is flexible and practical.

ᵐGvī'ílás & 7áxvái

ᵐGvī'ílás is a set of customary laws that governs the overarching system of the Heiltsuk. The word 7áxvái translates as the “power” or “authority” people derive from their ownership of and connection to the land. It is a complex and comprehensive system that embodies values, beliefs, teachings, principles, practices and consequences. Yímas Moses Humchitt refers to ᵐGvī'ílás as our “power” over all matters that affect our lives. Responsibility to manage resources and to provide material well-being is part of this complex concept. Based on ᵐGvī'ílás, the Heiltsuk are the responsible stewards of the land.

The Heiltsuk hold title and rights to our territory and will protect our lands. We continue to follow ᵐGvī'ílás and, where appropriate and as desired, use modern scientific methods including the evolving concept of ecosystem-based management, to steward our lands. We are committed to provide for the needs of our people in a responsible and sustainable manner consistent with ᵐGvī'ílás.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ᵐGvī'ílás serves as the paramount principle for managing resources. The Heiltsuk also endorse the general principle of ecosystem-based management. Guiding principles for land management, in order of priority, include:

1. Ensure conservation of natural and cultural resources
2. Ensure Heiltsuk priority access to resources for cultural and sustenance use
3. Enable appropriate Heiltsuk commercial and recreational use of resources
4. Enable appropriate non-Heiltsuk commercial and recreational use of resources

I recall the old people saying that families who had the right to fish in a particular river system also had the responsibility to maintain those river systems.

– Pauline Waterfall

power

Key Policy Statements

There are some specific land- and resource-use issues that are of major concern to the Heiltsuk. Many of these are immediate or pressing issues. We have highlighted key policy statements on six issues in order to raise their profile and provide clarity on our positions.

REFERRALS & CONSULTATION

Consultation is initiated through a formal written submission to the Heiltsuk Tribal Council. Depending on the nature and scope of the development, consultation may include written correspondence, meetings or other ways of communication. The Heiltsuk do not accept telephone contact as consultation, nor are casual or unplanned meetings with Heiltsuk Tribal Council members or officials considered consultation. Consultation shall be considered completed only when the Heiltsuk and other parties have reached mutual agreement.



Whatever is going to be done should be done in a sustainable way so that we could have it forever and we can continue to use it.

– Brett Waterfall

ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

Past resource management approaches have failed and, in response, a new approach called “ecosystem-based management” (EBM) has arisen. It is defined as “a strategic approach to managing human activities that seeks to ensure the co-existence of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems and human communities.” The Heiltsuk Nation supports the guiding principles of EBM. It is consistent with *Gwi’ilás*, in that it focuses first on what to leave behind to sustain healthy ecosystems and communities over generations.

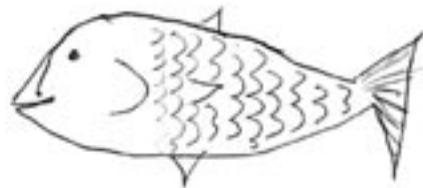


SALMON AQUACULTURE

The Heiltsuk Nation is deeply concerned that net-pen salmon aquaculture or “salmon farming” adversely affects the health and long-term survival of wild Pacific salmon and other aquatic species. The ecological consequences, in turn, directly impact the Heiltsuk people who are dependent on salmon and the marine environment. Therefore, the Heiltsuk Nation does not support salmon farming as it is currently practiced.

We are the salmon people. We have to do everything we can to stop salmon farming, and we will.

– Yírnas Harvey Hunchitt



Salmon

by Kylie Gladstone

OUR

CEDAR

Cedar—both *dúwas* (yellow cedar) and *dhíyas* (Western red cedar)—is an extremely important resource for the cultural survival and economic well-being of the Heiltsuk people. If industrial logging of old-growth cedar continues at the same rate as the past 15 years, there may be a future shortfall of large old-growth cedar for Heiltsuk uses.

In the long term, the viability of Heiltsuk participation in the forest sector may also be undermined. Therefore, based on stringent conditions prescribed by the Heiltsuk Tribal Council, logging must be done cautiously to ensure that cedar is sustained forever.



