

GBS Planning Part 1 9:50 min

"The sea, the great unifier, is man's only hope. Now, as never before, the old phrase has a literal meaning: we are all in the same boat."

— Jacques Yves Cousteau, Oceanographer

North Coast, British Columbia

DES NOBELS Director, Area A, Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District

At one time there was very little going on within the region other than some minor logging and fisheries. That was essentially it. But as of late, in the last couple of decades, we've seen a lot of other interest from other entities within the world to access our place, to get uses out of it. You have the oil and gas industry, you have the renewable energy industry. There's a range of recreational structures that are building up here from cruise ships to major sport fishing and recreational fishing opportunities.

So that is coming our way if it isn't already here, and the pressures are becoming quite substantial in terms of the marine environment. There are a lot of pressures out there. There's a lot of need for access. How do you best develop that? Coming from a governance role, we have a tendency to plan things very rigorously. We're both obligated and legislated, to be perfectly honest, to provide responsible planning on behalf of our constituents.

So this sort of fits in with the overall. We've done a very comprehensive land management plan here in the north coast for a number of years. That was instituted. We have the Central Coast Plan as well. We've done a range of things around the terrestrial, and now it's time to take a look that marine and say, "Alright – how do we want to use this environment, and what would be the best and most responsible uses of this environment?"

Central Coast, British Columbia

JIM McISAAC BC Commercial Fishing Caucus, MaPP Marine Advisory Committee

The idea of integrated planning really comes from the UN Convention of Law of the Sea, which was ratified in 1994.

And one of the major bases for that was to ensure that coastal communities are connected to the resources that are on their doorsteps and that independent fishermen have access to those resources, and that they're not just taken from the oceans by foreign countries coming in and fishing our coast. And the Canadian government's response //was our Oceans Act that set out and tasked the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to take that leadership role and develop integrated plans for sustainable development on our coast to protect the ecosystems. So they have a mandate to lead that, and they really need to step up and take that leadership because of the importance of the oceans to our country and to the people on this planet and to all the other species on this planet as well.

North Vancouver Island, British Columbia

DALLAS SMITH President, Nanwakolas Council

So we hope to get this plan in place to use that again as a platform to start some high-level government-to-government discussions where we can talk about fishing management, where we can talk about

protected areas, we can talk about tanker traffic and we can talk about all the various user groups that they want to use in our territories.

People seem to forget that First Nations people have been here for thousands of years and they're a part of the ecosystems that are here. We're not simply dependent on them, but we're part of the functioning ecosystems. And as you develop and urbanize and talk about liquefied natural gas and all these things, people seem to forget that there's a subset of society that is dependent and part of that ecosystem, and we're only now being seriously taken at the table, and there's a lot of relationship building that has to take place for us to make sure that we have the sustainable cultural economy that goes along with our need for job creation in our communities.

Haida Gwaii, British Columbia

CAROL KULESHA Mayor, Queen Charlotte, Haida Gwaii

Well, marine planning is extremely important, so important that my council passed a resolution to support it. And now we're looking at the implementation phase. And I would say that we have cautious optimism, it depends on how it's going to unfold.

You need a plan because haphazardly we're not gonna make it. And we, being the planet.

Narrator

With conflicts rising over ocean and coastal resources, new marine enterprises staking claims and the need for better protection of ocean ecosystems – people on the British Columbia coast are coming together to better protect ocean, cultures and ways of life.

Led by First Nations and the Province of British Columbia - this unique partnership has created marine plans to prepare for the impending demands upon the regions waters and to carry out a new vision of ocean stewardship.

The Great Bear Sea

Reflecting on the Past – Planning for the Future

Narrator

Islands, rain forests, wild rivers, coldwater seas–

Traditional territory of First Nations for millennia - the Great Bear Sea is home to 20% of the world's remaining wild salmon,

Home to dolphins, porpoises, humpback and killer whales,

Home to wolves and the rare white Spirit Bears that live nowhere else on Earth.

Welcome to the Great Bear Sea.

DALLAS SMITH President, Nanwakolas Council

These territories and the bounty that exists within them sustained our people for thousands of years, at probably 100 times the population levels that we have right now. So, we know it can provide if it's managed and taken care of well.

Beautiful territory. There's whales that pass by on a daily basis in the summertime. There's tremendous traditional foods and values within the area. We still use this as our breadbasket. People come out here, probably monthly, to gather the seafood resources, the hunting resources, the ducks when it's the right time of year. And so, it's quite important to us. That was one of the reasons why marine planning was so important to us because this still is our livelihood. Our people still make their living off this land – whether it be through sustenance, or through commercial enterprises.

