



Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve,  
National Marine Conservation Area Reserve,  
and Haida Heritage Site  
[www.parksCanada.gc.ca](http://www.parksCanada.gc.ca)

# Yahgudang dlijuu: A Respectful Act

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## Restoring the land and honouring the history of Lyell Island

Tilga Kun Gwaayaay (Lyell Island) is a place of tremendous significance to the Haida people and indeed to all Canadians. As the site of the 1985 political standoff where Haida elders stood “the line at Lyell” to protest unsustainable logging on their traditional lands, the island is an icon in the history of Gwaii Haanas and an important symbol of the Haida struggle to protect their natural and cultural heritage.

Lyell Island has seen extensive logging activity which has resulted in degradation to forest ecosystem function, including damage to stream channels and the loss of suitable spawning and rearing habitat for several species of salmon.

Logging first began on

this 19,000 ha island in the 1920s in a limited manner, but was followed by more intensive clear-cutting in the late 1970s and reached its peak in 1986. With over 200km of roads constructed and almost 30% of the island clear-cut, landslides resulted due to instability of slopes from forest cover removal. The effect of the landslides on streams and the practice of skidding logs through streambeds resulted in the destruction of salmon-bearing stream habitat.

In 1985, the Haida Nation designated Gwaii Haanas as a heritage site under the Haida Constitution. In July 1987, logging on Lyell Island ended when Canada and British Columbia signed the South Moresby Memorandum of Understanding. The following year Gwaii Haanas was designated as a national park reserve and Canada committed to working in cooperation with the Haida Nation to establish a marine protected area. Today Gwaii Haanas is cooperatively managed by Parks Canada and the Haida Nation and management decisions that affect the land and sea areas of Gwaii Haanas are made by consensus.



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HAIDA NATION



# Yahgudang dljju: A Respectful Act

Gwaii Haanas has launched a unique initiative at Lyell Island which highlights the connection of the living culture of the Haida people to the land and sea. This project is entitled *Yahgudang dljju*, which translated from the Haida language means “a respectful act”.

The project aims :

***“to celebrate the rich history of Lyell Island as a symbol of cooperation and Haida connection to the land by restoring stream and riparian forest ecosystems and re-establishing self-sustaining salmon populations.”***



Ecological restoration on Lyell Island involves the addition of large woody debris to streams and stabilization of banks in order to increase stream channel complexity and provide improved habitat for spawning salmon. In adjacent riparian forest areas, secondary forests are being restored through the creation of canopy gaps to emulate old-growth characteristics and conifer growth is being encouraged to provide a future source of woody debris for streams.

Chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*) and coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) brood-stock are being collected from selected streams in the fall months and hatchery-raised to fry for release into restored streams in the spring. By marking this salmon fry with a fin clip, these fish can be identified as adults when they return to spawn in their home streams, allowing scientists to gauge project success.

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By engaging community members and youth in direct participation in ecological restoration activities, and through engaging local schools in the salmon enhancement program, the project will foster an increased understanding of the importance of ecological integrity and the significance of Lyell Island to the people of Haida Gwaii and to all Canadians.

## Working with partners

Since 2004, Gwaii Haanas has been working with a range of partners including the Council of the Haida Nation’s Fisheries Program, the Hecate Strait Streamkeepers, Fisheries and Oceans Canada as well as a range of community organizations. This project is funded by the federal government as part of Parks Canada’s Action-on-the-Ground program, a \$90 million nation-wide initiative that encourages Canadians to engage in activities that support conservation and promote the ecological integrity of Canada’s national parks and natural and cultural heritage.



Hecate Strait Streamkeepers



Fisheries and Oceans  
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