

Ancient Forest Alliance

2023
Activity Report
& Financials



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Mission Statement

The Ancient Forest Alliance (AFA) is a registered charitable organization working to protect endangered old-growth forests and ensure a sustainable, second-growth forest industry in BC.

We are BC's leading organization working to secure science-based, province-wide legislation to protect ancient forests for the sake of wild species, fresh water, the climate, tourism, Indigenous cultures, and communities.

Introduction

Since AFA's inception in 2010, there hasn't been a year that has seen more progress toward protecting old-growth forests in BC than in 2023. While the fight is far from over, our efforts have helped bring about major political commitments and deliveries that have the potential to help keep ancient forests standing for generations to come.

The year started strong when BC Premier David Eby committed to protecting 30% of lands in the province by 2030. This move will essentially double the current extent of legislated protected areas across BC, adding an additional area about four times the size of Vancouver Island!

Later in the fall, a series of massive announcements arrived from both the BC and federal governments, including a \$300-million conservation financing mechanism that we've been long pushing for (hooray!) and the BC Nature Agreement, a \$1-billion federal-provincial funding package to support the protection of old-growth forests through the creation of new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). Included in this package is the \$100 million+ BC Old-Growth Fund focused specifically on saving endangered, "big-tree" old-growth forests.

Finally, 2023 concluded with the release of the BC government's draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework (BEHF). This framework is intended to prioritize biodiversity and ecological health above resource extraction in forestry and land-use decisions. Most importantly, it has the potential to establish protection targets for the most endangered ecosystems in BC.

If the over one billion dollars in conservation financing and the forthcoming BEHF are aimed at protecting the ancient forests that need it the most, they have the capacity to end the nearly 50-year War in the Woods in BC.

***In addition, in 2023, we received charitable status!
This means that your donations are now tax deductible.***

The successes you see in the following pages resulted from the perseverance of Ancient Forest Alliance and our supporters, who played an integral role in propelling us along, whether by donating, sending a message, signing a resolution, or by other ways. We appreciate your support throughout the years and look forward to all we can achieve together in 2024!

Top 5 Campaign Wins of 2023

Significant victories in the world of conservation don't come around every day. When they do, it's the result of years, or even decades, of tireless work. With that in mind, 2023 was a year for the books, where historic milestones rolled in one after another.

At AFA, we believe it's crucial to acknowledge and celebrate progress when it happens and to give credit where credit is due. The latest victories below show that our collective efforts do make a difference, and it's worth our time and energy to keep pushing ahead. So be sure to take a moment to acknowledge just how far we've come with this short summary of five major campaign wins in 2023!

1. Over one billion dollars announced for nature conservation in BC through the BC Nature Agreement.

The highlight of the year was most certainly the \$1.1 billion tripartite BC Nature Agreement announcement from the provincial and federal governments and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC). We used to joke that if we just had a billion dollars, we could finally see ancient forests get the protection they deserve. Well, now it's arrived — the largest provincial funding package in Canadian history for nature conservation! This funding will be vital to support Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and deal with all the various costs of establishing new protected areas, particularly in contested landscapes with high-value “big tree” old-growth forests.

2. \$300-million conservation financing fund launched by the province.

After more than five years of campaigning for this specific goal, in November, the province launched its \$300-million conservation financing mechanism (set to increase over time) to help protect old-growth forests through the creation of new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). Critically, it will also support sustainable economic alternatives to old-growth logging — a key component we relentlessly pushed to have included. We probably asked you to send a message calling for conservation financing about 300 million times, but our collective efforts truly paid off! We're proud at AFA for originally spearheading the call for conservation financing and driving it forward with our partners at the Endangered Ecosystems Alliance (EEA).

Top 5 Campaign Wins of 2023

3. \$100-million+ BC Old-Growth Fund launched to save the most at-risk old-growth forests.

