

The Great Eco-Wall of Canada

By Michelle Stirling-Anosh

The “Idle No More” protests have surprised most Canadians. The roots of it lie in opportunistic partnerships between environmental activists and First Nations, promoted by the [International Funders for Indigenous People's](#) (IFIP) located on Mohawk territories in Akwesasne.

The May 16, 2010 IFIP session of the 9th annual conference in Tofino details successes in “*Fighting Alberta's Tar Sands: A Cross-ENGO Cross-First Nations Collaboration*” and was facilitated by Michael Marx of the Tar Sands Fund and Tides Foundation ⁽¹⁾.

“*Fighting Alberta's Tar Sands*” reveals how the [Cooperative Bank](#) of the UK, together with the WWF and [BankTrack](#) are combining international forces to decimate the oil sands' social license to operate. “According to Marx, the campaign's ‘big goal’ is to end expansion of the oil sands. Key to that, he said, is blocking approval of a \$7 billion pipeline under review by the US Department of State.” (Keystone)

Canada has an uneven mix of land agreements with First Nations. In B.C. there are virtually no treaty arrangements with the more than 200 distinct First Nations who together claim 135% of the territory (pg 60).

This gap in title rights was useful in a joint forestry battle from which the multi-million dollar [Coast Opportunity Fund](#) for First Nations arose. Eco-activists used coercive techniques on the logging industry, publicly shaming them in the New York Times. “Next, the First Nations started suing businesses and the government. There was so much conflict that change had to happen or no one could go forward.”(pg 61)

That Coast Opportunity Fund encompasses all the tribes and coastal inlets from Alaska almost down to Vancouver. Overlapping much of this is [Great Bear Rain Forest](#).

Alaska is only separated from the US by a land bridge called B.C. This area is now part of a major environmental-First Nations initiative. It is called “[Y2Y](#)” - Yellowstone to Yukon – intended to be a vast nature conservancy passing from Alaska to the US.

Even to the west of the Rockies the [Canadian Boreal Initiative](#) forms a similar no-go eco-zone to west-east development.

Thus we are faced with invisible walls of untouchable territory and the threat of volatile conflict and vicious international campaigns to dishonour industry.

An even more ambitious plan – the [B2B – Baja to Barenjia](#) – could shutter all West Coast ports. This plan is on its way to acceptance in the [Commission for Environmental Cooperation](#).

First Nations and eco-activist initiatives count on broad support from the NGO/charitable sector – which now outnumbers producers.

As TIDES' CEO Ross McMillan recently told the Economic Club of Canada: *“The charitable and not-for-profit sector employs more than 2 million people, representing about 11 percent of the country’s workforce. By way of comparison, this sector employs four times as many people in Canada as the oil and gas sector and five times that of the automotive industry.”*

Alberta’s resource industries drive at least 30% of the Canadian economy. Yet Alberta’s oil sands products export routes are blocked by protests: anti-Gateway to the west, anti-Keystone to the south and pro-Boreal to the east.

At least one coastal First Nation is claiming the ocean as theirs.

Old Massett Village is a Haida community in the Coast Opportunity region that recently financed [geoengineer Russ George](#) for \$2.5 Million through the Haida Salmon Restoration Corp. to dump 120 million metric tons of iron sulphate in the ocean without appropriate federal or international permits. George hoped to stimulate a plankton bloom and intends to make money off carbon offsets if this idea works. The Haida hope it will stimulate salmon growth for their fish industry.

It is surprising that a village of some 2,586 people with 70 percent unemployment could find \$2.5 million for a carbon sequestration project (though a recent article on [rabble.ca](#) suggests carbon trade, not nature conservation, was the main purpose of establishing the Great Bear Rainforest).

Yet one wonders at the expertise of the Haida for ocean experiments and why federal approvals were not sought.

“This is the Haida Ocean....”claims Russ George in an interview in the Oct. 24, 2012 issue of Scientific American.

The deepwater port of Prince Rupert and proposed Gateway port of Kitimat are here in the ‘Haida Ocean’, a region most Canadians and international investors believe to be ‘our’ ocean.

First Nations and ENGOs successfully used conflict to get what they want. Major offshore foundations have underwritten them, either keen for carbon trades or locked-in resources at rock-bottom prices.

