



2006

The Great Bear Rainforest is saved from destruction

Ten years of difficult, dangerous and at times heartbreaking work delivers an agreement that put one third of Canada's Great Bear Rainforest under full protection and binds logging companies to a strict ecosystem-based management system for the rest.

THE THREAT

It's one of the very few remaining temperate rainforests in the world. It's home to grizzly, rare white "Spirit" bears and wild salmon, as well as one-thousand year old cedar trees and ancient spruce. It's one of Canada's most beautiful forests. Yet to those in charge of it, the Great Bear Rainforest was no more than 'Timber Supply Area 43,' with millions of hectares of ancient forest earmarked for felling.

THE GREENPEACE WAY

The campaign began in 1997, when environmentalists first coined the term Great Bear Forest and Greenpeace named the five major corporations doing 80% of the damage 'Rainforest Ravagers'. What followed was ten years of campaigning. Thousands of activists from around the world added pressure: some sent emails, some stood on the blockades, some voted against destruction with their wallets. Some were beaten, some were sued, some were arrested. Over time, the campaign to save the Great Bear Forest, which saw environmental organisations from around the world working together, turned into a mass movement that kept gaining momentum and media attention.

THE CAMPAIGN

Greenpeace activists blocked remote logging operations, closed the roads and prevented workers from entering and logs from leaving. In 1997 Greenpeace Executive Director Thilo Bode addressed the United Nations about the plight of the forest, just as Canadian Police moved in to break up the protests. Two Greenpeace ships, the *Moby Dick* and the *Arctic Sunrise*, were in action. At the same time, a markets campaign was in full swing in Europe and the US, targeting the customers of the logging firms. In 1999 this was supplemented with a campaign targeting the banking industry. Major banks began to divest their shareholdings in the companies involved. The combined result of this work was a very uncertain business climate indeed: and the industry came to the table.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT

The final agreement was negotiated between environmental groups, First Nations, the British Columbian Government and logging companies (some of which were kept at the table by resumed Greenpeace action). The forest's protection is not just one of the greatest environmental victories in Canadian history. It also serves as a global model for possible solutions to land use conflicts that arise out of concerns for social justice for indigenous people and their right to their traditional territories, environmental concerns over large scale industrial logging and the need to provide sustainable livelihoods for people who inhabit those threatened lands. Today, the Great Bear Rainforest is one of the largest and best protected rainforests in the world.

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