



# **TLA-O-QUI-AHT TRIBAL PARKS**

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**Annual Report: 2020**

## Letter from the Director of Lands:



Thanks for reading our 2020 Tribal Parks Annual Report. Like everywhere, 2020 was a challenging year in the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks. The COVID-19 Pandemic forced our Tribal Parks Guardians to focus primarily on our Community Safety priorities, operating checkpoints into and out of our villages and patrolling beaches to mitigate the risk of the virus spreading among our members. The tourism economy ground to a halt for most of the year, and operators were unprepared to manage the high volume of visitors who rushed to our homeland the moment travel restrictions were lifted. There is a clear need to scale up our Guardians program to deliver the regional services required to mitigate tourism impacts and meet our responsibility to care for this place.

2020 was also a year where lessons were learned straight from the land and waters where our culture comes from. The pause in our lives created by the First Wave of the Pandemic gave dune grasses the chance to weave themselves back together at Tin-Wis (Mackenzie Beach), where heavy foot traffic has decimated the sensitive habitat. The relent of boat traffic gave migrating whales a chance to access the inside waters between Tofino and Opitsaht. Our members witnessed herring – a skittish fish who flee from the sound of boat engines – spawning for the first time in decades in our eelgrass gardens. We remembered teachings about how to care for ourselves and for our non-human relatives.

Finally, it was a year where we grew as a community. Our Nation would like to thank the many individuals and businesses who chose these difficult times to show their support. You contributed to our food bank, supported our security checkpoints, respected our neighboring Nations' closures, comped hotel rooms for Tla-o-qui-aht members needing to self-isolate, and participated as Tribal Parks Allies. When we emerge from the throes of the pandemic, our community will be more resilient than ever. Thank you all for helping us build back better and for doing the work of learning to live well together.

Saya Masso, Director of Lands

## łayaahu?at (welcome) to the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks!

We uphold the ła?uukwi?ath People's ancient relationships and responsibilities within the web of life that exists here - and use these teachings to welcome, balance, and inform newcomers' influences. Our **Guardians** tend to our Ancestral Gardens, which include the largest intact ancient coastal rainforest on Vancouver Island. Our **Allies** provide experiences to connect you to our story, and support our vision for a culturally and ecologically rich coastline for our grandchildren to care for.

This is our third annual Tribal Parks Report. Each year, we release our Annual Report at our Tribal Parks Gathering. This important event is where we bring together our growing community to celebrate our achievements and collectively envision pathways towards our shared vision. Our Gatherings are centred around these Annual Reports, which showcase what we have accomplished and break down how we use funds raised by our Tribal Parks Allies and other sources to protect and restore the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks - within which Tofino resides and to which we are all inextricably connected.

This year was not an average year for our Guardians. To enable the Tribal Parks to reopen to visitors in step with British Columbia's public health recommendations, our Guardians were tasked with the unusual role of operating Community Safety Checkpoints at the entrances to our villages. This added responsibility limited our Guardians' already strained ability to fulfill our responsibilities to tend to the traditional territory, but it is thanks to their work that we were able to welcome guests to our Tribal Parks. It is thanks to our Guardians that tourism operators were able to recuperate some of their losses associated with the pandemic during that narrow, hectic window last summer.

While the pandemic has been hard for everyone and our community members have experienced major losses, we were able to celebrate significant growth for the Tribal Parks Allies. At the time of writing this, we are pleased to have more than doubled our number of certified Allies since our last Gathering. We certified 29 new businesses this year, for a total of 56 Tribal Parks Allies spanning every sector in the tourism economy. Collectively, our Allies contributed \$106,499 in support of our programs in 2020.



## Towards Tla-o-qui-aht Resurgence:

Since we published our last Annual Report in November, 2019, the landscape of the Indigenous Resurgence movement in British Columbia and Canada has changed significantly. In the final days of 2019, Bill 41 was unanimously passed in the BC Legislature – ushering in a new era seeking appropriate and equitable relationship between the Province and the Indigenous Nations whose lands and waters it asserts jurisdiction over. Bill 41 seeks to pass the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into law. Indigenous rights, as described in UNDRIP, are extensive. Present-day governance practices of both Canada and BC come in direct contravention of many of these rights. Tribal Parks are the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation’s assertion of Indigenous rights, and in 2020 we participated in important discussions regarding the resolution of some high-level points of contention we have with the Province.