The rapid loss of old-growth Western red cedar is the same as the loss of our culture.

– Kelly Brown

OFFSHORE OIL & GAS

Reliance upon the marine environment is a fundamental and defining factor of Heiltsuk culture, identity and economy. The potential harm posed by offshore oil and gas exploration or development is a real and significant threat to our way of life. We have serious concerns regarding the safety and advisability of engaging in these activities. Therefore, we are not supportive of oil and gas exploration or development within our territory.



PROTECTED AREAS

Any federal or provincial government proposals for designation of new parks, conservancies, nature reserves or other legislated protected areas require government-to-government consultation with the Heiltsuk Nation. If long-term protective measures are deemed essential to safeguard the natural and cultural resources of specific areas, the Heiltsuk Nation will pursue management agreements. These agreements must establish and define the relationship between the Heiltsuk Nation and other governments with respect to the planning, management and use of designated protected areas. The Heiltsuk Tribal Council has identified key elements of effective co-management.

nation



General Management Directions

General management directions guide the protection, conservation, development and use of resources and land. Heiltsuk authority is expressed consistently in these general management directions for ten resource sectors. One key message for all sectors is our commitment to protect the harvest of traditional-use resources, ensuring that our cultural activities can continue in perpetuity.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Heiltsuk culture derives from our deep attachment to the land and sea, shaping and enriching our language, customs, food, art and objects. Old village sites, shell middens, gravesites, pictographs, culturally modified trees—these are the physical evidence of our long and rich history. Family and place names, oral histories and myths—these also speak powerfully of who we are.

The Heiltsuk are carvers, cooks, craftspeople, storytellers, artists, weavers, teachers, writers, musicians, builders. We are a creative and inventive people. In fact, in 1844, John Dunn,

a European fur trader, described the Heiltsuk’s legendary boat building as “ingenious.”

We will protect and restore our cultural heritage and traditions, including 800 registered archaeological sites, traditional-use areas and sacred places. We will maintain our cultural practices for Heiltsuk wellness, community strength and identity. And we will rejuvenate our language, spiritual practices and traditional knowledge through education. Our children, parents and Elders will share our culture through mutual learning.



I am very connected to the land, and it is more than what I eat off the land and what I gather off the land...It is hard to put it into words because I just go on the land and I just know that is who I am.

– Kendra Newman



The Heiltsuk people were well known for their ability to build big canoes. They were sort of famous for that. They sometimes were commissioned by other tribes to build a big canoe.

– Yimás Edwin Newman



Photos: (this page top) Heiltsuk youth with old-growth tree; (bottom) procession of chiefs by canoe-catamaran at Koeve River; (opposite page) ocean-going canoe under construction by Ian Reid; (page 17) Heiltsuk mask; (page 12) Larry Campbell, Heiltsuk artist.



**The Heiltsuk are carvers,
cooks, craftspeople, story-tellers,
artists, weavers, teachers, writers,
musicians, builders. We are a
creative and inventive people.**



PLANTS

Plants provide us with food, medicine, and spiritual and cultural sustenance. Their cultural value is immense. Traditionally, Elders passed their knowledge to the younger generation regarding the cultivation, harvesting and uses of plants.

Today many plants have commercial value. Salal is a floral greenery product. Pine mushrooms, morels, salmonberries, huckleberries and salal berries are popular foods. Other plants—including moss, alder, yew, Devil's club, and cedar bark and oil—have commercial potential as holistic medicines. Some plants, however, may not be acceptable for commercialization.

Guided by our Elders and *ʔGvi'ilás*, we will protect areas for traditional plant harvesting ensuring cultural use takes precedence over commercialization. We will share knowledge of traditional gathering and plant uses with our people. Where culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable, we will provide commercial harvesting opportunities and ensure that intellectual property rights are respected and protected.

The most important things to me are fish, food, berries, the natural beauty of the territory.

– June Wilson



diverse



Photos: (opposite page top) Heiltsuk girl, Colleen Johnson, with rice root; (bottom) bunch berry; (this page below) Mitch Martin, Heiltsuk logger; (page 20) Heiltsuk logger at work.