Thanks to the work of MP Patrick Weiler, this federal-provincial funding pot (set to increase to at least \$164 million) is now available to help protect anywhere from 400,000 to 1.3 million hectares of the grandest, rarest, and oldest stands in the Coastal and Inland Rainforests and the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone. These areas include the spectacular forests you see in all of our photos!

4. Premier David Eby commits to protecting 30% of lands in BC by 2030.

The year started strong shortly after Premier David Eby made this commitment, which will essentially double the current extent of legislated protected areas across BC (an additional area about four times the size of Vancouver Island). It took over a century to reach the first 15%; now, we're set to double that in just seven years! The next priority will be ensuring the standards and permanency of new protected areas are upheld and that they're aimed toward the most endangered areas.



BC Premier David Eby announces the \$1.1 billion dollar BC Nature Agreement to help protect old-growth forests and other endangered ecosystems in BC.

5. Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework is released.

2023 wrapped up with the BC government releasing its draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework. If done correctly, this framework will open the door for a major paradigm shift in conservation: prioritizing saving the most endangered ecosystems via “ecosystem-based targets.” The draft framework aims to put ecological values above timber extraction and other industrial activities across all ministries. There are also plans to appoint a Chief Biodiversity Officer for the province.

Top News Stories in 2023

We were once again able to garner multiple international news stories in 2023, twice making the top story on Apple News! This doesn't happen by chance, however. Crafting accurate and compelling press releases that include high-quality photos and videos from our expeditions is a hallmark of AFA's campaign work, often landing significant coverage in major news outlets.

The Washington Post

['Freak of Nature' is the find of a lifetime for forest explorer](#)

The Independent UK

[Rare tree hunter in Canada finds 'freak of nature' 1,000-year-old cedar](#)

In the summer of 2023, AFA photographer and campaigner TJ Watt located an ancient cedar tree we deemed to be the "most impressive" tree in the country. Watt's images of the tree sparked a universal feeling of awe and wonder among people near and far, garnering coverage in both *The Washington Post* and the *Independent UK*, among many other publications.

The Guardian

[Canada: images of felled ancient tree a 'gut-punch', old-growth experts say](#)

Following a harrowing trip to northern Vancouver Island in the spring of 2023, AFA's TJ Watt and Ian Thomas released a series of photos showing the brutal destruction of an incredible old-growth cedar forest in Quatsino territory. These photos prompted widespread outrage, even catching the attention of *The Guardian*.

Canadian Press

[Poor data hinders B.C. old-growth logging deferrals, advocates say](#)

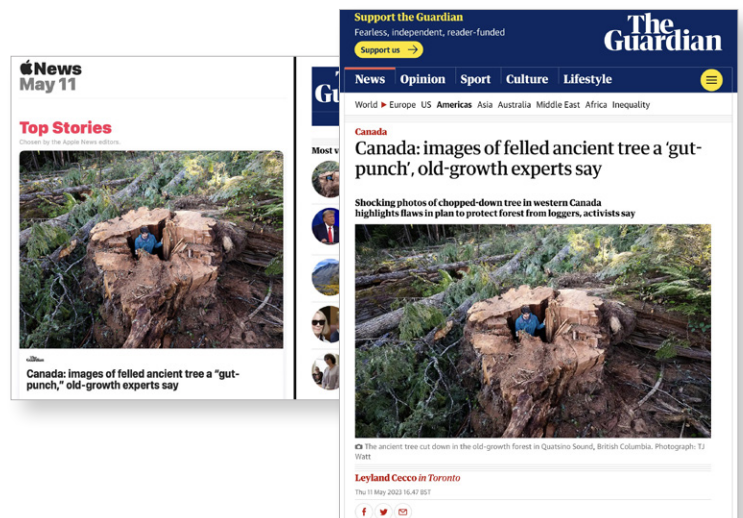
Following a second field trip to Quatsino territory on northern Vancouver Island, we exposed how some at-risk old-growth forests were missed for temporary logging deferral due to BC government mapping and data errors, allowing logging companies to move in and cut them down before they could potentially be set aside.

