



save the kitlope

protect the kitlope



Only once-in-a-planet's-lifetime....

It is remarkable that, nearing the end of the twentieth century, there still exists, south of Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, the opportunity to preserve a vast area of North American wilderness: an immense terrestrial and aquatic sanctuary, sufficient to maintain in perpetuity, populations of the large North American carnivores, including the continent's most exalted mammal, the grizzly bear. Here, unlike many other areas which protect only part of an animal's habitat, these animals can live their entire lifespan... within the protective boundaries of this immense watershed.

The cornerstone of this gigantic, yet-to-be-protected wilderness area is the rugged, rocky and totally wild Kitlope. This huge 3,170 square kilometre (1225 sq. mile) watershed, reputed to be the largest undisturbed watershed along the temperate coastlines of the world, spans a region of midcoast British Columbia between Fiordland Recreation Area to the west and Tweedsmuir Provincial Park to the east.

When the contiguous areas in the Chilcotins—currently being considered for provincial government wilderness and park protection—are adjoined, a 27,650 square kilometre expanse, an land area one and a half times the size of Kuwait, will be saved. Immense, large enough to be a full-fledged natural refuge, it would be as complete a natural sanctuary as is

possible today. It would conserve forever the entire cline of coastal ecosystems, from treeless outer islands to the top of the Coast Mountain Range and far into the interior plateau forests and grasslands.

The Kitlope represents more than just the chance to safeguard biodiversity in a landscape that is rapidly being converted to industrial use. This area has all the scenic attributes that world famous Banff and Jasper National Parks, just a few hundred kilometres to the east, have—a scale of grandeur unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

In contrast to the battles to preserve areas of old growth forest of high commercial value going on elsewhere in British Columbia, protecting the Kitlope involves relatively little loss of commercial economic opportunity. Less than three percent of the Kitlope watershed is loggable. Because of its northerly location, the trees grow back very slowly. The ability of this area to grow wood fibre on a sustainable yield is less than that of the tiny Carmanah valley, on southern Vancouver Island.

Plans to begin logging are already well advanced. Only a flood of protest—including your letter—will keep the Kitlope wild. This is a once-in-a-planet's-lifetime opportunity to conserve a big part of North America's natural heritage. This opportunity to ensure ecological sustainability will not arise again—ever.

Source of the milky blue waters....

The Haisla call the Kitlope River Husduwachsdu, source of the milky blue water. Prehistoric Kitlope village sites, seasonal encampments and natural resource gathering sites are located throughout the rivers, lakes, tributary valleys and the mountains of this watershed.

The ancestral Haisla, intimately interconnected with the natural vegetation and wildlife, drew both physical and spiritual sustenance from the Kitlope. In this place of primeval beauty, the blooming of the rice root plant heralded the beginning of a new year. Homes, clothing, canoes and a complex variety of technological, domestic and ritual items were fashioned from the wood and bark of young and old red cedar. More than 130 botanical species are known to have been culturally significant to the traditional Kitlope people.

Overall, perhaps three-quarters of the Haisla Nation died of smallpox, TB and other introduced diseases during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Eighty to ninety percent of the Kitlope people, who suffered more severely than almost any group other than the Haida, may have died.

The survivors of all the Kitlope clans moved to Kemano sometime in the late nineteenth century. Around 1949, the Kitlope Band amalgamated with the Kitamaat Band, bringing both tribes of the Haisla Nation together in one Band.

Many plants continue to be gathered and used as they were centuries ago. Devil's club and Indian hellebore that gave shamans "naulak", supernatural powers, are still used for their protective properties and their reputed ability to heal a host of ills ranging from cataracts to diabetes.

Traditionally, the Kitlope celebrated the return of the spawning salmon by dividing with a horse clam shell knife the heart of the first returning fish into quarters and offering one piece to their primary deity, the second to an important mythological being, the third to the peace maker (a good spirit) and the fourth to the salmon spirit.

Today, the Haisla, those speaking the Haisla language, go to the Kitlope to fish and hunt in season. Relying on the Kitlope watershed for spiritual strength as well as food, they are determined that this region remain undefiled.

Kitlope Facts...

Total Area - 317,000 hectares (one hectare is equal in size to two football fields side by side) - 1.4 times larger than Strathcona Provincial Park in British Columbia, one half the size of Banff National Park in Canada, and one third the size of Yellowstone Park in the USA.

Largest Tributary - Tezwa River 86,000 hectares - more than 12 times larger than the Carmanah Watershed on Vancouver Island.

Biogeoclimatic Areas Encompassed - Coastal Western Hemlock - low to mid elevations, Mountain Hemlock - subalpine, and Alpine Tundra - above the tree line. Northern limit of coastal Douglas fir.

