

**50 YEARS OF
CHANGEMAKERS FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

**2024 ANDREW
THOMPSON AWARD**

NOVEMBER 21 2024



CELEBRATING CHAMPIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

In 2024, West Coast Environmental Law is celebrating our 50th anniversary – marking five action-packed decades of legal research, advocacy and action in service of nature and communities.

In our work alongside Indigenous peoples and organizations, grassroots groups and concerned community members, over the years we have had the honour of working with innumerable individuals who have made outstanding contributions to environmental protection and sustainability in BC through law.

From political or community leaders, to grassroots activists and community members taking action in the courts or on the front lines, to the unsung heroes working tirelessly behind the scenes – we raise our hands to all of the incredible people working alongside us for environmental justice.

This year, as we mark our 50-year milestone, we have a special opportunity to honour some of the amazing folks we have encountered on this journey. The Andrew Thompson Award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding lifetime contributions to environmental protection and sustainability through law in BC. This year, the award honours not just one individual, but 50 years of environmental changemakers – a group of remarkable people who have made an impact in this way over the past 50 years.

The path toward environmental justice is often a difficult one, but we are continually inspired by environmental justice leaders across the province who are harnessing the power of law in diverse ways to address these complex challenges. We invite you to read on and learn more about their outstanding achievements and join us in celebrating their impact.



J. Clogg
Jessica Clogg
Executive Director
& Senior Counsel

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The 2024 Andrew Thompson Award was presented at West Coast Environmental Law's 50th Anniversary Celebration at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art.

The event took place on the territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

We are transforming environmental decision-making and strengthening legal protection for the environment through collaborative legal strategies that bridge Indigenous and Canadian law.

By putting the law in the hands of communities and creating legal risk for those who would harm our land, air and water, we are building the collective power to achieve a more just and sustainable future for all.

ABOUT THE ANDREW THOMPSON AWARD

The Andrew Thompson Award was established in 2002 by West Coast Environmental Law and the Thompson family as a legacy to Dr. Andrew Thompson, one of BC's foremost environmental lawyers and a pioneer in environmental and resource law.

The Andrew Thompson Award honours individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding contribution to environmental protection and sustainability in British Columbia through the law. In recognition of West Coast's 50th Anniversary, the theme of this year's Andrew Thompson Award is **"50 Years of Changemakers for Environmental Justice."**



Dr. Andrew Thompson served as one of West Coast's first directors.





**2024 ANDREW THOMPSON
AWARD RECIPIENTS →**



INDIGENOUS CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP / INDIGENOUS LAW DEFENDERS



ʔaʔsiwt (Ascasiwt), Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, syilx Nation. President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs since 1998, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip has been a tireless advocate for inherent title and rights, climate action and environmental protection. He and his partner of 46 years, Joan Phillip, have stood side-by-side with First Nations and allies countless times over the decades to defend land, water and territories from damaging industrial projects. Grand Chief is also a consummate statesman, bringing fierce integrity to negotiations with the Crown for legal and policy change. Together with the First Nations Leadership Council, he was intimately involved in shaping and advocating for the passing of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)* in 2019, which sets the stage for a wholesale transformation of Crown environmental and natural resource laws to align with the UN Declaration.



Kukwpi7 Art Adolph, Xáxli'p, Director Of Operations, St'át'imc Chiefs Council. Art Adolph, former Chief of Xáxli'p, began his education in St'át'imc language, culture, and traditions, including law and ecological knowledge from a very young age through custom adoption by Xáxli'p Elders, the Late Chief Sam and Susan Mitchell. Art was instrumental with initiating the Traditional Use Study (Ntsuwa7lhkálha Tl'ákmen – “our way of life,”) for Xáxli'p and negotiating for implementation of an ecosystem-based plan for Xáxli'p's survival area.

For close to four decades as a political leader, policy analyst/political advisor, director, negotiator, and researcher, Art has worked tirelessly to uphold St'át'imc inherent Title and Rights, culture and way of life, and to restore ecological and cultural sustainability in the territory, including protection of wild salmon and the Fraser River.



Beatrice Silver, Semá:th. Bea Silver, a Semá:th Knowledge Keeper, residential school survivor and former Chief of the Sumas First Nation, advocates to protect the health of her community from the impacts of industry activity on their land. As Chief of the Sumas First Nation, Bea addressed environmental justice issues including the dumping of toxic biological waste on the reserve. Bea founded the Sts'elemeqw Thrivers Society, a platform for healing for residential school survivors and to encourage youth to admire their roots and hereditary traditions.

Bea Silver's lifelong work intertwines environmental protection, revitalizing and passing down of traditional practices, and empowerment of youth and elders.



