



CLAYOQUOT SOUND

BRITISH COLUMBIA



MEARES ISLAND TRIBAL PARK

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Rising up from the ocean, the emerald green ancient forests of Meares Island form the backdrop of the tourist and fishing town of Tofino, BC, Canada. Situated in the heart of Clayoquot (pronounced "Klak-wot") Sound, Tofino is on the west coast of Vancouver Island and is where the Trans Canada Highway hits the wide-open Pacific Ocean. As anyone who has visited Clayoquot Sound knows, this place is a symphony of nature connected to the rest of Canada by a ribbon of blacktop.

To fend off impending logging plans, Meares Island was first designated a "Tribal Park" on April 21, 1984 by the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, supported by its neighbours, the Ahousaht First Nations. Meares Island's 8,500 hectares of spectacular ancient forests make this tribal park a favourite with west coast visitors.

A short trip by traditional dugout canoe, sea kayak or water taxi from one of Tofino's waterfront docks can transport you to the amazing world found on Meares. Imagine seeing red cedar trees almost 20 metres in circumference. That's a tree as wide as a living room! Imagine hiking on a winding boardwalk through this forest of giant trees and lush west coast jungle plants like licorice fern,

salal, salmon berry and sword fern. Or go with a guide to learn about the traditional uses of these forest plants and about the area's rich history.

Tla-o-qui-aht territory encompasses Tofino and its surroundings. The Tla-o-qui-aht have been living in Clayoquot Sound since time immemorial. Opitsat, the Tla-o-qui-aht village on Meares Island is located in the same spot as traders from Britain and the USA noted in the late 1700s.

The Tla-o-qui-aht have been welcoming visitors from around the world ever since those first encounters, though it's not always been easy living in such a busy crossroads of cultures. From the battle that sank the merchant ship 'Tonquin' in 1811 within

site of Meares Island, to the protests and court battle over logging giant MacMillan Bloedel's plans to clearcut log Meares in 1984, Clayoquot Sound has seen its share of conflict.

But mostly Clayoquot Sound is remembered as welcoming, wild and wonderful! These are the main reasons that Clayoquot Sound is such a popular get-away destination today.

If you are fortunate enough to visit Tofino and the surrounding Clayoquot Sound area, be sure to cross that narrow

strip of water to the Meares Island Tribal Park. You'll witness its amazing legacy and make memories to last a lifetime!



Cover image: **Meares Island** (Adrian Dorst). Left: **Hikers on Meares Island looking at giant redcedar** (Garth Lenz); Top: **Pacific tree frog** (Jaqueline Windh); Below: **"Life of Meares" design** (Joe David).

WILD FUN

INFORMATION INSIDE!

WHY MEARES ISLAND WASN'T LOGGED

On November 21, 1984, former logging giant MacMillan Bloedel's crew boat, the *Kennedy Queen* headed towards Meares Island in Clayoquot Sound to commence BC government approved logging. A clearcut landscape on Meares seemed inevitable. The old-growth forests would be converted to two by fours, newsprint and slash.

Or so it seemed... Instead, the *Kennedy* encountered many small boats—enough to halt progress. The RCMP were called

in and after extensive negotiations, the MacMillan Bloedel logging crew was allowed to land.

On shore they were met by nearly one hundred people, Native and non-native, with songs and drumming. The MacMillan Bloedel officials asked for passage. Moses Martin, elected Chief Councilor of the Tla-o-qui-aht, read from the original 1905 Timber License, the legal cornerstone of MacMillan Bloedel's claim to ownership of the trees. This agreement exempts all Indian plots, gardens and grounds from logging. Chief Martin told them the island was a Tribal Park, his peoples' garden; and that while they were welcome as visitors, no logging would be allowed.

The loggers left and the trees' protectors remained and continued working on a permanent cabin and trails. Two days later, on November 23, MacMillan Bloedel sought an injunction against Chief Moses Martin and "anyone else" from obstructing its logging operations on Meares Island.

Shortly thereafter, the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht

First Nations filed proceedings to prevent MacMillan Bloedel from logging Meares, basing their argument on aboriginal ownership of the Island. At Opitsat, a community of the Tla-o-qui-aht people located at the southwest end of Meares Island, the depth of the shell midden attests to over 5,000 years of continuous occupancy. Meares was never occupied by "outsiders" and its ownership was never ceded to the Canadian government.

Eventually the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht First Nations prevailed in court, and were successful in their efforts to protect their garden: Meares Island. The MacMillan Bloedel logging crew never returned.

Excerpts adopted from: MEARES ISLAND: Peaceful Protest Halts Logging - Wilderness Committee Educational Report Vol. 4 - No. 1, January, 1985

Left: **1984 Save Meares Island protest at Legislature** (Wilderness Committee files). Top: **Big tree trail on Meares Island** (Adrian Dorst). Bottom: **1988 Meares Island trailbuilding crew** (Wilderness Committee files).