Wildlife - "High wildlife values for the whole range of fur bearing species" - including grizzly bear, black bear, wolf, moose, mountain goat, wolverine beaver and marten. Large numbers of seals utilize Kitlope Lake. Important for migratory birds.

Fisheries - All five species of West Coast salmon. Three separate sockeye subspecies run at different times, each having a distinctive Haisla name. Runs averaged a total of 16,000 sockeye spawners annually during the last six years according to Federal Fisheries records. Best Sockeye river on the mid-coast.

Land Tenure - In the mid '60s, the B.C. provincial government awarded exclusive cutting rights to the timber within a large part of the mid-coast, including the entire Kitlope watershed, to Eurocan Pulp and Paper Company - Tree Farm Licence (TFL) 41 - for one dollar.

Operable Forest - The extremely steep mountain sides have very little soil. Percentage of the watershed with forest cover that can be commercially logged is less than 3 percent.

Net Volume of Operable Wood - Approximately 4 million cubic metres. Carmanah Valley which is only 2 percent as large has 1.25 times more timber (5 million cubic metres).

Provincial Park Potential - Fills a "major deficiency" in the existing protected areas of the Kitimat Ranges— low elevation old growth and complete wildlife habitats—Parks plan for the 90s - February, 1991.

...and the Gaps

Fisheries - Although good habitat for steelhead abounds, the river system has not been surveyed and no spawning records have been gathered. Extent of oolichan spawning in estuary unknown.

Wildlife - No studies as to population sizes of wildlife species have been made. The presence or absence of the endangered marbled murrelet nest sites is unknown.

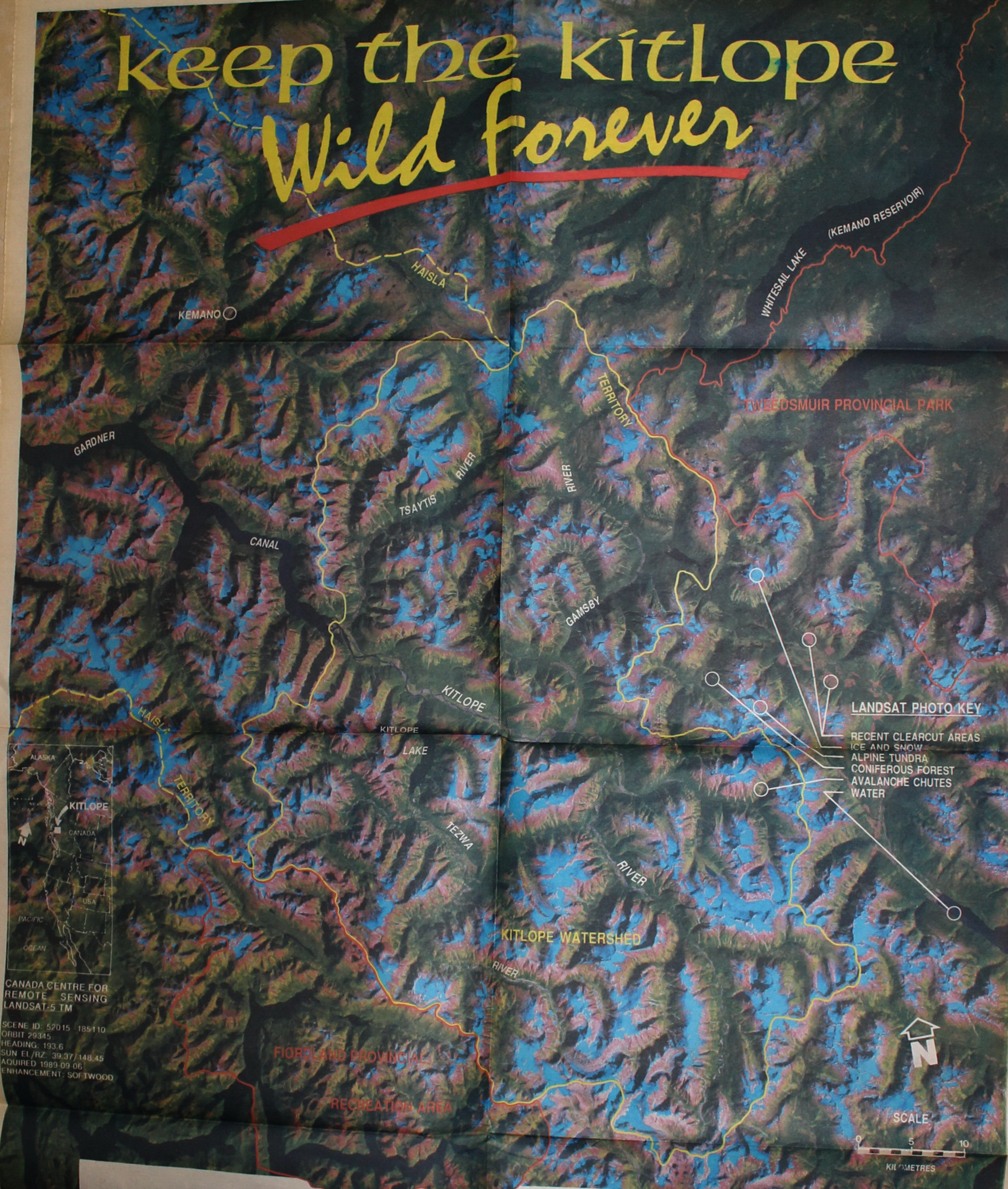
Forestry - Cost/benefit analysis of logging not made. The company estimates that 243 kilometres of roads would have to be built over 20 years to log two million cubic metres of wood in the Kitlope watershed. It is very possible that with extensive road building and transportation costs, it would be unprofitable to log the Kitlope without government subsidies.