### **BC Tree Farm Licence Tenure Reform**

Following the Clayoquot Protests, the central region Nuu-chah-nulth Nations – including the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation – gained control of the two Tree Farm Licences (TFLs) which the Province asserts over Clayoquot Sound. Due to these five Nations’ management of these TFLs, much of the area’s old-growth forests continue to remain standing, making it the largest intact old-growth rainforest on Vancouver Island. Conservation within the Province’s Tree Farm Licencing Tenure system, however, is difficult and costly.

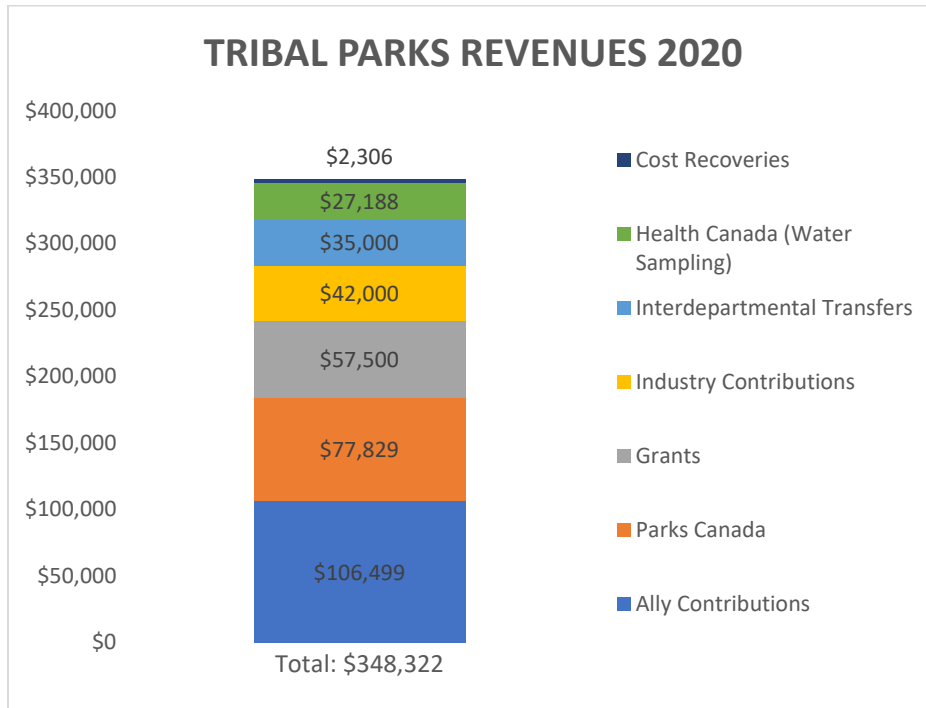
On Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Province released its Old Growth Review and announced a deferral of logging in several regions across BC - including Clayoquot Sound – for a two-year period. As long as TFLs continue to exist in the heart of old-growth areas in Clayoquot Sound, the future of our forests remains uncertain. Tla-o-qui-aht is working to implement its Tribal Parks land vision and is engaged with the Crown during the current logging deferral period to officially remove some of these old-growth areas from Tree Farm tenures.

