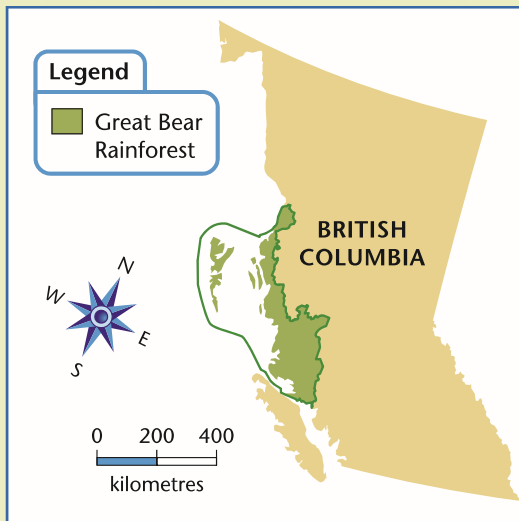


Voices For Change



Imagine a rainforest of towering, ancient red cedar trees. It is home to grizzly bears, rare spirit bears, wolves, moose, and mountain goats. Environmentalists want to preserve this special place for all time. But logging companies want to cut the valuable trees for timber. They argue that the logging industry will provide jobs for many people as well as supply wood for homes, furniture, paper, and other necessities.

How can a situation like this be resolved? Who will decide what should be done? On these two pages, you will read about a conflict over a large area that came to be known as the Great Bear Rainforest. It is located on the Pacific coast of British Columbia north of Vancouver. The Great Bear Rainforest is 6.4 million hectares in size.

To Cut or Not to Cut

First Nations have lived in the Great Bear Rainforest for a long time. Namu, one of the earliest known coastal villages, is 14 000 years old. The Nuxalk [NU-xalk] are among the First Nations whose traditional territory is in the Great Bear Rainforest. They were very unhappy about logging operations in the Great Bear. In 1994, the Nuxalk invited members of Greenpeace, an environmental organization, to see the clear-cut logging that was going on there. When a forest is clear-cut, all the trees are cut at the same time. Sometimes only the best trees are taken and the rest are burned or left to rot.

- What are the two perspectives about the Great Bear Rainforest?
- How do you think a solution to this situation might be achieved?

Saving the Great Bear

The Nuxalk and Greenpeace joined with other First Nations and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and Forest Action Network to stop the destruction of the Great Bear Rainforest. These groups thought that the government was wrong to allow logging in this area. They worked to persuade the government to change its policy. There were more than 10 years of protests and meetings to work out a solution that was acceptable to all sides.

On February 7, 2006, the British Columbia government and First Nations announced the signing of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. One-third of the Great Bear Rainforest was immediately protected from logging. By 2009, “ecosystem-based management” would be practised throughout of the rest of the rainforest. Ecosystem-based management makes sure that the way logging is done protects the ecosystems of the forest. It is also called “soft-impact” logging. The agreement gave First Nations a voice in future decisions about use of the Rainforest.



Great Bear Rainforest is the habitat of the spirit bear. How might clear-cut logging affect these animals?

? Inquiring Minds

In this chapter you will be building on what you learned in earlier chapters about the ways that people and groups participate in decision making in a democracy. As you read the chapter, think about the following questions:

1. How can individuals and groups hold elected representatives accountable for their actions?
2. In what ways do associations and groups give citizens a stronger voice in decision making?

Being **accountable** means taking responsibility for your actions.

What Is Accountability?

Have you ever been in charge of the money for a group purchase or been given money for clothes or school supplies? You were **accountable**, that is responsible, for using that money for a particular purpose. You couldn't spend it on anything else because if you did, those who gave it to you would want to know the reason why.

As you read in earlier chapters, elected representatives are accountable to their constituents—the people who live in their riding or municipal area. Representatives show that they are accountable in many different ways.

- They listen to constituents to find out what their needs are and how they feel about issues. Voters may talk to their representatives in person or by writing letters or sending e-mails.
- They present the concerns of their constituents at government meetings and then report what happened to their constituents.
- They keep their constituents informed by sending out newsletters reporting what they have been doing.