FORESTS

Trees are central to Heiltsuk society, providing materials for everything from housing and transportation to food, medicines, clothing and tools. In the post-contact era, we were some of the first commercial loggers, but over the past century our rights to forest resources have been severely eroded.

Logging has been concentrated in the large, productive river valleys such as the Dean, Kimsquit, Kwatna and Quatlena. A detailed timber supply analysis indicates that if logging of cedar continues at recent (1985–1999) rates, most of the operable old-growth cedar in our territory will be gone in 25 to 35 years. This deeply concerns us.

Ecosystem-based management must guide forestry operations, ensuring sustainable harvests and the integrity of forest ecosystems. We support Heiltsuk-controlled forestry, including co-management and joint ventures. We want to develop a robust and diverse forest sector economy, providing local employment, income and other benefits.

Forestry can provide some good economic opportunities if done in a manner that took in all of the ecological considerations such as wildlife habitat, watershed areas – especially salmon bearing streams.

– Albert Wilson

harvest



We need to be involved with the logging plans and activities that are in our territory and have proper consultation. We would like to see ecosystem-based management if we go into partnership with other companies.

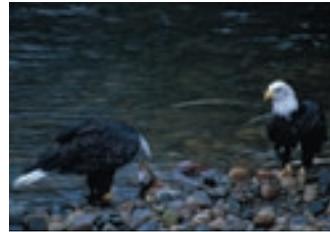
— Yímas Harvey Humchitt Sr.

BIODIVERSITY

A rich diversity of living creatures resides in Heiltsuk Territory. Populations of grizzly bear, black bear, wolf, cougar, blacktail deer, mountain goats and moose live in the forests and muskeg. There are mink, marten and otter. Sea lions and harbour seals swim along the shore. Migratory and resident waterfowl, shorebirds and birds of prey soar through the sky.

A complex web of life has sustained the Heiltsuk for millennia. Only recently, however, have industrial development and resource extraction begun to undermine the Creator's delicate balance.

We will ensure that some areas are left in their natural state to conserve biological richness and safeguard traditional harvesting activities. We will sustain and where necessary restore abundant populations of wildlife, especially grizzlies and mountain goats. Wild salmon stocks will be protected from industrial activity. We will integrate *Gwi'ilás* and traditional knowledge into wildlife management.



Once you lose quality habitat, it is very difficult to get that quality back.

– Mike Jacobs

Protect





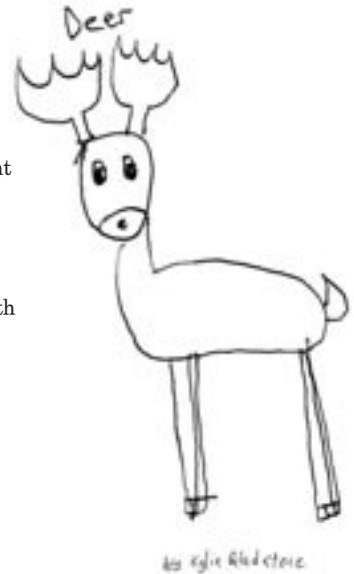


HUNTING & TRAPPING

Hunting and trapping remain important to the Heiltsuk household economy and way of life. Waterfowl, deer and mountain goat are commonly hunted for food. Mink, marten, river otter and beaver are commercially trapped for their furs.

The Heiltsuk have never surrendered trapping or hunting rights. Nevertheless, non-Heiltsuk hunters have become increasingly active in the territory and industrial logging has further disrupted patterns of wildlife movement, forage and predation.

We will protect hunting and trapping for food and cultural use, and support commercial trapping if it is economically viable and if Heiltsuk exercise proper management controls. Trophy hunting is not consistent with *Gwi'ilás* and thus is not permitted. In general, commercial hunting must address our concerns about population health and not compromise Heiltsuk traditional use.



Right now, a lot of people are camping anywhere and contaminating our beaches. This is a bit of concern for me. We need to have a central area within our government to manage tourism.

– Kelly Brown



Photos: (opposite page) martens are an important species for Heiltsuk trappers; (this page top) kelp beds on the outer coast; (bottom) seagulls on the beach in Bella Bella.