## 2020 Financial Report:

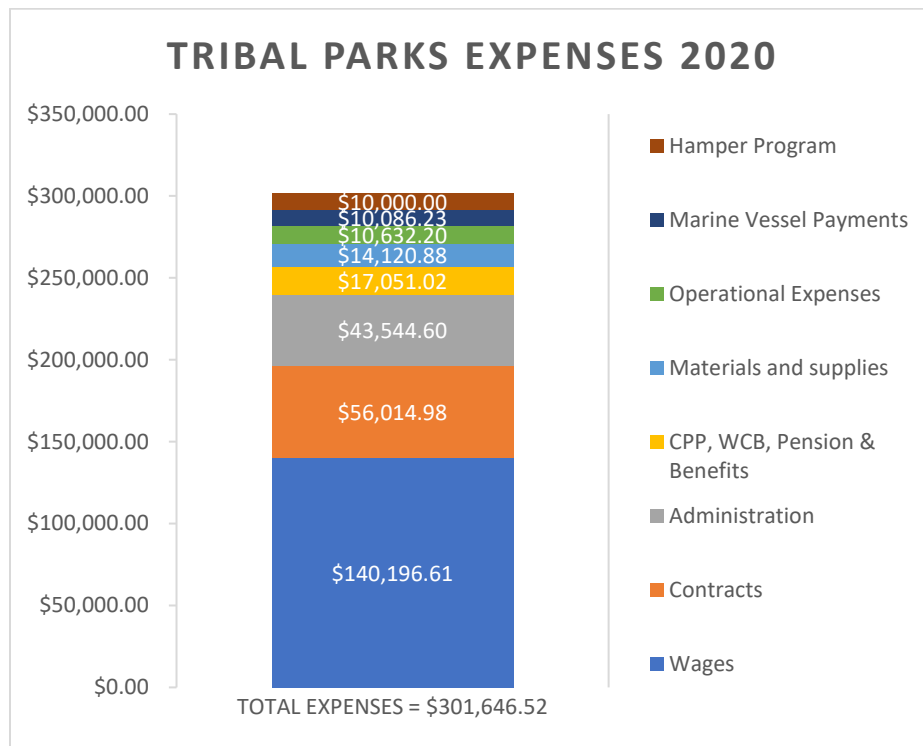
Thanks to the contributions of our Tribal Parks Allies, our partners, private donors, and some grants, we are happy to report a surplus of \$12,178. In total, we earned \$348,322 in revenue and incurred \$301,647 in expenses. We were able to pay off our deficit of \$34,497 with what remained and still maintain our surplus.

Below are some graphs which detail our revenue and expenditure, followed by a representation of our Graduated Capital Plan originally published in our 2019 report. Our Graduated Capital Plan details how we plan to spend future Tribal Parks Allies revenues as our circle of Allies grows. It scales up to \$2,000,000, a number we selected based on Tourism Tofino’s 2018 Tourism Report by IntraVista. Tourism Tofino reported that direct revenues of tourism in Tofino that year were \$230,000,000, so our plan reflects what we would be able to achieve if all businesses operating in the Tribal Parks agreed to contribute our 1% Ecosystem Service Fee.

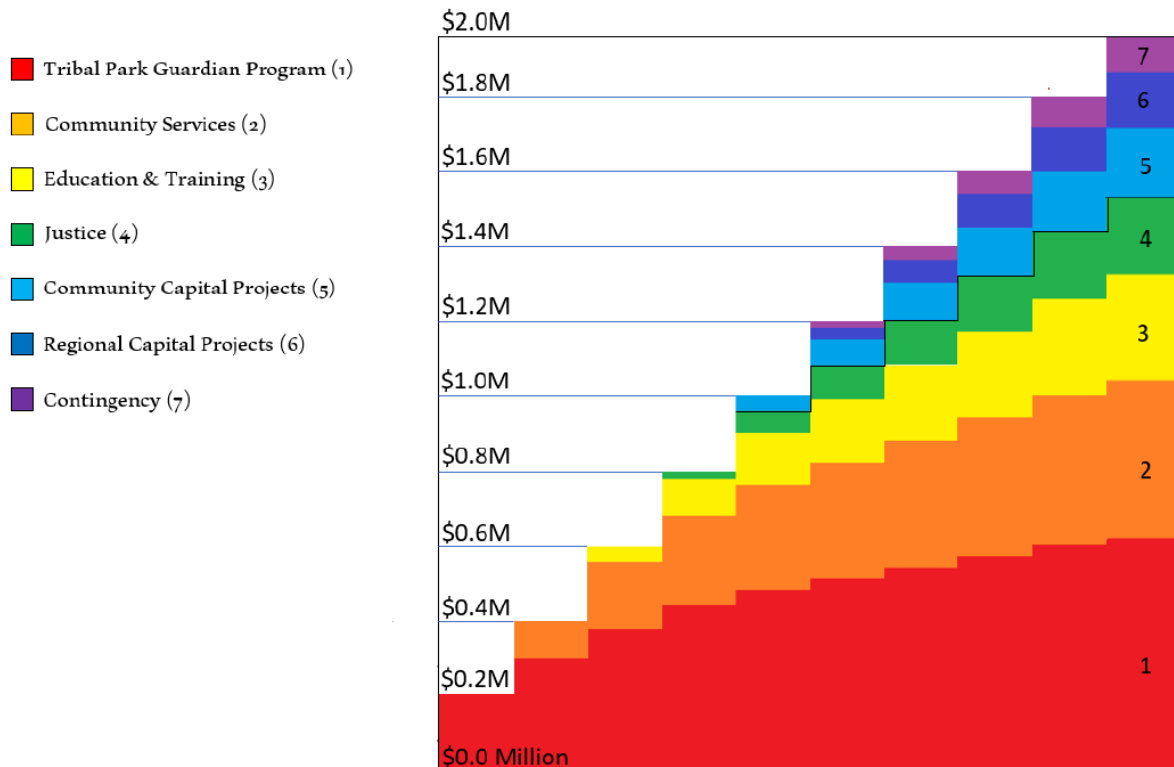
## 2020 Revenues:



