

The 2014 Haida Gwaii Economic Development Forum



Summary prepared by Jennifer Dysart and the Gwaii Trust Economic
Development Committee in collaboration with John Talbot

“The Economic Forum is an opportunity for all Islanders to have a voice in Economic Development and more importantly, a chance to identify projects that will benefit all Haida Gwaii residents.”

Brad Setso, Chair, Gwaii Trust



On November 1, 2014 the Gwaii Trust Society hosted an all-island Economic Development Forum. The purpose of the Forum was to stimulate an islands-wide discussion about what we can do to collectively strengthen the economic future of Haida Gwaii.

The all-day event was held at the Haida Heritage Centre. Over 125 individuals representing every community on Haida Gwaii and a wide range of age groups participated in the event, discussing ideas and projects that could benefit the economic future of Haida Gwaii.

At the end of the Forum, Gwaii Trust committed to reporting on this event. The following summary contains responses generated from the economic development forum and two high school workshops. The content of this report will be useful for organizations and individuals wishing to further explore and implement economic development opportunities on Haida Gwaii.

Conclusions from the Forum

There are a number of conclusions that the Gwaii Trust Economic Development Committee drew from the Forum.

First, the fact that almost 130 islanders attended an event to discuss economic issues on Haida Gwaii signifies a sincere concern for the state of the island economy and an interest in developing solutions and setting direction.

Second, the Forum generated many ideas, both new and old, each with various levels of feasibility. The attached list of ideas can be regarded as a starting point for investigating opportunities, but it should be noted that it does not fully reflect the wide range of discussions that occurred throughout the day.

Finally, the Forum participants made it clear that there is an expectation for Gwaii Trust to play a role in addressing economic issues that are beyond the scope of individual communities and that affect all islanders.

Next steps for Gwaii Trust

“The Gwaii Trust will enhance environmentally sustainable, social and economic benefits to Haida Gwaii through the use of the Fund.”

Gwaii Trust Mission statement

While the Trust recognizes that it cannot address all issues - and in many cases, cannot address them alone -its mandate as an organization representing all island communities, combined with its access to financial resources, provides it with the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in helping to shape the economic future of Haida Gwaii.

Since the Forum, the Gwaii Trust Economic Development Committee, as well as the Gwaii Trust Board, has spent time reviewing the Forum outcomes. While this has caused a delay in reporting back about the Forum, it has given the Trust the opportunity to discuss the economic concerns brought forward and look for structures and methods to best address those issues.

Gwaii Trust has already started implementing the Forum results by announcing a 4 year infrastructure commitment totaling \$7million, plus a \$2.2 million contribution

towards the support of a substantial improvement in the internet on Haida Gwaii. The need for improved internet access was identified at the Forum as one of the critical requirements for the economic, social, educational and cultural future of Haida Gwaii.

Beyond the infrastructure and island internet, the Economic Development Committee has identified the following priority areas on which it will focus this coming year. They include:

- Looking for opportunities/initiatives to enhance secondary/value added manufacturing/processing on-island.
- Supporting training, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial capacity building.
- Researching barriers and opportunities for improved transportation to and from the islands.
- Researching barriers and opportunities for improved connections between Graham and Moresby Islands and between island communities.

This initial focus does not mean that other concerns raised at the Forum (such as Island energy or Island governance) are of less importance, but that these will potentially require a longer term approach. Meanwhile the Trust will continue to look for economic opportunities and work with the communities and other on-island economic development organizations to address some of the economic development issues facing Haida Gwaii.

Background

There have been significant changes on Haida Gwaii (HG) over the past 10 years in terms of population, employment and the reduction of critical services. Between 2006 and 2011, the population on Haida Gwaii decreased by 9% to some 4300 people¹. From 1996 to 2011, the Islands experienced a population decline of 39% in the core working age group (aged 25-54 years). This trend is expected to continue over the next decade with a further decrease of 13%².

In 2001, the school district had 1011 students. By 2014 this number had decreased to 570 students - a 45% decline.

¹ Haida Gwaii Labour Market Project – Labour Market Information. Astute Management Consulting Inc. December 2011.