It’s a green velvet territorial conquest of Canada.

(1)



Building and Sustaining Coalitions: Finding Common Ground for Education, Environment and Human Rights Advocacy

TRACK 2 ENVIRONMENT

SATURDAY, May 15, 2010

<p>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</p>	<p><i>From Conflict to Collaboration: A new model for sustainability in the Great Bear Rainforest</i></p> <p>Canada's Great Bear Rainforest is one of the largest remaining coastal temperate rainforests on earth, and its rare ecosystem has been home to First Nations communities for millennia. Over the past few decades, the "Great Bear" has become a testing ground for competing interests trying to create new models of economic and ecological sustainability. It is a remarkable story of creative collaboration among indigenous people, environmentalists, philanthropy, forest companies, and government. Come listen to the leaders who helped to forge this watershed agreement.</p>	<p>Facilitator: Ross McMillan, Tides Canada Foundation</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Art Sterritt, Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative• Merran Smith, Forest Ethics
<p>2:00 pm - 3:30 pm</p>	<p><i>Building Indigenous and Environmental Partnerships: Community voices from Russia and Canada</i></p> <p>Indigenous leaders in the Arctic have partnered successfully with environmental groups as they deal with development activities from mining to oil and gas. Ekaterina Evseveva from Russia, Gladys Netro from the Gwich'in Nation, Ginger Gibson who has worked extensively in the Canadian Arctic and Galina Angarova from Pacific Environment will bring you deep insight into their work on building effective coalitions and raising indigenous voices for land rights across the circumpolar north. This session will explore critical questions: How have they built trust and dialogue? What strategies for funding and collaboration work best? What's next?</p>	<p>Facilitator: Ruth Richardson, Co-Founder – Small Change Fund</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ekaterina Evseveva, Director – Eyge Environmental Education Center• Gladys Netro, Advisor – Small Change Fund (Vuntut Gwich'in)• Galina Angarova, Pacific Environment• Ginger Gibson, advisor to Small Change Fund.

SUNDAY, May 16, 2010

<p>10:30 am - 12:00 pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Fighting Alberta's Tar Sands:</i> <i>A cross-ENGO, cross-First Nations collaboration</i></p> <p>Participants will learn about one of the largest collaborative efforts ever that is emerging between ENGOs and First Nations to slow the expansion and minimize the impacts of Alberta's tar sands operations. First Nations and ENGOs will explain the collaborative lessons learned along the way, and how challenges became opportunities to work together in new ways. Presenters will describe their campaign strategies and share lessons from past collaborations, good and bad, and how they are being applied to the current campaign.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Facilitator:</u> Michael Marx, Tar Sands Fund & Tides Foundation</p> <p><u>Panelists:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tara Marsden, Executive Director – Headwaters Initiative ● Jack Woodward, Indigenous Rights Lawyer – Woodward & Company ● Chief Al Lameman, Beaver Lake Cree Nation ● Clayton Thomas-Muller, of the Mathais Colomb Cree Nation, IEN
<p>2:00 pm – 4:30 pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Dueling Designations: Supporting official recognition of indigenous participation in community protected areas and sacred natural sites</i></p> <p>Efforts to implement designations such as World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves and other forms of landscape protection have diversified in recent decades. After reviewing progress in recognizing diverse models of protected area management and governance, we will discuss the impact national and international designations have on local communities' interactions with and control over their environments. We will conclude with an interactive discussion on how grantmakers and NGOs can address opportunities and avoid pitfalls of protecting biocultural diversity by engaging with Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs), Sacred Natural Sites (SNS), Indigenous Biocultural Territories (IBCTs) and other innovative trends. We will explore how to link funding mechanisms for community conservation with national and international initiatives. This session will draw on the results of an intensive workshop, sessions and peer exchange on community conservation and the cultural and spiritual values of protected areas at the International Society of Ethnobiology Congress.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Facilitator:</u> Gary Martin, GDF Director</p> <p><u>Panelists:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jamili Nais, Deputy Director – Sabah Parks ● Elis Enns, Political Scientist (Tla-o-qui-aht) ● Jessica Brown, Executive Director – New England Biolabs Foundation ● Bas Verschuuren, Project Coordinator – EarthCollective's Cultural Values of Nature Initiative ●