## 2020 Expenses:



## Our Graduated Capital Plan: How we plan to use the Ecosystem Service Fee



\*A spreadsheet detailing each expense category listed here is available at <http://tribalparks.com/news>

## Tribal Parks Guardians

Guardians and caretakers have existed here for many generations, upholding a wide array of specific responsibilities to specific species and areas within what are now known as the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks. The modern Tribal Parks Guardian Program was established to help implement the land vision laid out in the 2008 Tribal Park Declaration. That year, the Tribal Parks designation was extended to include the Ha'uukmin Tribal Park. In 2014 it was extended again to encompass all of Tla-o-qui-aht Ha'hulthii.

Guardians monitor and protect the lands and waters in Tribal Parks to ensure a vibrant future for generations to come. Funding for the Guardians Program has always been precarious, and conversations about implementing a version of an Ecosystem Service Fee have been ongoing in the region since 2008. In 2018, we established the Tribal Parks Allies program as an effort to grow a reliable revenue stream for our Guardians and other regional services. While we grow this revenue stream, our Guardians do what they can with the funding that is available. We work closely with our regional partners on collaborative restoration initiatives, as well as on independent projects.

## COVID-19 Response: Community Checkpoints & Hamper Program

*Tla-o-qui-aht Operators Employed: Rotation of 10-12 Guardians per checkpoint.*

In a normal year, a million guests visit the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, accessing and interacting with our communities in multiple ways. When the pandemic hit, the Tla-o-qui-aht Nation responded by advocating for restrictions on travel into and out of the Tribal Parks. The safety of our community members, especially our elders, was our top priority. We elected to establish checkpoints to our communities and limit travel among our members. These precautions later enabled the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks to reopen in step with British Columbia's public health recommendations (unlike most other Nuu-chah-nulth Nations), while our Guardians continued to maintain restricted access to our villages.

The additional responsibility of operating the checkpoints limited our Guardians' availability to maintain a presence in the more remote regions of the Tribal Parks, but it is thanks to their work that we were able to welcome guests and that our Allies and other tourism operators were able to recuperate some of their losses associated with the pandemic during that narrow, hectic window last summer. Indigenous Services Canada, the First Nations Health Authority, and a Community Foundations grant provided some support for the operation of these checkpoints, but delays in the rollout of these funding sources during peak tourism season would have made the impossible without the support of our Allies.

COVID response also included a Hamper program, which was partially funded by our Ecosystem Service Fee to support people who were under isolation orders.



*Photo credit: Ha-shilth-sa Newspaper*

## Hatcheries and Salmon Enhancement:

Tla-o-qui-aht participates in Salmon Enhancement projects with the Tofino Enhancement Society in hopes of recovering our salmon stocks and restoring the abundant runs our elders remember. While our capacity at the hatchery could be to rear up to 500,000 chinook eggs, this year due to the small numbers of females in the streams, we are only planning to release 5,000 eggs in the lower Kennedy. This spring, we will also be reviving two streams on Wanachis/Hilthuis extinct of Chum with 42,000 eggs from the Tranquil river which will be released in six weeks or so. We will release 46,000 Coho fry in Kootowis Creek in May 2021.

## Wanachis/Hilthuis Big Tree Trail Maintenance:

In 2020 we did some minor safety upgrades on the Big Tree Trail, but as our Guardians were focused on COVID-19 response, our work was limited this year. We are preparing to make significant improvements to the Big Tree Trail in 2021, including the installation of a composting toilet at the site.