² Developing a Forest Strategy for Haida Gwaii: A proposed pathway to defining the LONG TERM future of sustainable forests, communities and the forest businesses on the Islands. Moore, K. November 2013.

Haida Gwaii has also experienced significant reductions to its services. Mail service has been reduced. Summer flights have been cut. The Skidegate-Aliford Bay ferry route lost 35% of its sailings, while the Skidegate-Prince Rupert route has been decreased from three to two sailings per week for most of the year, and from six to five sailings per week during the summer.



These significant changes prompted the Gwaii Trust to initiate a dialogue about the current socio-economic situation on Haida Gwaii and potentially generate possible solutions through the Forum and high school workshops.

The Forum - An overview

The day of the Forum began with a welcome by Chief Gahlaay and a prayer by GwaGanad, along with a reading of 'What do you do with an idea?' by Mary Williams, a member of the Gwaii Trust Youth Board.

Following this, a presentation was delivered by guest speakers from the Vuntut Development Corporation (VDC) and Air North Airline (AN) who shared their story of creating a unique partnership. They spoke about the socio-economic challenges faced by the remote community of Old Crow (specifically transportation, food costs and employment issues) which motivated VDC to invest in an airline that would not only bring flight services to the remote community but also provide a source of income. The Vuntut Development Corporation and Air North worked together to develop a partnership model that would best serve the interests of both the airline and the community, including an increased number of flights to remote locations, lower fares and the ability to expand Air North's service provision.

After the presentations, the forum participants divided into working groups and were asked to discuss issues and opportunities on Haida Gwaii within various sectors. These sectors included:

- Forestry
- Fisheries/Marine Economy
- Technology/Knowledge Economy
- Education/Capacity Building
- Energy
- Tourism/Recreation
- Research & Development
- Governance & Management
- Small business retail
- Food & Domestic Product Development
- Health/Community Services

In the afternoon, the participants broke into small groups once more, this time self-selecting an industry or sector they wanted to discuss in more detail and prioritizing issues that could be addressed in the short and long term.



High School Workshops - An Overview

Working with teachers at Queen Charlotte Secondary School, two workshops were conducted on October 31 with a grade 11 and a grade 12 class. A local graphic artist collaborated with the Gwaii Trust team to design and facilitate the workshops. The students formed small groups and were asked to imagine their 'ideal' Haida Gwaii in 2025, as well as the type of employment they envisioned for themselves. They drew their responses and attached them to a large, blank landscape of Haida Gwaii. This graffiti-like depiction of their ideas was then used as a starting point for discussion.



Presentation of Results

i. Forum Results

ROUND 1 (morning)

The following responses from small working groups were based on the following questions:

- *What economic development area do you think is most important to address? Do you have specific activities or actions that need to occur both in the short and longer term?*

Sector	Ideas and Opportunities
Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable, island ownership • Hire local companies • Secondary manufacturing/processing critical • Value-added forest products (e.g., use “waste wood”,

