

BRIAN RIDDELL

CONFERENCE CHAIR

Conference Closing Comments

* Transcribed

"OK, well, it has been a long couple of days. I think everybody is probably getting a little antsy. I'm going to keep my closing comments really short, because I'm not sure I'll have a whole lot to add to what I've heard the last couple of days. I think you proceeded much further than maybe you give yourselves credit for. So, I only have a few closing comments.

I want to start with what I was thinking about yesterday afternoon when I said I didn't want to comment without thinking about it. I was extremely impressed with Jody's presentation on the experiences in the Great Bear Rain Forest. I sat down last night and I started to take a look at her messages that I had scribbled down and there were a lot of lessons. I think I'm up around 15 or something that I scribbled. They're not all on the same sort of level, but I think the lead five, to me, would be these:

- Create power for change;
- Find the means to work together (and she talked about an evolution of coalitions and that takes time);
- Protecting natural ecosystems is inseparable from human wellbeing, in other words, include people in the steps that you take so you show a benefit for people as well;
- Be bold, paint a compelling vision; and
- Getting from here to there, understanding how you make change.

I've heard this twice now, as I said yesterday. These are all really interesting statements from a group that worked extremely hard in a very successful program. But then I just reflected on, well, what was the experience that we heard yesterday afternoon? We heard about the Gitanyow and then we heard about the Upper Morice and I started thinking about the words that were used in those experiences. They are not identical, but the lessons would have to be almost identical. We talked about forming coalitions. We talked about the power of change. In some cases that was legislated in courts and sometimes it was just timing. In many of the cases that were presented, you are already there. You are taking smaller steps than the scope of the Great Bear Rain Forest, but you may want to step back and give yourselves a little more credit than you think. You've really made significant developments. The Gitanyow presentation was very, very impressive. I realize it is a small area, but I bet the other groups that weren't as extensively represented may have very similar types of experiences. There may be other information out there that you can build on already. It was interesting to reflect on what I thought was an outstanding presentation, but then I said, "You know, the other groups are almost there as it is." So, you really do deserve some credit for getting that far.

So, my closing comments come down to this—I was overwhelmingly impressed with the level of personal commitment and dedication to people, to this watershed. Of course, Ali's event last night was spectacular. Look at the sort of dedication that people had to put into these presentations. And today we heard about some of the things that we should include from the technical or scientific background, and there is interesting work going on there, as

Conference Closing Comments—continued

well. So the other thing is that you've got local experience to build on. It may be at fairly lower geographic scales than people are thinking about, but there is experience developing that's quite notable. And you clearly can build on those experiences in the other watersheds. And you have the technical expertise. We've heard lots of people talking about various programs they are involved with. And then you are in touch with people that are doing some of the big scale thinking about climate change. So, I think you've got commitment, dedication, you've got local experience to build on and you've got the expertise developing. So, I think you've got the ingredients. It's really a question, in my mind, of what's your next step? And we heard a proposal from Richard, and then I thought that Joy's comments were very similar in content, different type of model, but the issue is getting to, how do you put all this commitment to really protect this watershed on the big scale, on the Skeena watershed scale? Is there another level that you have to take this planning and commitment to? And I think that that is worthwhile doing, given the values that you find inherent in this watershed. They are too great to risk. You wouldn't want it to come down to individual decisions, you know, death by a thousand little developments. I think you are too wise for that as it is now, but how do you organize against large-scale developments that are still pressuring places like the Skeena? The importance of the watershed is fully acknowledged and maybe the next step is thinking about how to pull together with all this power behind you to protect the whole basin. A suggestion that was just given to me, not mine, is a facilitated workshop to bring all of the very disparate groups – or – groups in the different geographic areas - together into some sort of structured decision-making process to see what the people in the basin want at that higher level. Is it necessary? What should it look like? It could be a protocol, which is not that formal, necessarily, in terms of a power base. It's a commitment. It could be something that develops the way Joy described. How do you make that next step? I think it's worthwhile seriously considering how to develop a Skeena watershed-based council. And that is consistent with a number of things that governments are really talking about.

I think the key word I wrote down when Joy was talking is "inclusivity". If you can achieve that and really put all this dedication and effort together for watershed protection you've got a great future here. It's a fabulous system to work in and I complement everybody for their work. I guess the final thing is to say, I didn't really know what to expect when I was coming here, but I'm very, very happy that a few months ago I said I'd be happy to do this, because it's been very educational, it's been a real pleasure to meet with people and to listen to this, and I wish you the very best of luck in pulling it all together and PSF will be behind you to help you. So thank you very much."