

### **Statement regarding Northern Gateway Pipeline**

Recent media articles have implied that Coast Opportunity Funds has provided \$16million to First Nations to oppose the Northern Gateway Pipeline project. That is absolutely incorrect.

Coast Opportunity Funds, an independent BC organization, is a \$120million fund established in 2007 to support conservation and sustainable economic development projects by the First Nations of the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. The federal and BC governments contributed \$60million to the economic development fund, and philanthropic foundations contributed \$60million to supporting conservation projects.

More than a decade of discussions took place prior to 2007 between First Nations, governments, the forestry industry and conservation groups in the region looking for a way to end years of conflict over logging and meet the interests of all of those groups. The creation of Coast Opportunity Funds was a critical part of the solution, together with the signing of numerous land use planning agreements between First Nations and the BC government.

More than 80 percent of the awards to date (totalling \$25million) have been invested in the government-funded economic development projects, such as tourism businesses, shellfish aquaculture, and forestry. Conservation funding to date has been spent on projects such as creation of resource stewardship institutions.

In making the awards, Coast Funds has no authority to have regard to the First Nations' stance on matters such as the Northern Gateway Pipeline or any other unrelated issue of that nature, and has never done so.

Merv Child, Chair, Coast Opportunity Funds