Native Heritage - The Haisla are in the process of mapping the watershed which is noted for its very high concentration of spiritual sites. It is thought by anthropologists who have studied the mythological and ceremonial life of the central and north coast that the Kitlope was a centre of innovation and diffusion in such matters.



Most northerly stands of commercial quality coastal Douglas fir grow in the Kitlope.

keep the kitlope Wild forever



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ORBIT: 29345
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ACQUIRED: 1989-09-06
ENHANCEMENT: SOFTWOOD

haisla nation ~ kitlope declaration

We, the Henaaksiala (Haisla people) of Husduwachsdu (the Kitlope), have known, loved, and guarded the Kitlope Valley for untold, uncounted centuries. Here, our people have been born, have lived out their lives, and returned to the Earth, at one with the land.

For we do not own this land so much as the land owns us. The land is part of us; and we are part of the land.

It is given to us only as a trust: to live within its boundaries in beauty and harmony; to nourish our bodies and our spirits with its gifts; and to protect it from harm.

We have a solemn, sacred duty to keep faith with those who came before us, who guarded and protected this land for us; we must do no less for ourselves and for those who come after.

Long ago, our people set down laws to protect the land, the waters, the animals, the fish, and the forests. These laws

are embodied in our ancient title to the land: a title which has never been surrendered or extinguished, and which remains in full force for us today.

These laws require that we make it known to all:

To those who would despoil the land: we will oppose any proposals or acts that threaten the lands, waters, and living creatures of the Kitlope. You will find us implacable, for we are protecting the very core of our existence as a people.

To those who would approach us in friendship and harmony; who would join us in wonder and respect for this place: our laws require that we make you welcome, and share our most precious gifts with you. You are welcome here; we know that once you have seen and felt this place, you cannot leave here unmoved and unchanged.

Gerald Amos
Chief Councillor Gerald Amos, on behalf of the Haisla Nation





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The Haisla Nation needs your help. Please send letters of support and donations for their Kitlope Protection Fund directly to:

Chief Councillor
Gerald Amos
HAISLA
P.O. Box 1101
Kitimaat Village
BC V0T 2B0

Telephone 639-9382
Fax 632-2840

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Eighty-six year old Kitlope elder Gordon Robertson collecting the leaves and branch tips of red elderberry *Sambucus racemosa* for use as a rheumatism treatment



EVERY LETTER COUNTS



Misty morning on Kitlope Lake.

With the power of your pen, join those who are telling their political leaders that they are concerned about the fate of the spectacular Kitlope Watershed, "the largest remaining undisturbed coastal temperate watershed in the world"*

Please send a photocopy of your letter to the Kitlope Campaign Leader, Western Canada Wilderness Committee, 20 Water Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6B 1A4

*Quoted from *Parks Plan for the 90s - Preserving our Living Legacy - Information sheet from the Ministry of Parks - Kitlope Basin Inter-Agency Study Area 2 Grid D-7, dated February, 1991.*

Here is my tax-deductible gift of \$_____ to the "SAVE THE KITLOPE CAMPAIGN" (Revenue Canada Tax Registration #0587113-21-28).

Please use my donation to:

- Establish a camp and conduct research in the Kitlope Valley.
- Publish and distribute more information about the Kitlope and the need to protect the entire watershed.
- Both of the above.



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Please return to WCWC, 20 Water Street, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6B 1A4. Phone 604-683-8220. Fax 604-683-8229. Thank you for your support.

Write to:

and

Premier Rita Johnston
Legislative Buildings
Victoria,
British Columbia
Canada V8V 1X4

Prime Minister
Brian Mulroney
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0A6