INTER-TIDAL

Heiltsuk people have always gathered and preserved beach foods for sustenance, ceremonial, social and trade purposes. The inter-tidal zone is one of the most biologically rich habitats on earth. Beach foods include clams, cockles, gooseneck barnacles, oysters, scallops, seagull eggs, mussels, kelp, abalone and seaweed, among dozens of other species.

These resources are currently under threat from pollution, poaching, commercial over-fishing, the encroachment of sports fishing and tourism, coastal development and logging.

There is also concern about waste flows, disease and habitat changes caused by open net-pen salmon farming.

We will protect inter-tidal resources for food and traditional harvesting from all sources of degradation. Commercial harvesting or cultivation must not infringe on Heiltsuk rights to harvest inter-tidal resources. Certain areas should be designated commercial “no-take” zones to first restore depleted populations and second protect Heiltsuk food harvesting. We will explore opportunities in shellfish aquaculture.

WATER

High rainfall, snowmelt and glacial runoff produce abundant and very high quality freshwater resources in Heiltsuk Territory. Rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands are essential for spawning salmon, drinking water, hydroelectric generation and other commercial activity. Natural hot springs at Nascall and Eucott Bay are also important for health, healing and spiritual practices.

Access to freshwater is a critical factor determining Heiltsuk settlement expansion and new settlement development. Water quality is also essential to community health.



We will protect freshwater streams, lakes and fish habitat from development and manage the resource to safeguard Heiltsuk domestic and traditional uses. Any commercial development of freshwater resources must deliver significant benefits to the Heiltsuk Nation.



Link Lake in Ocean Falls and Namu Lake and the whole watershed are important for the future water supply for our people. We are lucky we haven't had a drought. It's going to happen.

– Fred Reid

TOURISM

Heiltsuk Territory is a spectacular tourism destination with rugged outer coastal waters and beaches, and inland waterways, lakes and fjords. The geography supports fishing, kayaking, coastal cruising, surfing, diving and hiking. There are excellent wildlife-viewing opportunities. Heiltsuk culture and history also provide a rich foundation for tourism.

On the Central Coast, tourism is primarily a summer activity and the majority of visitors are sports fishermen. Currently, few benefits from the sports-fishing industry filter into our community.

In fact, Heiltsuk fishermen often find themselves in direct conflict with commercial sports-fishing operators.

We will increase our management capacity and monitoring of tourism and recreational activities. Tourism must minimize adverse impacts on wildlife and natural areas, and not interfere with Heiltsuk culture, traditional use and recreational activities. We will strengthen our participation in the tourism sector and establish Bella Bella as a hub for tourism activities and facilities on the Central Coast.

There's too many sports fishermen moving in. They are more or less just taking over. You go on the plane and you see all the fish that are being taken out – boxes and boxes.

– Dickie Humchitt



MINERALS & ENERGY

The Heiltsuk have traditionally extracted and utilized a variety of minerals: slate, clay, quartz, obsidian, basalt, copper, ochre and pigments. Aggregates such as gravel continue to be used for road and building construction.

Currently there are a dozen mineral tenures in Heiltsuk Territory granted by the provincial government. Several oil companies own the offshore oil and gas leases in the Queen Charlotte Basin and Hecate Strait. Energy for Bella Bella is generated at an hydroelectric facility at Ocean Falls, an area that is subject to an ongoing dispute as to its ownership and control.

We support mineral exploration and development activity if it occurs under Heiltsuk control and management, and provides local benefits. Mining and energy related activities must achieve the highest standards of environmental and cultural resource protection. We are not supportive of the exploration and development of offshore oil and gas, but are committed to exploring alternative energy sources.



Mining should not occur where it will interfere with the daily lives of the people living on the reserve. It should not disrupt the animals' lives, or our traditional ways of life.

– Patti Gayle Gladstone



WILDERNESS ACCESS

Prior to European contact, Heiltsuk people travelled extensively between seasonal and permanent villages, and to fishing, harvesting, hunting and trapping grounds. Today, most travel occurs in and out of Bella Bella, the only permanent village site currently occupied. However, the Heiltsuk still travel widely throughout our territory, following ancient land use patterns. There is also an extensive network of logging and mining roads, and waterways used to access wilderness areas.

