

LÍLWAT NATION FORESTRY POLICY 2024

A supplement to the Lilwat Land Use Plan



Pal7míntwal i ucwalmícwa múta7 ti tmicw
The land and people are together as one



LÍŁWAT NATION FORESTRY POLICY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our deep appreciation to the members of the Project Committee that guided the development of this policy. Thank you to Vanessa Dan, Justin Green, Bobbi Jo Leo, Hayden Leo, Arnold (AJ) Nelson, Lucinda Phillips, and Helena Edmonds for your valuable contributions, direction, and oversight. We also thank the Lands and Resources staff, Lisa Pedrini and Roxanne Joe for their assistance throughout this process.

INTRODUCTION

We are the Líłwat Nation. We have an ancestral connection to the forests within our territory. Our culture guides our responsibilities as stewards and caretakers for the resources that the land provides us. This is a responsibility we continue to uphold and adapt to changing times.

Recent history of colonization alienated us from our lands. The Indian Act, the reservation system, residential schools, and other systematic colonial acts of oppression have created deep and lasting trauma for our people, our lands, and our community. Yet our resistance remains strong.

With increasing pressure from external developments and outdated government policies, we are taking back our rightful place on our lands. We have our own Lands and Resources Department that asserts and exercises Líłwat inherent title and rights throughout Líłwat Territory. We have our own forestry company, Líłwat Forestry Ventures, which is the primary operator on Líłwat lands, and which also provides forestry services to other communities. We are rebuilding our governing structures to provide for the needs of our community.

Amidst the hard work of nation re-building, we are facing new challenges arising from the global impacts of climate change. Forest fires, droughts, and unprecedented weather systems are putting a strain on the health and well-being of our forests, as well as on the plants, water, fish, and other wildlife they sustain. Yet we are also in a time of reconciliation, where the recognition of Indigenous peoples' inherent rights is gaining legal ground in Canada and British Columbia. New opportunities are arising for Indigenous peoples to be leaders in the management of the forests within their territories.

This policy is a guiding document, grounded in our traditional laws, our cultural teachings, and our values, and developed with input from the community, to help navigate the new challenges and opportunities for Líłwat Nation forestry management.

PURPOSE

This document was created to update the policy directives in *Lil'wat Land Use Plan (2006)* with respect to Lílwat Nation management of forest resources and forestry practices, and to address the current political pressure to protect old growth forests. New policy directives were needed to respond to the provincial recommendations to establish Old Growth Deferral Areas throughout Lílwat Territory. Work was required to understand community perspectives and goals for forestry and articulate these goals into management directions.

The vision, goals and directions outlined in this policy are in alignment with the core values expressed in the *Lílwat Land Use Plan (2006)* and will replace the management direction for Forest Resources and Forestry found in the *Lílwat Land Use Plan*. The management directions within this policy have been developed with respect for the intention of the *Lílwat Land Use Plan* to be a living document that evolves over time. Respect for Nt'ákmen (Our Way), Ucwalmícwts (Lílwat language), and other traditions, cultural knowledge, and practices continue to guide us in finding new and innovative approaches to sustain our forests, lands, and resources.

BACKGROUND

Lílwat people have lived within Lílwat Territory since time out of mind. Our legal title to our lands and rights to self-government have never been surrendered. Reconciliation between our Nation, Canada and British Columbia has not yet been achieved, but we continue to assert our inherent right to manage our lands and resources.

Lílwat Nation's strategic approaches for managing forestry within its territory have included:

- engaging in consultations and negotiating agreements with the province and private companies,
- creating its own forestry company to operate over as much of Lílwat Territory as possible, and
- developing its own resource management policies, including the *Lílwat Land Use Plan*.

The *Lílwat Land Use Plan* was adopted in 2006 and identifies Lílwat perspectives and goals for the management of lands and resources throughout the nearly 800,000 hectares of Lílwat Territory. It includes high-level management directions, strategies, and actions for forestry.

At the time of developing the *Lílwat Land Use Plan*, forestry was mainly controlled by large, external corporations that provided little benefits to the Lílwat community. Archaeological sites and cultural use areas were overlooked and often damaged or destroyed from forestry development activities. Lílwat sacred places were not recognized or protected under provincial laws.

