

To whom it may concern:

My name is Daniel J. Pierce. I am a resident of Vancouver, B.C. The following is my written submission for the B.C. old-growth strategic review. As a filmmaker and journalist, I have studied extensively the plight of B.C.'s last remaining old-growth temperate rainforests and interviewed numerous experts in forestry and forest ecology. Here, I have tried to synthesize a decade of my research into five key principles that I feel should be central to any new management paradigm for old-growth forests in British Columbia.

1. Water quality & timing of flow – This should be a top priority for how we manage our old-growth forests and all our forests across the province. Could anything be more important than the quality of the water that comes out of our taps? Clear-cutting in community drinking watersheds should come to an end and we must begin to consider the cumulative impacts of our logging practices on water quality and timing of flow. We must do landscape level assessments to minimize the risk of drought, flooding and siltation caused by industrial logging. This will also serve to retain and restore our depleted salmon spawning grounds. Conserving old growth is an essential element of protecting our limited supply of fresh water and should be the primary function of forestry, rather than a peripheral consideration.

2. Climate breakdown mitigation – With hotter, drier summers and shorter, warmer winters, we can expect bigger wildfires, longer droughts and more frequent floods. We can expect more pest outbreaks like the pine and spruce beetles. And we can expect the loss of entire species that may not survive into the future. Old growth not only creates cooler microclimates, but absorbs and stores more carbon than young forests. Old forests are also more resilient to wildfire and pest outbreaks. So it is imperative that we conserve old growth to fortify our communities against the climate crisis, which is now upon us.

3. Biodiversity and habitat protection – Not only are we in the middle of a climate crisis, but we are also in the middle of a major extinction event. We have lost nearly half of all wildlife on the planet since the 1970s. Our old-growth forests are oases of habitat for iconic endangered species, such as mountain caribou, spotted owls and marbled murrelets. Old-growth forests also protect wild salmon habitat by keeping rivers cool and holding the soil together. By keeping old-growth forests standing, we are also protecting vital habitat for many species that rely on these ancient ecosystems for seasonal shelter and sustenance. We must preserve these islands of biodiversity in order to protect the entire web of life.

4. Indigenous rights & cultures – To say that old-growth forests were not managed, is to erase the vast history of Indigenous use of these forests from the historical record. From cedar bark harvesting, to the collection of plant medicines, to the carving of canoes, Indigenous peoples relied on the bounty of the woods for countless generations. They took only what they needed and, after millennia of harvesting, left behind vast, healthy forests. But in 150 years of industrial logging and settler colonialism, we have depleted these once-sprawling forests to a few scattered fragments. How does one teach their children how to carve a canoe if there are no big cedar trees? How can one learn about traditional medicines if those plants don't exist any more? We should preserve what is left of our old growth for Indigenous cultural use and look to First Nations for leadership on how to steward these forests into the future.

5. Community health & abundance – When you take all of these factors into account, it should be plain to see that the long-term benefits of keeping old growth standing far outweighs the short-term profit of cutting it down for timber. For some communities, ancient forests are a big draw for tourism, resulting in new economic opportunities for post-industrial logging towns. If we continue to log old growth forests, they will eventually all be gone, along with the ecological and economic benefits they provide for our communities. It is far wiser to intentionally plan a phased transition away from logging old growth, than be forced to change overnight due to a sudden collapse. By keeping what little old-growth we have left standing and recruiting second-growth to eventually become old growth, we will protect clean water, mitigate and slow the climate crisis, preserve vital habitat for endangered species, and ensure that Indigenous peoples can continue to practice their cultures for generations to come.

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