Access to remote areas of Heiltsuk Territory by vehicle, helicopter and motorboat impacts the environment. The Heiltsuk are concerned about the effects of road construction, maintenance and deactivation on cultural sites and wildlife, especially salmon. Aircraft and motorboats also cause air and noise pollution that disturbs wildlife.

Still, we believe some existing logging and mining roads may be useful for tourism and other activities, and should not be deactivated without consulting the Heiltsuk Nation. We will also explore additional road and transportation systems required for the expansion of settlement and tourism areas, and for economic development.

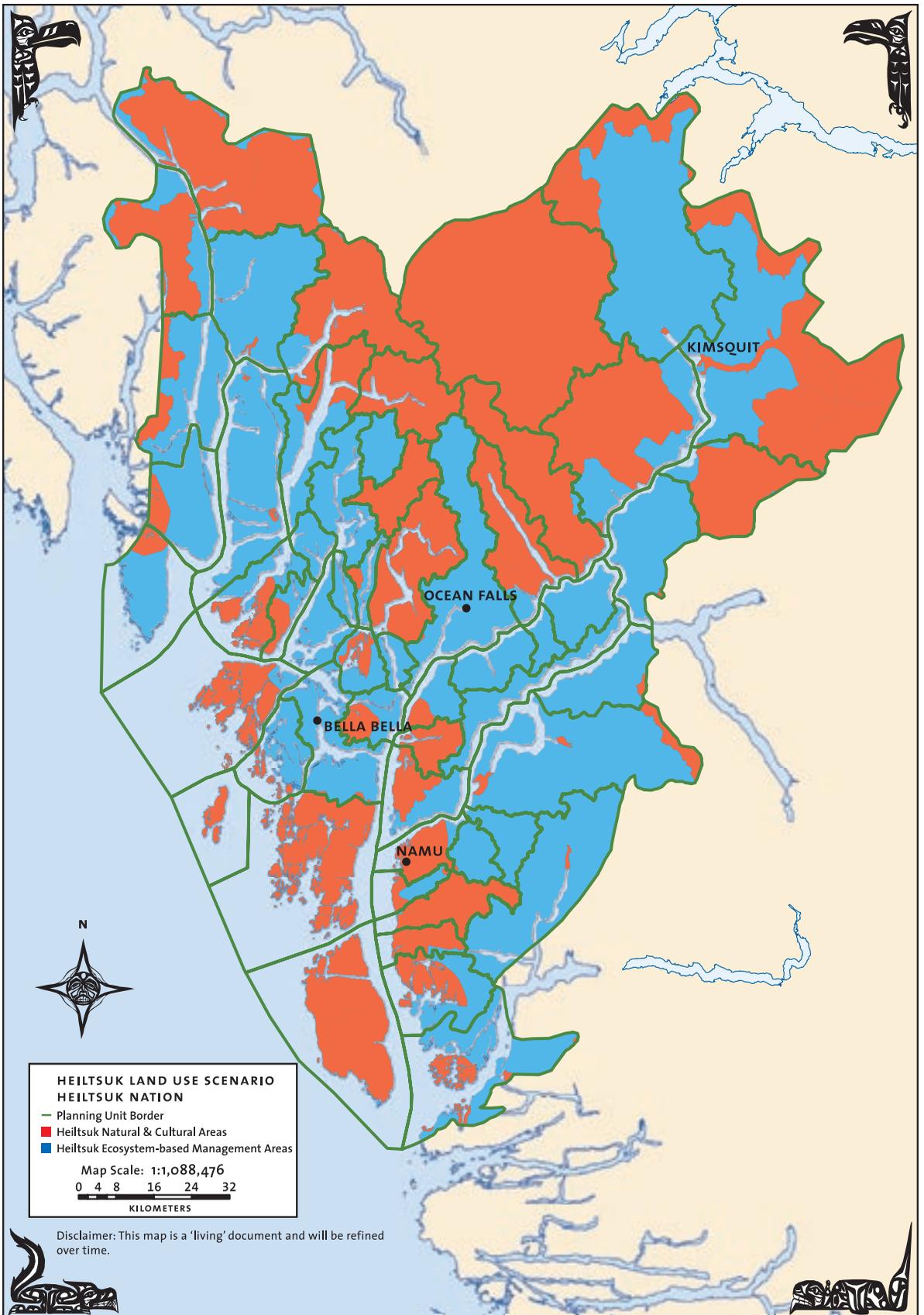
The Koeys was one of the major village sites for the Heiltsuk people. We're just happy that we've been able to take control of the lodge. Now we can start to fight to save the area from other developers, rebuild the salmon runs, and protect the headwaters from logging.