There has been a significant shift in land management in Lílwat Territory since 2006. Lílwat Nation's consistent efforts to increase its control over its Territory has contributed to the protection of archaeological sites and sacred places. Approximately 60% of Lílwat Territory forested land base is now protected from forest harvesting. Furthermore, Lílwat Nation now owns 76% of the forest tenure areas in Lílwat Territory, making it the largest forestry operator on its Territory.

This Lílwat Nation Forestry Policy provides updated vision, goals and management directions for forestry that reflect the current context of forestry management for Lílwat Nation.



PROCESS

Each step in the development of this policy document was guided by a Project Committee, made up of Lílwat Nation community representatives, and supported by the Lands and Resources Department staff.

The policy was developed through three stages of work. The first stage was conducting background research, focus groups, and key informant interviews to gather information about forestry and the current challenges facing Lílwat Nation forestry management. A review of other First Nations forestry practices was also done to understand other practices. The results were presented in a Lílwat Nation Forestry Current Reality Report. From this first stage, draft policy areas and goals were developed.

The second stage was community engagement. A variety of activities were undertaken to reach out to and receive input from the Lílwat community. Information about how people use the forests and what they would like to see improved was gathered through on-line and paper surveys and “pop-ups” in the community. A community open house sought input on draft goals for forest management. A workshop was held with Chiefs and Council and with the Lílwat Nation Land Use Referral Committee to gather input on their concerns and desires for forestry

and receive feedback on the draft goals. A record of community engagement efforts and input is presented in an engagement summary report.

The final stage was the writing of this policy document. Drafts were vetted through Lands and Resources Department staff and the Project Committee and reviewed by the Land Use Referral Committee. The policy document received final approval and adoption by Lílwat Nation Chiefs and Council on XX, 2024.

VISION

Forestry for Lílwat Nation will be guided by the following vision statement:

Ntákmén (our way) sustains Lílwat people, culture and economy for future generations and guides how forest resources are accessed and used.

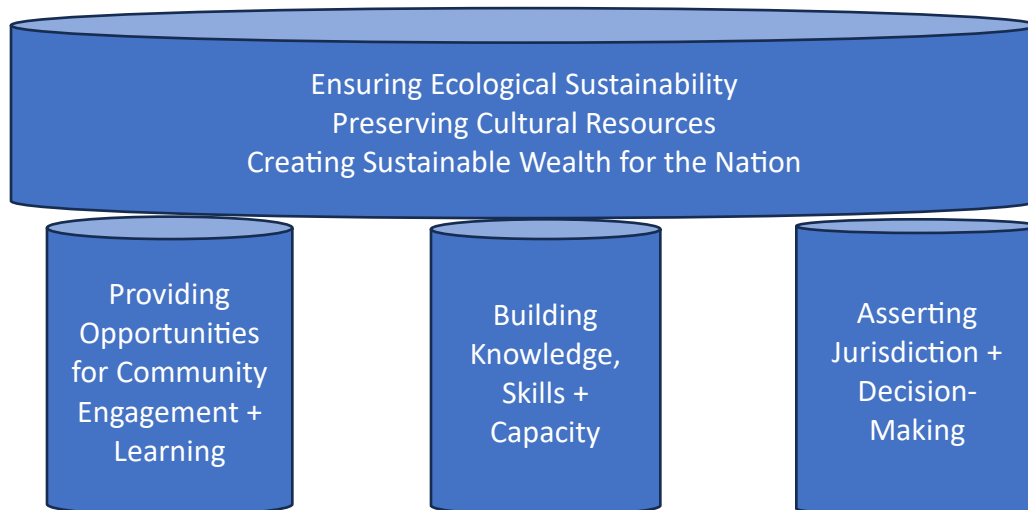
GOALS

Lílwat Nation has identified six goal areas for forest resource management in Lílwat Territory:

- Ensuring Ecological Sustainability
- Preserving Cultural Resources
- Creating Sustainable Wealth for the Nation
- Providing Opportunities for Community Engagement and Learning
- Building Knowledge, Skills, and Capacity
- Asserting Jurisdiction and Decision-Making

Ensuring Ecological Sustainability, Preserving Cultural Resources and Creating Sustainable Wealth for the Nation are goals that reflect what Lílwat people want from forestry. Each are distinct but not separate from the other. For example, ecological sustainability means sustaining a healthy and vibrant ecosystem in the forests while also supporting the preservation of important cultural foods, materials, and medicines for people to gather.