ARCHIE ROBINSON Hereditary Chief, Kitasoo/Xais'Xais Nation

In the early 1800's the Kitasoo were out there in different settlements all over Aristazabal and out here Higgens...different settlements all over the place... before we were taken.....again by the government....into the reserve system.

They, they moved about....they moved about...fishing...they stayed all over.....so there's places for everything.

Yeah, all the resources of the sea mean a lot to us. Everything....the sea prunes, the cucumber,..red urchins...we call them *Suitcha??*,,,those all are put away...Everything, every kind of fish is put away for winter use.

WILLIAM HOUSTY Chair, Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department

Everything we eat, whether it's inter-tidal, whether it's bottom fish, whether it's herring, whether it's herring spawn, whether it's salmon – everything comes out of that ocean. It's a lifeline. It's a lifeline for our people.

When you look at the intricate life cycle that exists between all the species that are in there, and if you remove one you start to have a collapse like dominoes.

So it's really important that we keep everything health so these life cycles can continue on and thrive off each other. From the top of the chain to the bottom of the chain, we all depend on one another, right through the top, right down to the bottom.

ARCHIE ROBINSON Hereditary Chief, Kitasoo/Xais'Xais Nation

All Nations have to work together....all Nations up and down the coast...the Haidas, Vancouver Island, the coastal people...Nations have to get together, work together...work together to protect what little we have left....

Respect 9:50 min

Underwater Big House, Story of Gitnuganaks told by Vernon Brown, Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Nation

So the story I'm gonna tell you guys has to do with the big house that was in the forest here. And the story takes place on the south end of Aristazabal Island. There used to be a village in there, and the village was called Wit'ien So one day these four hunters decided to go out on a seal hunt, and they wanted to paddle from the south end all the way up to the north end of the island. It's a pretty big island, and after they started out hunting, over a week's time they had a very successful hunt, but a week later they were at the northern end of the island and all the men were kind of tired, and they didn't even bother to pull into the bay, they just decided to drop anchor.

So they dropped anchor and it was getting dark, and all of the – all the men in the boat decided to go to sleep. So only one of the guys couldn't go to sleep because he kept hearing a noise, and it was kind of like a slapping noise he kept hearing on the side of the canoe. So he got up and took a look, and then there wasn't anything there. So he tried to lie back down and go to sleep again, and he heard the noise again, the slapping noise. He jumped up, looked over the edge and he didn't see anything.

He was starting to get a little upset, so the third time he was actually kind of waiting there, he was waiting to hear the noise. And then when he heard the noise he jumped up, he pulled the, pulled the – it was a ratfish. He pulled it out of the water. As upset as he was, he grabbed its fins and ripped it off and he threw it back into the water. And then he actually managed to fall back asleep.

The ratfish, when it got thrown into the water, it managed to swim underwater, dove under, and managed to get into this underwater Big House. He walked through the door. As he walked through the door he transformed from a ratfish into a human. So here was this human with no arms, and he walked up to the master, the Chief of the Big House, and his name was Gitnuganaks. And Gitnuganaks said, "What happened? What had happened to you?" And the ratfish said, "Well look what they have done to me. They have torn off my arms. They tore off my arms."

So Gitnuganaks, the Chief of the Big House was really upset, so he left the underwater Big House and went up and grabbed their canoe and pulled them under. They dragged them underwater, formed a big whirlpool, and the men woke up and they're in this underwater Big House. And they started describing the big house they had seen in the story, described the big house as a starfish and sea anemones for the ceiling, giant halibut for a floor, grizzly bears holding up the Big House.

And Gitnuganaks was sitting there. The men are still sitting in their canoe yet – and Gitnuganaks said, "What have you done to my slaves?" And one of the men spoke up, and was trying to apologize to Gitnuganaks for the loss of his slaves. Gitnuganaks said, "Well how are you going to compensate me for the loss of my slave?" Well, one of the men spoke up and said, "We can give you all our seal meat and all our seal fat that we got from our, from our hunt. And Gitnuganaks agreed, and he took all their seal meat and said, "Well, I'm gonna take all your seal meat, but you guys have to stay here and potlatch for four days and four nights."