CHEK News

[B.C. signs 'historic' \\$1B agreement to protect lands and waters](#)

The tripartite BC Nature Agreement between the provincial and federal governments and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) was one of the biggest news stories of the year. This is the largest funding package for nature conservation in Canadian history!

Thanks to your generous support, we continue to embark on field expeditions to explore and document the beauty and destruction of endangered old-growth forests in BC, bringing to life stories that would otherwise go untold.



Top 3 Photos of the Year



Professional photography continues to be one of our greatest communication tools. Here are three of AFA photographer **TJ Watt's** photos that gained the most attention in 2023!

The largest spruce in Canada, the San Joseph Spruce.
Northern Vancouver Island, Quatsino territory.



The Wall – The most impressive tree in Canada.
Flores Island, Ahousaht territory.



Fallen Giants – Old-growth cedar logging.
Northern Vancouver Island, Quatsino territory.

Field Expeditions

In 2023, AFA's TJ Watt and Ian Thomas travelled to some of the farthest corners of Vancouver Island to document the incredible beauty and diversity of old-growth forests and expose the ongoing destruction caused by industrial logging.

Some of the highlight areas we explored include **Flores Island** near Tofino in Ahousaht territory, the **Burman and Muchalaht watersheds** near Gold River in Mowachaht/Muchalaht territory, the **San Josef and Koprino watersheds** near Holberg in Quatsino territory, and the **Klanawa watershed** near Bamfield in Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht territory.



The Wall – an ancient redcedar that's perhaps the most impressive tree in Canada.

Flores Island, Ahousaht territory.



Ahousaht Hereditary Representative,
Tyson Atleo.

Flores Island

Canada's Most Impressive Tree

In the summer of 2023, we released [images](#) and [videos](#) of one of the greatest big tree finds in decades — a monumental redcedar that's perhaps the most impressive tree in Canada, located on Flores Island north of Tofino in Ahousaht territory. First identified by AFA photographer TJ Watt as part of his fieldwork as a National Geographic Explorer, he returned again to further document and highlight the record-breaking tree with Ahousaht Hereditary Representative Tyson Atleo. Making their way through the dense rainforest, they passed many a giant cedar that, on any other day, would have been the star of the show. Finally, what could only be described as a living wall of wood appeared before them, a tree with a trunk diameter of more than 17 ft (5 m) wide at the base and which grows wider as it reaches skyward. Given its size, it is likely well over a thousand years old. Thankfully, due to the incredible Ahousaht Land Use Vision, the majority of the old-growth forests in Ahousaht territory, including where this tree is found, will now be protected through Provincial Conservancies to be legislated by the province. We are grateful for the incredible stewardship the Ahousaht Nation has shown for their lands, both in past and present.

Burman River Valley & Gold River

Salmon Parks

In October 2023, together with our colleagues at Nature-Based Solutions Foundation (NBSF) and Endangered Ecosystems Alliance (EEA), we travelled to Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation (MMFN) territory near Gold River on the west coast of Vancouver Island. There, we met with MMFN members and explored various areas to be protected within their [proposed Salmon Parks](#), an initiative set to safeguard important salmon-bearing watersheds from valley bottoms to mountaintops.

A major highlight was a boat trip to visit the spectacular Burman River watershed. This valley hosts extremely rare valley-bottom old-growth forests of ancient Douglas-fir and Sitka spruce intermixed with enormous bigleaf maples in open glades of luxuriant sword fern. The closest comparison to forests of this nature are areas we've seen in the Olympic National Park in Washington state.

We also explored ancient cedar forests along Muchalaht Lake and the dry Douglas-fir forests on the banks of Gold River, all to be permanently safeguarded under the exciting new Salmon Parks Initiative. We were amazed by the diversity of ecosystems that will be protected here, knitting together rich wetlands, drier upland forests, and magnificent floodplain rainforests under an ecological approach to protection that recognizes the enormous value old-growth forests provide to wild salmon habitat.