	<p>reclaimed forestry products)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem Based Management critical, will benefit in the long term • Need to control forestry policy and management • Haida Gwaii branding • Links to transportation, issues with barges • Make Port Clements feel more like a community than a camp (build families) • Support forestry-based entrepreneurs • Assess where the market is going with respect to exporting, processing and manufacturing
<p>Fisheries/Marine Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value-added fisheries opportunities (e.g., salmon skin leather) • Fish cannery (e.g., custom canning, high value, high quality) • Develop a Haida Gwaii brand • Promote delivery to Haida Gwaii processors • Potential for seal products/industry • Possibility of a fisheries cooperative • Celebrate successes and grow businesses (e.g., Haida Wild, changes at Albion) • Increase number of private businesses owned on-island • Explore opportunities for partnerships • Respect need for food sources (local fishing opportunities) • Consider shellfish aquaculture • Quota allocations through CHN – focus on local opportunities
<p>Technology/Knowledge Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve internet – fiber optics running length of island to meet 21st century standards • Better communication/internet technology will promote business opportunities • Important in terms of accessing education and using outside training resources • Internet critical for connecting to families off-island • Enable online conferences • Allows people to work remotely and live on-island (e.g., designers, contractors)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess needs for investments in improved technology • Functioning broadband network critical for economic development in all sectors • Attract talented people back to Haida Gwaii by providing increased internet capacity and cell phone coverage
Education/Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build entrepreneurial abilities on-island, training in small business management • Train local guides for forestry, tourism etc. • Fair hiring process • Support applicants (e.g., preparation for interviews etc.) • Trades programs • On-island training and planning • Target youth training, apprenticeship opportunities • Build transferable skills • Increase awareness for local funding/support • Build capacity to ensure gender equality in resource management/resource industry positions (e.g., females in logging) • Increase marine training/develop marine program • High school – importance of learning outside, alternative education for those who don't fit the traditional school system • Balance university learning with experience (go outside of the box) • Retain/increase returning youth - 60% statistic is shocking from high school workshops (percentage who say they do not plan to return to Haida Gwaii after high school) • Youth have energy – engage them, they are the future • Increase number of youth attending local schools • Focus on developing innovative education programs • Acupressure school on-island • Exchange programs – spread the word about Haida Gwaii • HG Higher Education Society increases younger demographic (but needs funding for administration, needs to become self-sufficient)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on increasing older demographic • Inventory existing skills • Educate island population to be more self-sufficient • Increased incentives for post-secondary training/education (e.g., funding for tuition and living costs, awards) • Value of Haida immersion • Diversify training – all sectors need trained individuals • Consider international student program – bring new students (and possibly their families later on) • Link training to job opportunities on-island (place for HG youth to return and have jobs) • Train people to do jobs that they can do here remotely for people off-island
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholesale fuel depot • Interest in alternative energy, link to core community values • Implement HG Energy Strategy • Consider joint partnerships • Link to job opportunities in the energy sector • Affordable energy – the more we save, the more we have to spend in the community • Need for transmission line between HG and mainland (both for energy and internet) • Island investment in renewable/sustainable energy sources, need to get off diesel (e.g., Bloom Box that converts sewage to energy, conversion of plastics to energy technologies, wind, solar)
Tourism/Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors come to connect with the land • Important to support small business tourism enterprises • Build local Haida Gwaii brand • Build on Haida culture – protect and share stories – cultural tourism opportunities (international markets), art tours for visitors • Manage tourism development appropriately – will result in more visitors, revenue in the longer term • Scuba diving potential • Offer mini (affordable) cruises around HG

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to other regions (Alaska) – tourism circle • Provide higher-end tourism opportunities • Ecotourism potential – reach out to international markets, fishing, hiking, kayaking • Research/Education-based tourism – e.g., Laskeek Bay, HG Higher Ed Society • Build tourism around natural environment (educate about value, build on uniqueness) • Tourism based around both Haida and Settler history/culture • Access to walking trails for all ages (e.g., access to the West Coast, cabins on trails like in New Zealand, have students be a part of development) • Grow environmental recreation opportunities all over HG • Recognize link between tourism development and transportation (also benefits other sectors and small businesses) • Focus on family-based tourism opportunities • Need for more infrastructure • Promote HG as a retreat destination (e.g., yoga/artist retreats, corporate retreats) • Make towns appealing with diverse services (e.g., local brewery) • Tourism operators need to collaborate more to solve issues that affect them • Develop tourism packages which include all components (transportation, accommodation, entertainment etc.)
<p>Governance and Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for one all-island unifying body • Build comfortable, fair governance system • Many collaborative partnerships already in place • Cooperation between communities and better planning • Connect north/south communities • Youth symposium/youth assembly very important – educates and connects youth • Youth Boards of Directors very valuable – builds skills • Recognize municipal restrictions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Island protocol table needs more resources – agreements need to be revisited (but not basic principles) and communities need to reconnect, build island unity • Gwail Trust – invest in each community, allow for each community to use as they need, report on how funds were used (also retain overarching programs) • Effective management will require partnerships with multiple industries (including businesses based off-island) • Include economy in governance (link business and income to distribution of wealth in the community for the benefit of everyone on-island) • Decision-making must be based on-island • Transparency in elections and decision-making
Small Business/Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need business and administrative training (e.g., accounting) • Marketing important (Love HG most successful) • Educational partnerships to train entrepreneurs in small business • Encourage youth to take opportunities • Examine imports and see if we can produce things locally • Need to consider what local resources are appropriate for development by small business • Local control of equipment/technology that supports small business and local events (e.g., music festival rental of off-island equipment) • Need more local restaurants • Link entrepreneurial opportunities/ideas with local values (organization to do this?) • Assist with marketing and finding niche markets (collaborate and partner to reach high-end markets) • Support existing local businesses and have more effective local networking • Make seed money available and used as leverage for other funding sources • Put knowledgeable people in decision making roles
Food Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of local food and self-sufficiency, produce what we consume as locally as possible • Opportunities for food cooperative (co-operative food