## Central Westcoast Forest Society (CWFS) Partnership:



*Hiłpičis Creek before restoration (2016) and after (2020). Photo credit CWFS.*

Poorly regulated logging practices and other development – most significantly between the 1950s and 1990s – have seriously affected many of the rivers and creeks within our Tribal Parks. These industries have long walked away from the damage they left behind when they liquidated the natural capital banked for generations by past Tla-o-qui-aht stewards. But we are still here, and with the help of our friends at the Central Westcoast Forest Society, we are inviting our Salmon relatives to come home again in numbers like our elders remember. Together we have worked to restore numerous waterways throughout the Tribal Parks by replacing collapsed or inadequate culverts where roads intersect with waterways, and by doing the more involved work of remediating degraded creeks to simulate the morphology of a healthy river and enable the flow of water and the natural regeneration of the rainforest to carry on the healing when we finish our interventions. When the salmon come home, everyone eats. Here are some of the projects we worked on in 2020 with CWFS:

**Hiłpičis (Hydro Hill West) Creek:** In-stream Restoration Project and Highway Maintenance/Repairs and Spawner Surveys

*Tla-o-qui-aht operators on project: 3*

Maintaining the barrier between the side-channel, mainstem and Highway 4. This watershed is a very "flashy" system because of increased sediment entering the lower reaches from forestry work in the upper watershed and the development of a highway. It is necessary to prevent flood events from washing over the highway. In-stream habitat work has been done to protect the highway, while also increasing habitat connectivity in the mainstem for rearing juveniles and spawning coho and trout. We also installed 3 large instream log jam structures upstream of highway work to protect an eroding corner and provide instream habitat benefits in a highly volatile section of the stream.

**lilsuk̓lis (Tranquil Creek):** Riparian Restoration, Willow collection and staking, and Preparation for In-stream Works

*Tla-o-qui-aht operators on project: 6*

Due to challenges working with the transport company, in-stream works were postponed to spring 2021. Large woody debris (140 logs) were bundled and staged for transportation for gravel bar stabilizing structures and side channel jam structures. 4000 willow stakes were harvested and staked on an extended gravel bar to slow sediment transport, promote the development of vegetated islands and protect redd scour downstream. The riparian aspect of the project included the brushing of 18 hectares and planting of 11,600 native conifer seedlings.

### **Highway 4 Kennedy Lake Safety Improvements Project:**

*Tla-o-qui-aht operators on project: 3*

Environmental Monitoring for Construction

### **Ha'uukmin Tribal Parks and Kennedy Flats Backroads Clean Up:**

*Tla-o-qui-aht operators on project: 3*

Volunteer event cleaning up illegally- disposed waste from logging roads around coastal communities. Cleaned up 18,750kg of waste (including 2 camping trailers) and had 110 volunteers.

### **Kennedy Lake Sockeye Habitat Assessments**

Evaluating quality of known sockeye spawning habitat along Highway 4 beaches (substrate and water quality) and comparing with known spawning habitat in Clayoquot Arm.

## Coastal Restoration Society Partnership:

Our friends at the Coastal Restoration Society have been working on several important initiatives throughout the Nuu-chah-nulth Traditional Territories. Here in the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, our Guardians have partnered with the Coastal Restoration Society to clean up legacy waste like derelict vessels and abandoned aquaculture sites along our coast. These collaborative projects created 17 regional jobs.

**European Green Crab management and control:** From June to December 2020, Guardians participated in the Development of an Industrial Targeting Trapping Program to remove invasive green crab from Clayoquot Sound.

**Wild Salmon Migratory Corridor Rehabilitation:** From October 2020 to January 2021 Guardians helped restore 43 hectares of nearshore habitat within Lemmens and Gunner Inlets. 67 tonnes of anthropogenic marine debris was removed, including ghost fishing gear, polystyrene (styrofoam) flotation, petroleum products, micro-plastics, and abandoned and derelict infrastructure.

**Derelict Vessel Removals:** From November 2020 to February 2021, Guardians participated in the removal of 11 individual vessels from Lemmens Inlet and surrounding islands. 58 tonnes of material and debris from these vessels was removed. This was an enormous step towards restoring eelgrass habitat and traditional First Nations FSC harvesting bivalve grounds.



*Some marine debris removed in partnership with CRS. Photo Credit: CRS*

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## (Thank You) to our Tribal Parks Allies!

Since 2018, our Allies have become an integral part of how Tribal Parks function and key to achieving the vision articulated in our Tribal Parks Declarations. In 2020, we doubled the size of our circle of Allies, who played a critical role in our Nation's resilience in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