AFA and our partners at NBSF and EEA are actively supporting MMFN's Indigenous-led old-growth conservation work. In late 2023, Environment and Climate Change Canada also gave the project a major funding boost of \$15.2 million.



Burman River, Mowachaht/Muchalaht territory.
Vancouver Island, BC.

Quatsino Sound

Big Trees and Giant Stumps

In the summer of 2023, we returned to Quatsino Sound on northwest Vancouver Island in Quatsino territory to explore some of the remaining unprotected old-growth stands and to [document the devastating logging taking place](#). There, we saw vast clearcuts, where entire hillsides had been stripped of their ancient rainforests, forests full of giant cedars where logging was underway, and unprotected groves of towering Sitka spruce supporting some of the most monumental trees we've ever seen, including a pair that reached heights of 280 ft (86 m) tall.

Trips to Quatsino Sound, one of the most remote areas on Vancouver Island, involve thousands of kilometres of travel, navigating labyrinths of logging roads, and full days of rugged bush-whacking. However, they have proved pivotal in exposing some of the most egregious industrial logging practices taking place far from the public eye while showcasing the need to protect the stands of towering old-growth cedar and spruce that still remain. [Photos](#) and [videos](#) from these trips resulted in significant international media coverage.



Hathaway Creek, Quatsino territory.

Godspeed River

Towering Sitka Spruce Stands

Also, in the summer of 2023, we explored a remnant patch of old-growth forest on the floodplain of the Godspeed River in Quatsino territory. This spectacular valley-bottom rainforest is studded with towering pillars of incredible Sitka spruce soaring from delicate gardens of wildflowers and ferns. The monarch of the grove was a towering Sitka spruce that stands 265 ft (81 m) tall and measures 10 ft (3 m) in diameter. This forest is currently unprotected and represents one of the last remaining opportunities to preserve a magnificent river-side ancient forest in a region where virtually none remains.



Godspeed River, Quatsino territory.

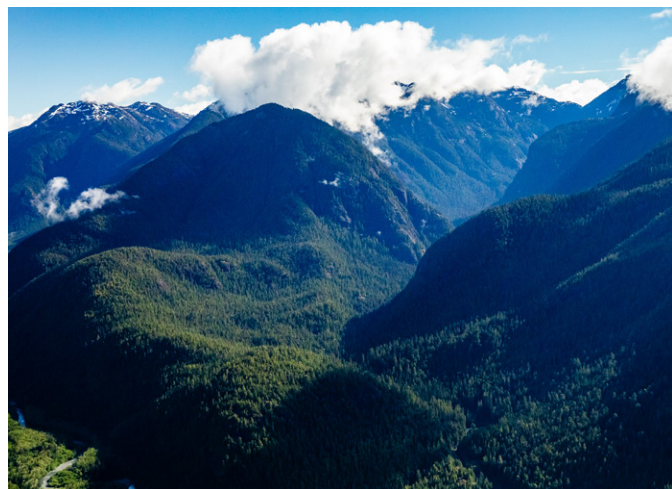
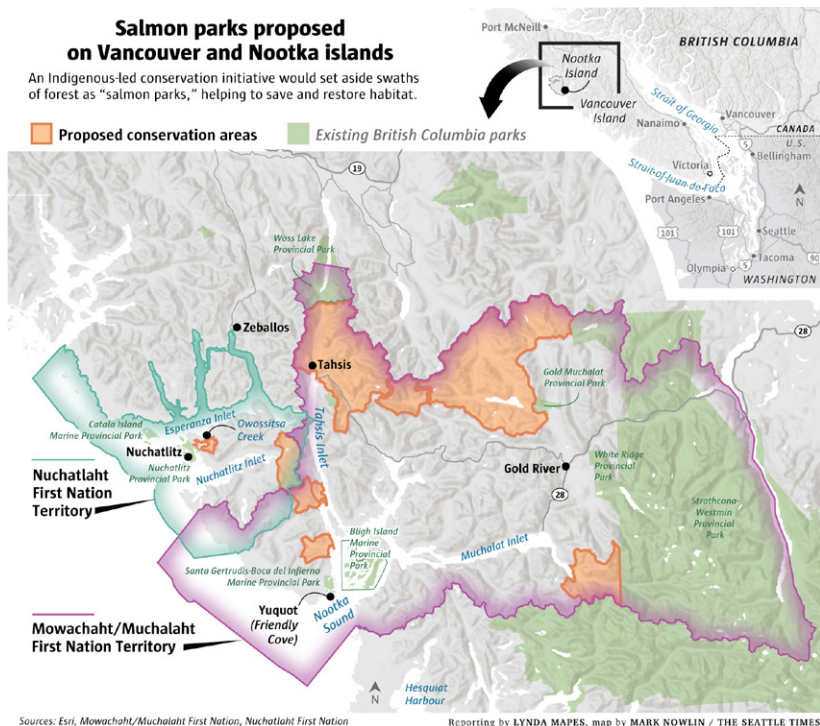
Supporting Indigenous-led Old-Growth Protection