MEARES ISLAND TRIBAL PARK



Legend

- Meares Island Big Tree Trail
- Other old trails / routes
- Wah-nuh-juss (Lone Cone) Trail
- Highway 4
- 100m Elevation Contours
- Meares Island Tribal Park
- Wetlands
- Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations Territory
- First Nations Reserves



25 YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG

Story by Torrance Coste, Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Volunteer

On May 15, 2010, the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations held a public feast to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the notorious Meares Island court case. The 1985 case, which placed Meares under a Supreme Court injunction, was the result of protests and a blockade by the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht First Nations, environmentalists and community members against logging giant MacMillan Bloedel (who were later bought out by Weyerhaeuser in 1999).

The event marked a significant step forward for indigenous rights and environmental movements in Canada. The case also created the first tribal park, which has since been expanded to include Ha'uukmin (the Kennedy Lake watershed) and is managed by the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks initiative (herein referred to as "Tribal Parks").

The May 15th celebration began with a feast, attended by several hundred Tla-o-qui-aht, Ahousaht, and community members. The meal was followed by opening remarks by Jack Woodward, the lawyer who represented the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht in the case. Woodward was welcomed warmly by the *Ha'wiih* of both Nations, and he in turn acknowledged the role of indigenous leadership in winning

the case.

The Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht *Ha'wiih* then treated the guests to their family songs and dances, a spectacle that continued for hours. "Our society underestimates how powerful and alive this culture is," said Woodward, when the songs and dances had finished, "but the tradition here is as strong as ever."

Woodward also acknowledged the larger role of the Meares Island court case in British Columbia. He explained that the case served as the catalyst for the treaty process. "It proved that the government could no longer ignore indigenous rights," he said.

Woodward was proud to see that Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks is still going strong after 25 years, saying "This instance showed that the declaration of a Tribal Park has symbolic value that translates directly into action."

Joe Martin, who played a central role in the blockade and served as co-founder of Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks remembered those who helped protect Meares and have since passed on. Martin, a master canoe carver and Tla-o-qui-aht historian, spent three months

on the Island with his father and his brothers during the blockade.

Despite the success, Martin was quick to point out that Meares is not necessarily protected forever.

"The Island is not quite saved," he said, adding that the injunction only stands while the land treaty remains unsettled.



Top: **Sea otter** (Thomas Kitchin/First Light). Middle: **Wah-nuh-juss** (Annie George). Left: **View from Lone Cone on Meares Island** (Martin Krykorka). Right: **Kakawinshiilth - Becoming a killer whale** (Ron Hamilton).



TLA-O-QUI-AHT TRIBAL PARKS CO-HOSTS INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Story by Torrance Coste, Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Volunteer

In May 2010, indigenous community representatives and researchers from around the world were welcomed to Tla-o-qui-aht territory for the 12th International Congress of Ethnobiology and a workshop on Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs). The events, which were co-hosted by Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, brought diverse groups of people together to share experiences, and discuss challenges in land and resource management. Representatives from Tribal Parks had the chance to highlight self-determined indigenous ecosystem management in Clayoquot Sound.

Participants were awestruck by the beauty of the region, and were further impressed by the way that traditional Tla-o-qui-

aht values govern development strategies for Tribal Parks. The balance between responsible ecosystem management and the creation of sustainable livelihoods is the backbone of Tribal Parks, and this value inspired individuals and groups with similar goals.

In addition to learning about Tribal Parks through presentations and formal dialogue, the participants were invited to the Big Tree Trail, one of the central features of Meares Island Tribal Park, so they could experience Tla-o-qui-aht territory for themselves.

The participants were humbled by the colossal old-growth rainforest as they walked along a boardwalk constructed by Tribal Parks Guardians, the Tla-o-qui-aht people who proudly work to improve

ecotourism infrastructure within their traditional territory. Tribal Parks staff were reluctant to label their parks as "protected areas," as this term separates the world into pockets of strict conservation and space in which destructive industrial practices persist. Tribal Parks Director Eli Enns feels that the creation of environmentally respectful micro-economies in all areas is more effective.

Near the end of the Congress, a small group of participants joined Enns on a hike up *Wah-nuh-juss* (Lone Cone Mountain), the highest peak on Meares Island. Veteran journalist Laird Townsend exclaimed that Machu Picchu was the only place he had been that rivaled Clayoquot Sound in beauty. At the peak, before a breathtaking view of

the Sound, the group engaged in a powerful discussion, based around the concept of *Hishuk-ish tsawk*, which means "everything is one, and all is interconnected."

Throughout the events, Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks was understood as an initiative that not only recognizes this interconnectedness, but manages Tla-o-qui-aht territory based on this connection. The participants left Clayoquot Sound impressed and humbled by the powerful environment, and by the proud people who steward it as they always have.