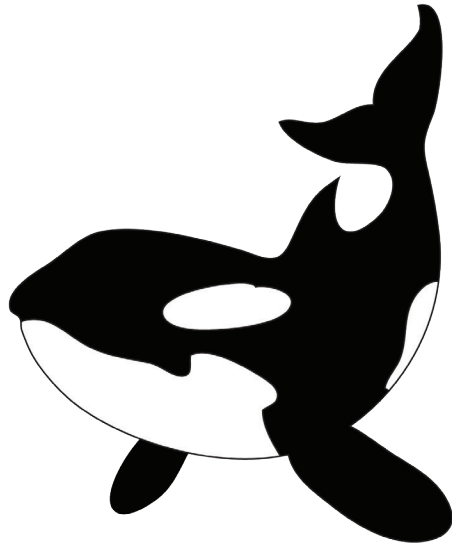
Doug Neasloss, Chief Councillor, Kitsoo Xai'xais Nation.

Chief Doug Neasloss has served for years as elected chief of the Kitsoo Xai'xais Nation and stewardship director of a growing stewardship department. He has worked tirelessly to elevate Indigenous governance in stewardship and conservation spaces. He has contributed to stopping bear hunting, advocated for Guardians enforcement, led the declaration and implementation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, contributed to building a sustainable economy for his community through ecotourism with a focus on getting the youth on the land and capacity building for the next generation of leaders.

He is a true visionary – always looking ahead for the next big idea that will improve the lives of Indigenous peoples and protect their territories. Along the way he shares openly about what is working and how – lifting up others in this work.



Giindajin Haawasti Guujaaw. Guujaaw is a Raven of the Haida Nation; his clan is the Gakyaals Kiigawaay of Skedans, Haida Gwaii. He has been at the inner circles of Haida culture and politics all of his adult life. A trapper with his uncle in his formative years, and like most of his people, he is a hunter, fisher and food gatherer for living. He has been a carpenter, canoe builder, copper maker, singer and carver. Guujaaw has a long history as a Rights, Title and Earth Advocate. He was a founding member and served as the president of Coastal First Nations and spent many years with the Council of the Haida Nation including 13 years as President of the Haida Nation. Today, serving as a Hereditary leader, he is always true to culture and keeping priority for the wellbeing of his people and the Earth.



Iris Siwallace, Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Researcher, Nuxalk Nation. Iris Siwallace is a lifelong environmental advocate who has dedicated her life to protecting the lands and waters of her ancestral territory. From standing up during the Ista crisis with her granny Nunanta to ending the bear trophy hunt and resisting mining and clear-cut logging, Iris has tirelessly worked to uphold Indigenous governance, laws and environmental justice.

Her quiet strength and behind-the-scenes efforts have made a lasting impact on current and future generations, preserving natural ecosystems and empowering communities to continue the fight for a sustainable future. Iris embodies the spirit of environmental stewardship and deserves recognition for her invaluable contributions.



Marilyn Slett, Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Nation. Marilyn Slett is a Heiltsuk changemaker working at the intersections of Indigenous and Canadian laws, and the environment. As Chief Councillor, she has stewarded Heiltsuk's strategic litigation and law reform work with support of Heiltsuk's joint leadership. Heiltsuk successfully challenged Northern Gateway Enbridge's pipeline permit and is challenging the maritime liability regime's failure to recognize cultural losses. Heiltsuk's law reform work supported the *Oil Tanker Moratorium Act*.

Environmental justice for Marilyn includes advancing the protection of Indigenous women. Marilyn recently presented to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women about Canada's ongoing systemic discrimination against Indigenous women.



Chief Na'Moks, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief of the Tsayu Clan. There is no doubt that Chief Na'Moks is known for his contributions in the Climate Justice communities in so called British Columbia. Due to his unwavering determination to protect our lands, he was successful in shutting down a proposed pipeline, Enbridge Northern gateway pipeline, and costing other pipelines like Coastal GasLink pipeline billions and billions of dollars. His leadership and strong voice has inspired so many of different walks of life. Also, his presence has no doubt got big banks and corporate CEOs and executives shaking in their boots and running for the hills.

He has definitely helped Indigenous resistance and the matters of Free Prior Informed Consent on the forefront of Climate Justice. He is also taking the world stage by storm making his impact global! We are so thankful for his work for Mother Earth and future generations.



Naxginkw / Tara Marsden, Gitanyow, Independent Consultant, Hlimoo Sustainable Solutions.