Through the Old-Growth Solutions Initiative (OGSI) — a partnership between Ancient Forest Alliance, the Endangered Ecosystem Alliance (EEA), and the Nature-Based Solutions Foundation (NBSF) — Ancient Forest Alliance continued its support for two significant Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area proposals.

These Indigenous-led conservation initiatives will eventually see over 43,000 hectares (430 km²) of combined old growth protected — an area about four times the size of Vancouver!



Endangered
Ecosystem
Alliance



McKelvie Valley – Tahsis, BC, Mowachaht/Muchalaht territory.

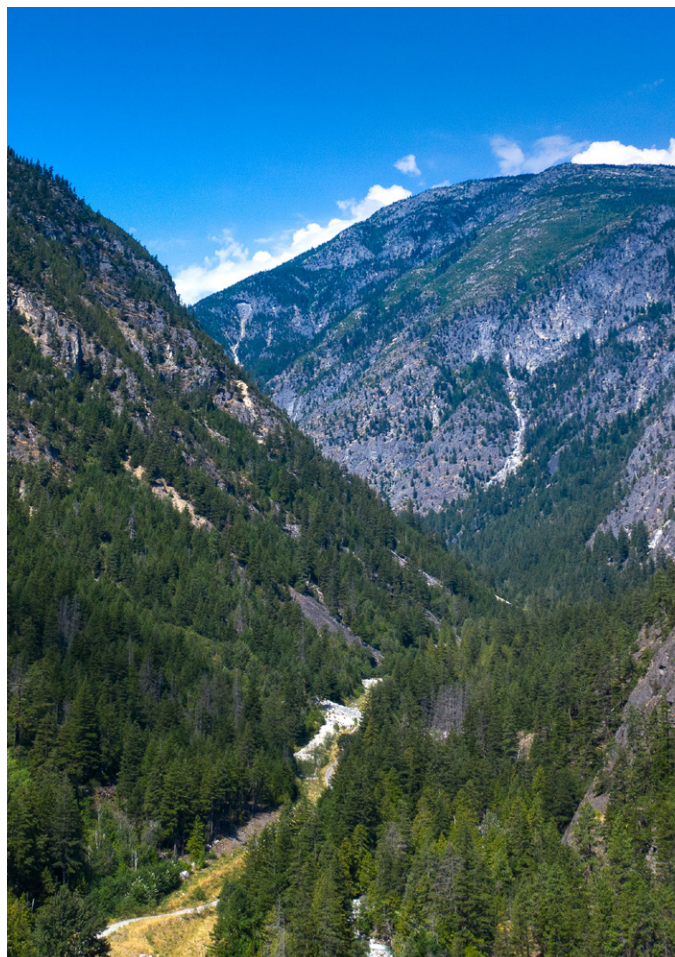


Salmon swim up river during the fall spawning run.