LAW SHOULD COME FROM NATURE



Joe Martin (Eli Enns)

To us, the Tla-o-qui-aht people our totem poles represent our constitution, and how our rights and responsibilities are based on natural laws. They help us affirm that communities are not merely stakeholders, but are also rights-holders.

The top crest of the totem pole in our tradition always features the Sun or the Moon crest. This is the first natural law and relates to respect: self-respect and respect for other people and other creatures. This teaching comes down on us when we are inside the womb of

our mothers and our elders speak to us, which they continue to do throughout our lives. This is reflected in *Hishuk-ish Tsawaak* i.e. "everything is connected, everything is one". To us, this means that the world is a living system that is imbued with intrinsic value and deserves great respect.

The second law forms the base of each totem in our tradition, and that is the Wolf, which is responsible for upholding the natural laws, and is seen as one of the most important crests.

Another common crest depicted in our tradition is the Raven. It reminds us of all the creatures that fly and walk in the world, and the laws of nature we all live and die under. This includes humans because when we live together we have to learn how to walk together. This law is also present in the concept *Quu-us*,

which means, "Real live human beings".

As Quu-us, we are a link between past and future ancestors, and have inherited all of the medicines that sustain life both physically and spiritually. As a link we are responsible for passing our inherited medicines onto future ancestors, and are accountable to them and all living beings through the laws of nature and our communities' laws.

These teachings about inter-generational accountability forms the human point of reference to the teaching of *Quay-qwiik-sup*, which is about landscapes and "life-scapes" in a state of transformation. Quay-qwiik-sup speaks to the connectivity through time and the gratitude and responsibility to our past and future ancestors.

The current challenge we face is to apply these laws and teachings

in a meaningful way to the day-to-day governance of our traditional territory including sub-watersheds and communities.

One of the tools we have developed to meet this challenge is Tribal Parks. Tribal Parks are indigenous watershed management areas designed to reflect a more integrated understanding of human spirituality, human economy and healthily functioning ecosystems. Tribal Parks aim to meet our long-term accountability to future ancestors while also creating sustainable livelihoods for today's generation. Furthermore, Tribal Park experiences are designed to transfer ancestral knowledge to visitors traveling from around the world with the goal of furthering global stewardship initiatives.

—Joe Martin and Eli Enns, Tla-o-qui-aht (indigenous peoples of Clayoquot Sound)

FUN! WEST COAST STYLE

Here are a few listings of some folks that can make your Vancouver Island adventure come alive! For a more complete list see Tourism Tofino (tourismtofino.com)

Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks

The friendly folks that manage the Meares Island and Ha'uukmin Tribal Parks.
Ph: (250) 725-3233
tribalparcs@tla-o-qui-aht.org
www.tribalparcs.ca

WestCoast Wild Adventures Ltd.

Come see the Ha'uukmin Tribal Park with Zip Line and River Kayaking Eco-Educational Tours.
Ph: (250) 726-8668
Email: info@wcwild.com
www.wcwild.com

Tla-ook Cultural Adventures

Gisele Martin guides dugout canoe trips, guided hikes to Meares Island Tribal Park and Big Tree Trail.
Ph: (250) 725-2656
Toll Free: 1-877-942-2663
www.tlaook.com

Clayoquot Freedom Charters

Moses Martin guides fishing, whale and bear watching, custom boat tours, trips to Meares Island Tribal Park and Big Tree Trail.
Ph: (250) 725-2765
Toll Free: 1-866-725-2765

Best Western Tin-Wis Resort

Located 3 km outside of Tofino, in the beautiful and pristine heart of Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island, BC. Positioned on the traditional territory of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations.
1119 Pacific Rim Highway
Tofino, BC, V0R 2Z0
Ph: (250) 725-4445
Toll Free: 1-800-661-9995
Email: info@tinwis.com
www.tinwis.com

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!

Contact Premier Campbell, and let him know how you feel about having Meares Island become legally protected from industrial logging for all time.

Hon. Gordon Campbell, Premier of BC

West Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Phone: 250-387-1715

Fax: 250-387-0087

Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Humpback whale (Art Wolfe)



info@wildernesscommittee.org • 1-800-661-WILD (9453)

I support the TLA-O-QUI-AHT FIRST NATIONS' TRIBAL PARK!



Here is my donation towards the Tla-o-qui-aht Meares Island Tribal Park initiative.

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call
Tel: (250) 725-3233

clip
And send to:
Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks
Box 18
Tofino, BC, V0R 2Z0

YES! I support the Wilderness Committee's work to protect Clayoquot Sound

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I want to become a member! Enclosed is my annual fee for a:
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The Wilderness Committee is Canada's largest membership-based wilderness preservation organization.

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In the Lower Mainland
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And return to the:
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