The goals of *Providing Opportunities for Community Engagement and Learning, Building Knowledge, Skills and Capacity, and Asserting Jurisdiction and Decision-making* articulate how Lílwat Nation can best move toward achieving their vision for forestry and are the building blocks for achieving the other three goals.



Goal 1: Ensuring Ecological Sustainability

The goal of *Ensuring Ecological Sustainability* is to sustain and restore vibrant and healthy ecosystems and ensure long-lasting biodiversity within Lílwat Territory forests. This means practicing forestry that is guided by traditional Lílwat knowledge, uses sustainable forest harvesting models, and that is informed by current understandings of climate change impacts. Traditional teachings, such as kúłtsam̓ (take what you need and use all that you take) should be followed. Forests play a critical role in mitigating the climate crisis due to their capacity to absorb and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping to offset greenhouse gas emissions. Research on climate change impacts is necessary to effectively operate in our changing environment with increasing risks of floods, fires, landslides, and droughts. Lílwat can draw from traditional knowledge to address current challenges today and employ sustainable forestry best practices to ensure its forest management practices are ecologically sound.

Management Directions:

- Use the concepts of kúłtsam̓ (take what you need and use all that you take) and kúłantsút (make something for oneself) to guide how we sustain and enhance the health of the forest ecosystem, including plants, fungi, water resources and wildlife habitat.
- Increase “eyes on the land” through the stewardship work of the Skél7awlh and build a Guardian Program to enforce Lílwat policies.
- Inform forestry planning and practices with climate change knowledge.
- Design forestry practices to maximize carbon reduction.
- Control harmful invasive species.
- Use forestry practices that improve the long-term health of the forest and ecosystem.
 - Identify clear plans for restoring and supporting the diverse forest ecology of the harvested cut block.

- Employ strategies to keep forests clean and free from garbage and waste.
- Protect rare and endangered botanical resources within Lílwat Territory.

Goal 2: Preserving Cultural Resources

Lílwat culture is deeply connected to the land. Placenames, stories, and legends throughout Lílwat Territory provide teachings about who we are and where we come from. Archaeological sites shed light on how and where our ancestors lived, camped, hunted, fished, gathered, and practiced ceremonies. These physical landmarks are animated through our oral histories. *Preserving Cultural Resources* for Lílwat Nation means preserving our cultural knowledge, protecting archaeological sites, and maintaining and enhancing the foods, medicines and materials from the forests that sustain our traditions and connections to the land to ensure these cultural traditions and knowledge are available for future generations.

Management Directions:

- Respect and draw from n̓ákmen (Our Way), Lílwat knowledge and cultural values to inform forestry practices.
- Manage and re-introduce traditional medicinal and edible plants into Lílwat Territory.
- Continue to seek, record, and protect archaeological sites and other places of cultural value, including traditional use areas, found within forested areas.
- Manage access on the land to protect cultural resources and practices.
- Maintain and restore hunting, fishing, and gathering areas.

Goal 3: Creating Sustainable Wealth for the Nation

Forestry has created important financial benefits for the Nation over the years that have been used for housing, community amenities, employment, and training. However, cultural knowledge and access to the land is an equally valued measure of wealth for the community. The goal of *Creating Sustainable Wealth for the Nation* means using forestry to attain economic, environmental, social, and cultural wealth for Lílwat people.

Management Directions:

- Conduct forestry in a manner that creates employment, supports cultural knowledge, contributes to climate action, and provides a sustainable revenue source for the Nation.
- Use new sustainable harvesting practices and models, such as silviculture that manage forests for the widest possible range of values (including timber and non-timber values), harvesting of botanical resources for traditional medicines and food security, or creating value-added products to generate revenue.
- Support Lílwat people to have greater access to, and knowledge of, the land and forest resources.
- Find opportunities for forestry practices to generate greater cultural knowledge and values.