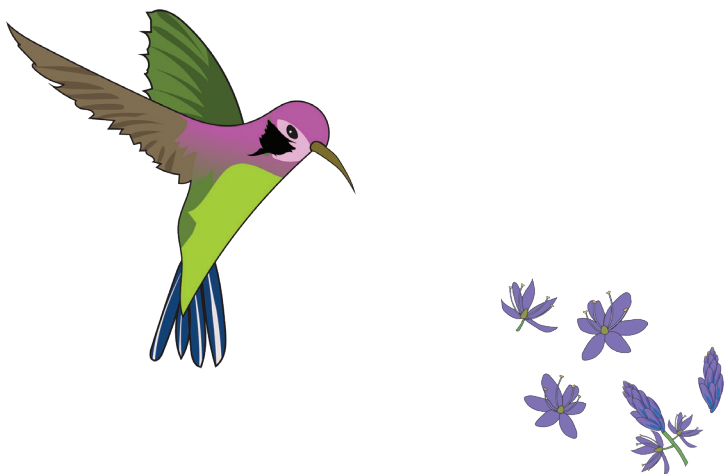
Naxginkw / Tara Marsden is from the Lax Ganeda (Frog) Clan of Gitanyow Huwilp of the Gitksan peoples. For more than two decades, Tara has been dedicated to advancing sustainable development and operationalizing Free, Prior and Informed Consent for Indigenous peoples. Drawing on her Master's degree in Political Science and her upbringing in Gitksan Ayookxw (laws), Tara has worked for a number of First Nations governments, academia, the provincial government, philanthropic organizations, and for her own nation, Gitanyow (including as Wilp Sustainability Director from 2012-2021). In 2021, Tara established Hlimoo Sustainable Solutions to continue her life's work as an independent consultant in her homelands of the Gitksan people. In this role, among many impactful projects, she has supported Wilp Wii Litsxw (Gitanyow) in establishing the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area, and served as Senior Indigenous Advisor for Healthy Watersheds Initiative. As UNDRIP Fellow, Tara recently led the completion of the *Transformative Actions for UNDRIP Advancement*, an Action Plan for REFBC, and has also been appointed to the Watershed Security Fund Grants Working Group which has just completed its first granting cycle.





Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack). Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack) is a Nuxalk and Secwepemc land defender, community organizer, researcher, and human rights advocate. She is well known in BC and Alaska and beyond for her critical work in response to the 2014 Mount Polley Mine Disaster in her Secwepemc homelands. Nuskmata was part of a coalition of women leaders advocating for mining reform in BC, First Nations Women Advocating Responsible Mining, as well as a board member for the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance.

She is now the Executive Director of the Moccasin Footprint Society, a small Indigenous charity that supports Indigenous Knowledge, Rights and Way of Life. She lives in her ancestral village of Nusq'lst, where she is a leader in the establishment of Nuxalk Protected Areas and the restoration of Nuxalk Ancestral Governance and Jurisdiction. Most importantly, she is a mother, auntie, and new grandmother in her communities of Nuxalkulmc and Secwepemculecw.



LAWYERS AND LEGAL SCHOLARS



John Rich, Senior Counsel, Ratcliff LLP. John Rich has been with Ratcliff for over 35 years, working since 1997 alongside fellow senior counsel, and former West Coast Environmental Law executive director, Greg McDade. Ratcliff has been described as “a place where new law students and grads can aspire and work on environmental and indigenous cases in the private sector.” John has represented First Nation governments as general counsel and in litigation. He has conducted several major trials respecting Aboriginal rights and historic claims and has appeared at all levels of Provincial and Federal Courts and the Supreme Court of Canada, as well as numerous administrative tribunals. John served for many years as a director and president of both West Coast and Ecojustice, and as an elected Trustee and Chair of the Islands Trust.



Linda Nowlan. For over three decades, Linda Nowlan has dedicated her work to environmental justice through her public interest environmental law practice including stints as Executive Director and Staff Counsel at West Coast, as well as director roles at WWF-Canada and UBC. Working across all levels of government, she has contributed to environmental law and policy solutions focused on oceans, fresh water and species at risk. She leverages her extensive knowledge and experience to advocate for a healthier environment, collaborating with a diverse range of people and groups.

Linda is passionate about sharing stories of environmental justice through multiple mediums, including peer-reviewed books and articles, policy briefs, op-eds, and artistic projects. She is dedicated to mentoring the next generation of environmental leaders through teaching at the law school and beyond and is always turning her mind to the next creative solution.