Kanaka Bar Indian Band

We have continued to expand our [partnership](#) with the Kanaka Bar Indian Band in the Fraser Canyon to help support their T'eqt'aqtn Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) which will protect some of the most diverse old-growth ecosystems found anywhere in BC, home to 42 species at risk.

We are working to provide key support from start to finish to develop and establish the T'eqt'aqtn IPCA. This includes funding stewardship initiatives and capacity for land-use planning, recruiting large-scale philanthropic funding, and purchasing private lands of high conservation and cultural value to be given back to the community under conservation agreements. We also worked to raise public awareness through widespread social and news media campaigns while pressuring the provincial and federal governments to support the IPCA with significant conservation financing to foster a conservation-based economy incorporating eco-tourism, stewardship, restoration, and clean energy to bring greater prosperity to the nation.



Kwoiek Watershed, Kanaka territory.

Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation

We have also launched an exciting [partnership](#) with the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation in Gold River to support their incredible Salmon Parks Initiative, now backed by a \$15.2-million commitment from the federal government to provide capacity funding for its Salmon Park Initiative. This visionary project will see the protection of key salmon-bearing watersheds from valley-bottom to mountaintop, safeguarding spectacular old-growth forests, as well as setting aside second-growth forests for restoration and recovery. Some of the most magnificent old-growth forests left in BC will be preserved under this initiative, including areas that AFA has campaigned for years to protect, such as the McKelvie Valley near Tahsis and parts of Nootka Island.

In addition to financial support, AFA has provided professional photos and videos of the Salmon Parks for the Mowachaht/Muchalaht to use in their campaigns. We are proud to support this visionary proposal to see the Indigenous-led conservation of incredible old-growth forests, watersheds, and the salmon that depend on them.

Both IPCA plans are still undergoing further development, including consultation with neighbouring communities and land-use planning before they are finalized, and boundaries are preliminary for now. Ultimately, legislated protection from the province, likely through Provincial Conservancy designations, and greater financial support from the provincial and federal governments, including for sustainable economic development, will be required before full protection is secured.



Sitka spruce – Burman River, Mowachaht/Muchalaht territory.

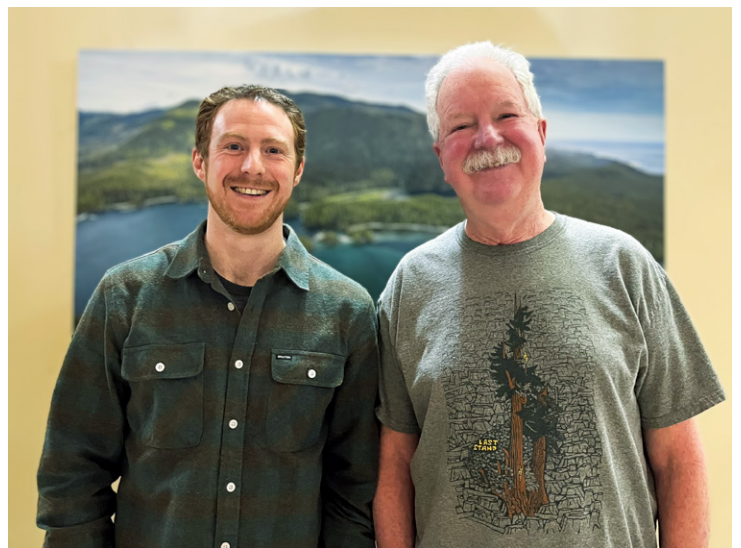
Raising Awareness Through Education

An instrumental part of our work is raising awareness about the importance of old-growth forests through education.