– Yimás Edwin Newman

Distinct Planning Areas

To make land use planning more manageable, we subdivided Heiltsuk Territory into 56 planning units. (See map on page 30) These distinct sub-areas were determined according to three criteria: relevance and meaning to Heiltsuk people, biophysical boundaries and common cultural and/or biophysical resource inventories or development opportunities. Each sub-area has an English name, although a process is underway to rename these with Heiltsuk place names.

The *Heiltsuk Planning Unit Summaries* is a detailed and extensive addendum to the complete land use plan. The summaries are a reference tool for Heiltsuk leaders and resource staff. Each summary provides an overview of the planning unit's cultural and biophysical characteristics. As part of the *Plan's* implementation, the Heiltsuk will undertake detailed planning for each planning unit.



Land Use Designations

Land use designations are a tool for ensuring that different areas of land in Heiltsuk Territory are used in a way that is compatible with Heiltsuk values and needs. The rights of the Heiltsuk to hunt, gather, fish, trap and continue activities for social, cultural, commercial, ceremonial and sustenance purposes are not limited by the setting down of any land use designations. Traditional use by the Heiltsuk people is permitted in all zones subject to *Gv'ílás*. Two land use designations have been created and applied throughout the territory.

1. Cultural and Natural Areas are managed to maintain their natural and cultural values, while maintaining or enhancing opportunities for traditional use and minimizing adverse impacts on natural and cultural values. The areas will be kept largely in a natural or wilderness condition, although low-impact tourism and access may be permissible.
2. Ecosystem-based Management Areas are managed according to EBM principles and practices. The areas provide appropriate opportunities for resource development while maintaining or enhancing opportunities for traditional use and minimizing adverse impacts on natural and cultural values.



Future Challenge

Implementing the *Plan* will involve much coordination and work, as well as community involvement. There are many important and exciting tasks described in the complete *Heiltsuk Land Use Plan* that need to be accomplished. This challenge is the joint responsibility of the Heiltsuk Tribal Council, *Yímas* and the Heiltsuk people.





Our Elders taught us that our land is sacred. Through *ᵿGv́ilás* and *ᶑáxváí*, we are regaining control of our lands and resources.

Our vision is to maintain our traditions and natural resources for future generations by practising sustainable harvesting methods.

To do this is to be Heiltsuk.

**– Chief Ross Wilson,
Heiltsuk Tribal Council**

Acknowledgments

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Note

This booklet, *Qn q̓íts Sásm̓háts
ḫ̓n̓s̓ḫ̓ats* or *For Our Children's
Tomorrows*, is the executive summary
of the *Heiltsuk Land Use Plan*.
Contact the Heiltsuk Tribal Council
to inquire about obtaining a copy
of the full *Heiltsuk Land Use Plan*.

My children, and all other children who have been into the pristine forests,
know what the future has in store for them.

The people who have never been there have never realized the importance of nature.

They have never seen a bear, or any other animal for that matter.

They have never witnessed the joy that the animals bring to the children while out
in the wilderness.

Neither the children nor the forests have a voice. And both are dependent
on others to take care of them.

Both are beautiful and deserve the right to be left alone to grow in their own
beauty and identity.

It is no longer about what is yours and what is ours.

It is about what is living in the forest and how we can keep it safe.

Why do people always have to envision money in everything?
Lives are at stake here, and life is far more important than profit.

It is possible to either make money elsewhere or live without money?

Ask my ancestors. They were wealthy and they did not own a cent.

– Caroline Humchitt



Heiltsuk Land Use Plan
Executive Summary
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