Mark Haddock, Lawyer. Mark Haddock is a pioneer who has his whole heart in environmental law. That's why he risked becoming Ecojustice's first staff lawyer – and an early West Coast lawyer. For decades, environmentalists have turned to Mark first on forestry and other questions. He always responds collaboratively, brilliantly, generously. He used his expertise to help win the historic Tsilhqot'in decision, and successfully advocated for a broad range of environmental law reforms. Mark has consistently volunteered his leadership and advice to the boards of green groups. Numerous protected areas now exist, thanks to his volunteering. And his law teaching has helped inspire and create a new generation of environmental lawyers.

He is an exemplar of a dedicated environmental advocate, who has played a key role in empowering environmentalists and communities.



Michael M'Gonigle, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Law, at the University of Victoria. For 40 years Michael M'Gonigle has been an influential scholar, public intellectual, activist, and leader in environmental thought, and theory about social justice, law, and governance. He has made profound contributions in fora from local community organizing through international governance of the environment, often by founding or leading organizations such as Greenpeace International, Greenpeace Canada, the Dogwood Initiative, and the Polis Project.

As a writer, speaker, teacher, and mentor, he has influenced and inspired generations of students at Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria through his diverse and engaged scholarship as well as public debate and law reform through civil society organizations.



SCIENCE AND THE LAW



Otto E. Langer, BSc (Zoology) MSc. Otto Langer has been involved in legal aspects of environmental issues over the past 55 years in BC. He helped form one of the first habitat protection groups in Canada. By 1970 he realized letter writing/negotiations with polluters and those destroying fish habitat often achieved little and advocated legal action. He used the pollution prohibitions of the *Fisheries Act* to lay charges and became an expert on sediment pollution. He was an expert witness in over 100 cases from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. He cultivated essential working relationships with the Department of Justice, the BC Attorney General and worked with the first environmental non-governmental organizations in BC.

He is still active in advising environmental groups on fisheries matters as related to environmental assessment, pollution and habitat laws.



COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGEMAKERS



Denise Foster, Save French Creek Estuary Land Society.

Denise Foster has dedicated herself to protecting at-risk species and sensitive ecosystems, contributing greatly to the protection of the 23 acres now known as the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve, home to animal species like Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons. Denise's work has brought First Nations, communities and stakeholders together to make this environmental protection a reality, including the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, BC Parks Foundation, Regional District of Nanaimo and many conservation societies and community groups. Denise continues to work to protect the biodiversity of the French Creek Estuary through scientific information and legal protections.



June Ross, President, Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition.

June Ross has dedicated her life to protecting Vancouver Island Water. Her leadership has been very valuable, and she has worked tirelessly for many years helping others in many different places on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. She is a very knowledgeable person and has helped others to acquire important information to help them protect their natural environment in their areas.



Ruth Simons, President and Executive Director, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative. Ruth's contributions to protecting the lands and waters of Howe Sound serve as an example of community-based conservation for all of BC. Ruth actively campaigned for the designation of Howe Sound as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, focusing on respecting and upholding Indigenous rights, protecting the environment, and promoting education. Thanks to her leadership, the UNESCO designation was achieved in 2021. Ruth continues to lead the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society, which is now responsible for managing the designation. Ruth also convenes the Howe Sound Community Forum, which brings together elected officials from multiple orders of government – Indigenous, federal, provincial and local – in the region.

Ruth has a special gift for bringing people together to work towards the common good of Howe Sound. She is innovative in identifying new goals and initiatives to support the health of the region, and tireless in her dedication to achieving these goals.



Ross Muirhead, Elphinstone Logging Focus. Ross has dedicated over 14 years to protecting forests and the valuable ecosystems that they shelter from clearcutting. He co-created the forestry watchdog group Elphinstone Logging Focus in 2010 in response to plans to clear-cut Sunshine Coast forests that house invaluable watersheds, and since then ELF has responded to dozens of threats to forest biodiversity. Ross's tireless advocacy through Elphinstone Logging Focus and in partnership with First Nations elders, other community groups, and scientific experts has contributed greatly to forest conservation on the Sunshine Coast.

PAST ANDREW THOMPSON AWARD RECIPIENTS



Bill Andrews, Lawyer (2019)



Malii (Glen Williams), President, Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs (2014)



Gid7ahl-Gudslaay, K.C. (Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson), Lawyer (2014)



Calvin Sandborn, K.C., former Legal Director of the University of Victoria Environmental Law Centre and former West Coast Environmental Law staff counsel (2011)



Keith and Bernadette Wyton, Alberni Valley Citizens' Stewardship Coalition, Peace Train Canada (2006)



Bill Turner, Founder, The Land Conservancy of BC (2006)



The Hon. David Anderson, P.C., O.C., former federal Environment Minister and Fisheries Minister (2004)



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