Aside from important policy-related matters, we also love sharing information about the diverse plants and animals that call these ancient forests home. Ranging from the largest specimens to the tiniest organisms, we shared 13 educational pieces about old-growth dwellers in 2023, including Roosevelt elk, banana slugs, Scouler's corydalis, false hellebore, nurse logs, devil's club, deer ferns, western skunk cabbage, red-legged frog, fairy puke lichen, lobaria lichen, licorice ferns, and slime mold!

We also had the opportunity to meet in-person, when during Earth Week in April, nearly 200 people gathered in Metchoin for an evening of knowledge-sharing, insight, and community-building, with presentations from renowned forest ecologist Andy MacKinnon and AFA photographer and campaigner TJ Watt.

Andy explained the intricacies of old-growth forests and how they affect the planet's well-being and our own. Afterward, TJ gave the crowd a behind-the-scenes look into his conservation photography trips out in the field. A special thanks to Janet Gray for helping organize the event!



AFA photographer & campaigner TJ Watt and famed ecologist and author Dr. Andy MacKinnon. Together, they presented to a full house in Metchoin on Earth Day.

We're Now a Charity!

We're thrilled to announce that the Ancient Forest Alliance officially became a registered charity in 2023!

When AFA was initially founded as a non-profit society in 2010 by Ken Wu and TJ Watt, we chose to forgo charitable status as laws at the time would have constrained our freedom of speech and critical advocacy work, limiting the effectiveness of the organization. However, changes in legislation since then mean that we're now able to become a charity while remaining as effective as before, except with the added bonus that we can now issue tax receipts for donations!

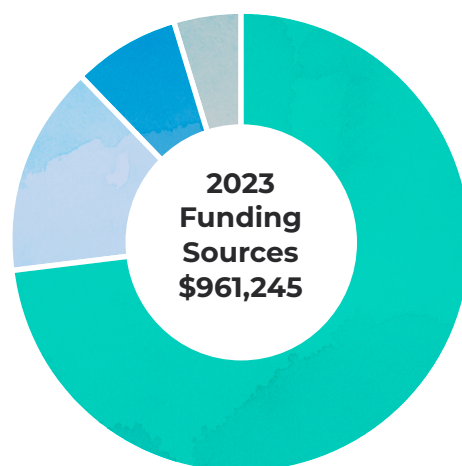
AFA relies on the generosity of our community in order to lead our campaigns. We're incredibly grateful to the broad base of individuals, businesses, and organizations who have chosen to contribute to the cause since our inception. We know that every dollar counts these days, and we hope that this new milestone will make it easier to support us as we lead the push to protect endangered old-growth forests in BC. We thank the many thousands of you who have supported us right from our humble beginnings.



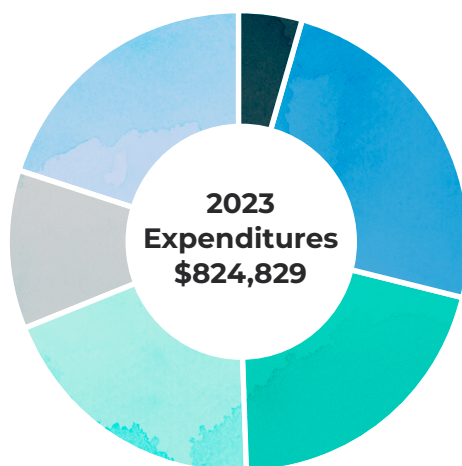
Statement of Operations

For the year ended December 31, 2023

Revenue		
Donations	702,472	
Grants	142,777	
Sales	72,672	
Other Income	43,324	
Total Revenue		961,245
Expenditures		
Cost of Goods	36,940	
CAMPAIGNS		
Campaigners	202,873	
Research & Campaign Development	169,758	
Public Education & Engagement	160,337	
OPERATIONS		
Public Outreach	90,478	
Operations	164,441	
Total Expenditures		824,829
Net Income		136,416



- Donations
- Grants
- Sales
- Other Income



- Cost of Goods
- Campaigners
- Research & Campaign Development
- Public Education & Engagement
- Public Outreach
- Operations

What's Next in 2024

With the massive year we had in 2023, our campaign efforts in 2024 will be largely focused on ensuring current government commitments are shaped in the most effective way and that the remaining conservation policy and funding gaps are filled.