Goal 4: Providing Opportunities for Community Engagement and Learning

Forestry cannot be managed in isolation from the Lílwat community. Open and respectful communication about the planning and implementation of forestry practices is key. Community engagement can provide valuable knowledge and input on forest management decisions as well as create opportunities for the community to learn about forestry practices. The goal of *Providing Opportunities for Community Engagement and Learning* requires shared responsibilities among Lílwat Nation administration, Lílwat citizens, forestry companies and the public at large. The Nation has a responsibility to provide opportunities to the community for engagement in the development of forestry policies. Lílwat citizens have a responsibility to engage in these opportunities, be informed, and share their knowledge. Collaborative forestry endeavours, like community forests, are designed to regularly seek input from the communities they represent. Forestry companies must communicate with Lílwat Nation and be prepared to provide information about their forestry plans with sufficient time and opportunities for community engagement. And finally, Lílwat Nation forestry decisions and decision-making procedures need to be shared with the public. This will contribute to public understanding of Lílwat Nation's authority over forestry.

Management Directions:

- Identify ongoing and regular times and ways to engage the Lílwat community in the forestry planning process.
- Provide opportunities for the public to become aware of our forestry practices and decisions.
- Engage Lílwat citizens in identifying sacred places and places for uses such as hunting, gathering and recreation.
- Continue to build and sustain trust of forestry practices with the community through transparency, understanding, and respect.
- Use Lílwat terminology where possible for communications with the community.

Goal 5: Building Knowledge, Skills, and Capacity

The goal of *Building Knowledge, Skills and Capacity* is to create opportunities and provide support for Lílwat people to be educated and trained to work in the forest industry and land management. This includes education in Lílwat traditional knowledge and practices for forest management. Working toward this goal will not only increase employment opportunities for Lílwat people but will also increase Lílwat leadership and control over forest management decisions and support the use of traditional knowledge in forest planning and practices.

Management Directions:

- Provide opportunities and support for Lílwat people to have the training, skills, and expertise to be employed in the forest industry and land management.
- Incorporate traditional knowledge into forestry education and training.
- Increase capacity and knowledge to strengthen Lílwat Nation decision-making.

Goal 6: Asserting Jurisdiction and Decision-Making

Lílwat Nation has inherent governing rights and title to its lands and resources, including forest resources. The goal of *Asserting Jurisdiction and Decision-Making* focusses on Lílwat Nation developing clear plans and procedures to more effectively guide forestry management practices, and to undertake strategic efforts for the recognition and enforcement of Lílwat inherent rights to forestry management.

Management Directions:

- Pursue Lílwat Nation's full control over forestry within Lílwat Territory.
- Create clarity and certainty about where forest harvesting can and cannot occur.
- Use Lílwat mapping, regular data collection and field assessments to inform forestry planning and practices.
- Develop effective decision-making guidelines and provide sufficient information to the Lílwat Referral Committee to make complex forestry decisions.
- Seek local, provincial, and federal government support for Lílwat policy directives through government action and legislative alignment.



MANAGEMENT OF OLD GROWTH FORESTS

Old growth forests are forests that have unique ecological and cultural values. As a general guideline, old growth within a coastal ecosystem are trees over 250 years old and within an interior ecosystem are trees over 140 years old. Lílwat Territory includes both ecosystem types. Furthermore, in some areas there may be mature forests that do not meet these specific criteria but still hold important values for wildlife, cultural uses, and biodiversity.

Lílwat Nation has a wholistic and long-term perspective for the management of old growth forests within its Territory. Ecological and cultural values and the long-term health of the forests should be the primary consideration when managing all forests, including old growth.

Management of old growth forest includes sustaining forests within each ecosystem-type throughout Lílwat Territory to support the overall health of all forests. This includes managing second growth forests to become healthy old growth forests in the future. Consideration of age, density and size of trees is needed when determining management strategies for old growth forests.

All of the management directions outlined in this policy should be applied to all forests, including old growth forests. Furthermore, the following are a list of specific directions for the management old growth.

- Assess the health of the old growth that has been protected within Lílwat Territory and implement management strategies as needed to sustain the forest health.
- Determine what percentage of old growth needs protection to ensure healthy forests in all ecosystem-types throughout Lil'wat Territory.
 - Identify second growth forests that can be managed to become future old growth to sustain this percentage for the long term.
- Ensure there are contiguous old growth stands for wildlife corridors and other cultural values.
- Regularly assess where and how much old growth remains throughout Lílwat Territory to support a wholistic and long-term approach to old growth management.
- Collect data on the location of big trees and the corresponding ecological values to assess for protection.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation mechanisms are provided in the attached Procedures Documents. Procedures should be reviewed and amended as needed to ensure they are functional and serving the purpose of implementing Lílwat Nation Forestry Policy vision, goals, and management directions.