	label, value added)
Health/Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of healthy local population • Healing treatment centre, alternative medicines • More people = more services (e.g., dental services) • Mental health is important, needs resources and increased support • Create healing retreat/destination • All-island infrastructure (e.g., swimming pools) • Local health treatment is important (off-island care is expensive, results in loss of work etc.), retain professionals, co-owning expensive medical equipment • Need sewage treatment plant for communities • Tax that is specific to HG local economy so that businesses automatically contribute to the economy • Reduced transportation costs are good for local citizens and businesses • Accessible/affordable housing for renters and owners – a lot of summer homes, need property managers on-island to assist people to open up their homes; get rid of run-down houses • Recreational Centre is important (facilities to retain families)
Art and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art crawls successful • Have more local events • Support/encouragement for local artists and artisans • Consideration of cultural needs when making decisions on Haida Gwaii
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferry cost is prohibitive (fees for empty trailers leaving HG?) • Consider island-owned ferry service, possibly partner with other First Nations along the coast • Consider business partnerships for alternative ferry service, look at alternative business models (e.g. water taxi) • Transportation critical – “Port of Haida Gwaii” (Port Clements) • Better and affordable airplane service (creative routing if necessary – e.g., Rupert, Port Hardy, Hydaburg)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for an ocean-going tug (locally-based essential service) • Need for local control of transportation services • Explore barge option to reduce cost of product transportation • Car rental opportunities important (e.g., cars-to-go or car co-op) • Consider relationship between airline and ferries in terms of economic development
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of self-sufficiency • Partnerships important – link to community needs/vision, outside experience is critical • Importance of mentoring • Explore manufacturing opportunities • Need for (external) investment – see as advantage, not threat • Consider role of government economic support • Consider where profits go, who benefits from revenue • Consider employment/jobs off-island for residents – have something owned on HG but operated elsewhere • Recognize accomplishments, changes over last decade • Equal opportunities for all sectors (consider interconnectivity, interdependence between sectors) • Fewer compromises – do what is needed for the islands – incredible local potential • Market to people who used to live here to come back (job opportunities) • Mail service is declining – need to improve • Late night store openings would be appealing to others (draw people here) • Connect seniors (e.g., seniors games) • Haida owned and operated partnerships • Recruitment not a problem, focus on retention • Reinvent definition of “wealth” on HG (e.g., full freezers, clean environment); reinvent economy on island terms • Charge travel tax at ferry and airports • Balance economic growth with lifestyle pace • Work together to develop economy that enables

	people to make a livelihood while caring for the land and culture
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ROUND 2 (afternoon)

The following responses from small working groups were based on the following questions:

- Please reflect on what has been proposed from the morning session. What did you like and why?
- What else would you add to the list that is missing?
- Please identify as a group what you think are the 3 key actions that should be addressed in both the short and longer term