As of the time of writing, the BC government is currently finalizing its Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.

With your continued support, in 2024, we will:

1. **Expand our critical work with key First Nations communities to support Indigenous-led protected areas initiatives** in areas with the best old-growth forests in BC while fostering sustainable economic alternatives to old-growth logging. This is our main priority and the only way to secure large-scale protection of old-growth forests going forward.
2. **Ensure that BC's commitment to double the protected area in the province to 30% by 2030 and its Biodiversity & Ecosystem Health Framework targets the most endangered old-growth forests through "ecosystem-based targets."** These targets must be legally binding, fine filter enough to include forest productivity distinctions (i.e. big-tree vs. small-tree forests), and ensure the sufficient scale of protection to support the long-term persistence of these ecosystems. These targets must be based on the latest insights from conservation biology and landscape ecology from designated independent science teams, and from Traditional Ecological Knowledge committees of First Nations. This is the most critical provincial policy piece still needed.
3. **Push for at least \$120 million in deferral or "solutions-space" funding for First Nations to forgo logging in the most at-risk old-growth priority areas as defined by the province's appointed Technical Advisory Panel (TAP).** This is a critical stepping stone to deferring the remaining 1.3 million hectares of TAP's priority areas. First Nations with logging interests in these areas need compensation for their lost revenues for two years while deferrals are enacted. During this time, they can potentially undertake protected-areas and land-use planning.
4. **Continue to explore and document endangered old-growth forests in BC,** bringing back professional images, videos, and stories to help educate citizens across BC and around the world, inspiring them to act.
5. **Continue to broaden our support base** to ensure that the province knows that people from all walks of life, including businesses, unions, faith groups, and more, want to see old-growth forests in BC protected!



Conclusion

We're excited to use the momentum we've gained in 2023 to make 2024 a year to celebrate.

The incredible string of recent successes shows that our strategic, solutions-based approach to campaigning delivers results. With your continued support, we'll keep leading the fight until the endangered old-growth forests and other ecosystems in BC get the protection they deserve.

The aforementioned successes would not have been possible without all of you who contacted decision-makers, met with your elected representatives, signed a resolution, shared our photos and news articles, donated to our organization, or simply cheered us on. We are extremely grateful to all of our supporters for helping make these incredible gains a reality.

And while 2023 was a monumental year, our work is far from over. Now that the major conservation financing funds have finally arrived, we will need to work just as hard to ensure the province directs it toward protecting our most threatened old-growth ecosystems and provides the still-missing funding for short-term logging deferrals as well.

Despite major steps in the right direction, the BC government has so far shown itself to be content playing a passive role (at best) in ensuring the protection of the most at-risk old-growth forests. If left to its own devices, the BC Government will happily shift protection toward lower-productivity ecosystems less threatened by logging — the classic approach that has led us to the ecological crisis we are in today.

We can't let that happen; at the heart of BC's strategy to expand protected areas and disburse conservation financing funds must be the deferral and eventual protection of the most at-risk big-tree forests and other endangered ecosystems that are so important for climate, ecological health, Indigenous culture, and tourism.

Together, we will celebrate our successes and continue to build toward a future where all species — both human and non-human — have the opportunity to flourish in a healthy and harmonious world.

Thank you for standing with us.

Get in touch!

Phone: (250) 896-4007

Email: info@ancientforestalliance.org

205-620 View St.

Victoria, BC, V8W 1J6, Canada

ancientforestalliance.org