Thinking It Through

How did the British Columbia government demonstrate accountability during the creation of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement?



Participating in public functions gives representatives a chance to demonstrate accountability. Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach is shown here during the light-up ceremony at the legislature.

Elected representatives hold government leaders such as mayors, reeves, premiers, and Cabinet ministers accountable for keeping promises that were made during the election campaign. These leaders must be able to explain their actions and show that these actions are in the best interests of the people. Representatives also try to make sure that the tax money the government collects is being spent wisely.

Demanding Accountability

In a democracy, elected representatives need to listen to people's opinions. If they don't, they may not be re-elected. Members of the public often send letters and e-mails to let their representatives know what actions they would like them to take. Representatives know that one letter usually means many other people feel the same way about an issue.

The following letter was posted on the website of ForestEthics, an environmental organization. People who agreed with the letter were asked to sign it and send it to the premier of British Columbia.

Skill Smart

For a letter to be effective, ideas must be expressed clearly and persuasively.

- What action does the writer want the premier to take?
- What arguments does the writer make to persuade the premier to take this action?
- Why does the writer ask for a response from the premier?

Evaluate the effectiveness of this letter. What criteria will you use?

Dear Premier Campbell,

I urge you to ratify (agree to) the Great Bear Rainforest consensus package (agreement) that was recently negotiated with First Nations. These agreements are the result of years of negotiations and planning, involving many stakeholders (interest groups).

These agreements require that you and your Cabinet formally and permanently protect one-third of the region from logging, implementing Ecosystem-Based Management and matching the philanthropic money (donations) contributed to diversify local economies and broaden business opportunities in the region.

This is the one of the world's rarest and most endangered forests and the largest unprotected coastal temperate rainforest left on Earth. The world is watching and waiting for these agreements to be ratified, as you have committed, by September 2005.

The time to act is now. Please let me know what steps your government is taking to ensure the September deadline is met.

Sincerely,
(your name)

How Can Groups Affect Decision Making?

First Nations and environmental groups were able to participate in creating the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. They used many different methods to try to influence the thinking of members of the public, businesses, and the government. Over the years, many thousands of people became involved in the actions the environmental groups took during their campaign.



Why would the Nuxalk protest be effective?

Blockades and Protests

Blockades and protests were two strategies used by First Nations people and environmental groups. In 1997, environmentalists set up blockades on logging roads so that trucks could not move in or out. They were able to stop the logging for 10 days.

Protest rallies were held at the British Columbia parliament buildings. The activists dressed up as "Ents" from *Lord of the Rings* and demanded protection from the BC legislature.

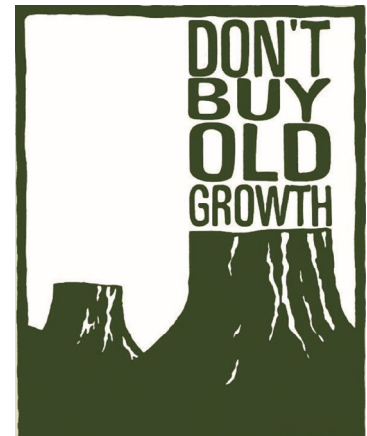


Why do you think the 1997 blockade only lasted for 10 days?

Pressure and Influence

Another strategy the groups used was to try to persuade large companies that bought lumber from British Columbia not to buy lumber cut in the Great Bear area. Environmentalists also took part in government-sponsored public meetings where they could voice their opinions about what should be done.

Environmental activists got involved in other countries as well. In February 2001, Greenpeace activists swimming in icy waters blocked a Norwegian ship approaching a Dutch seaport. The ship was carrying lumber cut in the Great Bear Rainforest. Four climbers went up the sides of the ship with banners that read “Canadian Forest Crime” and “No forests, no future.” Other activists painted “Save the Forests” on the hull of the ship.



This poster was issued by the Rainforest Action Network.



Why do dramatic actions like this draw media and public attention?



What reasons might companies such as this one have for listening to the environmental groups?

Thinking It Through

1. Which of the strategies shown in the photos would influence your own thinking about the issue. What criteria will you use?
2. Which strategy would you be most likely to participate in? Why?