Sector	Priority Actions
Forestry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secondary manufacturing processing 2. Local training (e.g., retraining within industry, cost of training) 3. Creating local business
Fisheries/Marine Economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Haida Gwaii branding/value-added processing (e.g., seafood products incl. kelp culture, retooling fish processing plants) 2. Importance of mentoring to build capacity (youth linked to fishermen, plant employment, local training) 3. Access and allocation (community quota, cooperatives)
Technology/Knowledge Economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gwaii Tel – increase fiber optic cable on island
Energy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnership across all communities (collaboration); build on existing plans/strategies 2. Non-profit opportunities
Education/Capacity Building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business administration/finance – basis for all types of employment 2. Mentorship – on the job, school programs 3. Funding/General Incentives for post-secondary education – living allowances and tuition/books; housing for students on HG and off-island for post-secondary students

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Training for mature population 5. Destination tourism and education (e.g., HG Higher Education) – expand to marine
Tourism/Recreation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing a tourism board (all-island) with funding/resources – build on former strategies 2. Branding and marketing 3. Infrastructure and transportation – on and off-island 4. Support for small businesses
Governance and Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect north and south communities (e.g., remove long distance phone charges; youth sports event) 2. Different all-islands protocol – look at a different governance model (work by consensus) 3. Support youth (e.g., youth board of directors, mentorship)
Small business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire a facilitator to drive local initiatives (e.g., regulations re food production/sale) 2. Mentorship and funding – youth, unemployed, aspiring entrepreneurs (cost sharing with Gwaii Trust) 3. Marketing – both on and off-island; support for Farmer’s Market; Haida Gwaii labelling (e.g., food, services) 4. Small business forum – connect and promote resource workers to small businesses and clients 5. Reduce cost of products – link to transportation
Health and Community Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create incentives to retain health service professionals (promotional materials about living on HG) 2. Improve access to off-island health services (e.g., funding for escorts, pairing people for travel) 3. Utilizing existing tourism assets for medical emergencies (e.g., tourism/health helicopter sharing) 4. Pool! 5. All-island mental health youth coordinator – holistic approach to youth health

Arts and Culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an island-wide Arts and Culture Strategy (incl. socio-economic analysis and market analysis) led by artists and art organizations 2. Develop partnerships with Haida Heritage Centre and other major arts organizations for core funding opportunities 3. Expansion of existing Gwaii Trust arts funding program (led by broad array of artists on Haida Gwaii) – remember why Gwaii Trust was created
Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local control of own ferry 2. Ancillary support services for ferry 3. Local control of own airline 4. Transportation subsidies for local residents

ii. High school workshop results

Both the grade 11 and 12 classes ranked recreation as the highest priority for Haida Gwaii in 2025. They wanted to see more hiking trails, a recreation centre and a casino. While the grade 12 class ranked small business and health/community services next (ideas included a hair salon, car dealership and daycare), the grade 11 class chose technology as their second highest priority for 2025. They envisioned a Haida Gwaii energy company and cell phone service everywhere (see results below). A poll taken at the end of each workshop revealed that 60% of students believed they would not return to Haida Gwaii once they left the islands after graduation from high school.

Grade 11

Number of Ideas Generated	Sector	Examples of Ideas			
1	Transportation	Better public transportation			
4	Infrastructure	Mall	Covered areas and covered bus stops	Recycling and garbage cans everywhere	Boat launch
5	Technology / knowledge	Cell service everywhere	Electricity company	Electric cars	

8	Tourism / recreation	Hiking trails	Recreation center	Swimming pool	Dance academy
2	Small business	24 hr. store	Video game store		
1	Food	Starbucks/Tim Horton's, etc.			
1	Health community services	Dentist			
1	Energy	Electricity company locally owned			
2	Other	No Flex Zone			

Grade 12

Number of Ideas Generated	Sector	Examples of Ideas			
1	Transportation	Public transportation			
2	Infrastructure	Improved highway	Sidewalks	Bike lanes	Bridge to Sandspit
1	Technology / Knowledge	Cell service	Internet		
1	Education	University of Haida Gwaii			
9	Tourism/recreation	Sleeping beauty ski hill	Casino	Bar	Recreation center (bowling, billiards)
5	Small business	Hair salon	Volkswagen dealerships		
2	Food	Tim Horton's	Starbucks		
3	Health & community services	Daycare			
2	Culture	Welcoming totem poles			