The men had no choice but to agree, and Gitnuganaks started inviting all the winds – he invited the north wind, he invited the easterly wind, he invited the westerly wind. Each and every one of them brought a form a gift or a form of a punishment. Gitnuganaks also invited the Chief of Skeena River, the Chief of Nass – he invited all these people from these neighboring communities to come in and potlatch.

So when the easterly wind came in he had a black face and black cloak on – he walked up to one of the men, and he kicked over the canoe and all the men fell out of the canoe. And the easterly wind said that, “If I see you out in the water, I’m gonna come kick your canoe over.”

The north wind came up to the men. He had an icicle kind of beard and he had a white cloak on. And he came over and he touched the ground around the canoe and started freezing all around the canoe. And he said, “If I see you out in the water, I’m gonna freeze the water around you.” Kind of like a form of punishment for what he had done to the ratfish.

Only the wind that kind of brought a gift was the westerly wind. It’s kind of a nice warm wind that we’re getting right now. It’s nice and warm, nice weather. And he gave the men a big drum, and the men received the drum. And he said, “If you hit it, and if you’re in my area here, the KITASOO Bay, if you hear my drumbeat, that’s me.” Apparently when you get a good westerly wind in the KITASOO Bay, it sounds like a drum beat.

Anyways, they stayed and potlatched, danced, and after four days and four nights it was finally coming to an end. And all the men were asking, “Gitnuganaks, can we go now, can we go now? We’ve been here. We’ve potlatched with you for four days and four nights.” And Gitnuganaks was kind of getting irritated and he got upset, and said, “Go!” And he kicked open the door of the Big House and started flooding under the water. All the men jumped back in their canoes and they managed to resurface, left the underwater Big House and resurfaced. And they dumped out their canoe.

They jumped back into their canoe, not knowing they were filled with barnacles and sea growth, and the men just started paddling. They wanted to get home, and they tried to paddle, paddle back home to Wit’ien Bay, and it got foggy and they couldn’t see where they were going, so they were paddling and paddling, hours and hours and hours. And they finally hit an island, and the man in the back of the canoe told the man in the front of the canoe, “Go climb the biggest tree, biggest spruce tree you can find. Go find the biggest spruce tree you can find and find out where we are.”

So the man – one of the men climbed up, and he climbed up and he was looking around, and he seen some mountains. And he said, “Well, we’ve gone the wrong way because those are the mountains of the Haida Gwaii.” So the men decided to get back in the canoes, left, and they came back across and the fog kind of cleared up. And the men could see their village. They could see the smoke coming from the bay and they paddled straight for Wit’ien and they managed to get home. As they arrived on the shoreline the community members were really shocked to see that they were there, and the men didn’t care, they just wanted to go home and tell their wives what had happened. As they walked up to their homes, all the four men, they realized that all their wives had been married off to other men.

And the men couldn’t understand what was going on. The men had no reason to be living there in Wit’ien Bay, but they told the story, where they were in this underwater Big House, and what had happened to them, that they got pulled under water and what they had seen. They described the Big House they were at, and describes the type of gifts they had received, and the punishments they received from doing that to the ratfish. And because they told their story, all the men got Chief names, but the men decided to leave Wit’ien Bay and they came across this way and they built a replica of what they had seen underwater.

I can go back to the story where the men first dropped anchor and that anchor hit the top of the Big House and made a big bang, made a big bang. And Gitnuganaks sent up his slave to go up and see that that noise was. And the ratfish was asking the canoe to move because they had dropped anchor on top of their house. And because the men had ripped off the fins of the rat fish and threw him back in the water, it turned out that the four days turned out to be four years that they were actually under water for.

And this is the type of story that has always been told to me, the moral is about respect and respecting animals and respecting yourself and respecting others. You do this and this will happen to you.

So my grandmother used to tell me this story all the time when I was growing up, and she made sure that she kind of drilled it into my head that you have to respect animals and you have to respect yourself. Never get more than you need for salmon, and more than you need for hunting, stuff like that. The moral of that is about respect and sustaining the things that are around you.

And marine use planning, everything like that, if you look at our values, number one on that list is conservation. Number two is food fish, number three is economics. And we'd rather protect, protect the salmon and protect the bears before we even just talk about money, before we even talk about food fish. We'd rather have them protected and respect them.

Some of the Elders in Klemtu say that common theme of the circle of life. Take one out, you affect everything else. Take salmon out you affect the bears, you affect us. So we're exactly a part of that ecosystem around here. We're competing with the other animals as well, but we're people and we'll respect that and we'll take our share and leave the others for the animals.