



DIALOGUE
PARTNERS

Bringing people together

2031 Neepawa Avenue

Ottawa, ON Canada

K2A 3L7

Telephone: 613-724-2450

Toll-Free: 1-866-269-1276

Fax: 613-724-2450

Web: dialoguepartners.ca

E-mail: info@dialoguepartners.ca

Lessons from the Sound

I recently spent a week in Clayoquot Sound enjoying the wind in the trees, the waves on the shore and the passage of whales through the waters. While there, I attended an evening hosted by the "Friends of Clayoquot". The evening was called "Secrets of Clayoquot" and I thought we were coming to learn about the wonders of the wilderness we were exploring. It turns out I learned a lot, but not that much about the wilderness.

Friends of Clayoquot was created in the early 1990's, originally with a mission to save, protect and preserve old growth forests under threat from logging. The group made international news by holding a peace camp of non-violent protest that drew a crowd more than 10,000 strong, for longer than a year, to Tofino, which lies at the very end of road on the far west coast of Canada. The group succeeded in building national and international awareness, support and endorsement of environmental preservation, of standing up for your rights, for speaking for things that have no voice. They were the original Occupiers.

The "Secrets of Clayoquot" presentation on a foggy August evening in Tofino continued in this tradition of building awareness for important issues. It accomplished more though for me than they may have intended, with lessons those they oppose could stand to learn. *(Just a note as you read this, these are the lessons I think mining and logging companies should learn, not the lessons the Friends shared with me. I think if mining and logging companies knew these lessons, they might just think again before trying to develop in places where these lessons have been learned.)*

Lesson #1 – Appeal to people's emotions

The Friends are masters of story-telling. They tell the story of place and values with care, helping you feel the grandeur and the majesty of the wild, the land and its people. They contrast this beautiful story with a tale of tragedy and destruction, and they encourage you to stand with them to stop this from happening.

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It is the only thing that ever has."*

- Margaret Mead



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Lesson #2 – Make sure you have enough funding to sustain your activities

The Friends have a website, take one-time contributions at events and activities, and now, you can be a supporter from afar with monthly donations, even if you don't live in the area. Actually, especially if you don't live in the area, because then people from far and wide are aligned in supporting this very special place in the world (*Just to let you know that this really matters to me and was effective I'm going to put it on our team planning agenda for discussion*). Funding helps you host your website, promote your activities, produce post cards, newsletters, promotional materials. It makes sure you have a visible office in town, where tourists from around the world can see your sign and know of your important work. This builds your voice, in ways the organizations you oppose will be trying to do for their message, probably with way more funding than you have.

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Lesson #3 – Make sure no one can disagree with your message

At the “Secrets” night we attended, you could also sign a petition and pick up a couple of post cards to be mailed to federal and provincial elected officials. The one I picked up (*and which I will sign and send in*) says the following:

“Imperial Metals, a Vancouver-based mining company, is currently exploring the potential for two mines in Clayoquot Sound.

The globally rare temperate rainforests of Clayoquot are no place for mining activities of any kind.

In the spirit of Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation, I ask that the Canadian government not allow any mines in Clayoquot Sound.”

Then you sign your name and send it in (free of charge because postage is paid for Members of Parliament) to the Minister of the Environment. Seriously, who could not agree with that statement? Probably only someone without a heart, who hates trees, whales and small children.

Lesson #4 – Start and never stop

The Friends know that the good fight is never over. That if they aren’t vigilant and attentive to caring for the wild, that someone will eventually come forward with a proposal or plan that will impact the things they care deeply about. The Friends have learned that you don’t wait to be reactive to a situation, because then it may be too late. Staying vigilant, present and always working towards your goals means you will have the public support and social license to deal with the next intruder.

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Lesson #5 – Inspire the younger generation

The Friends told some beautiful stories that night about how models and examples of civic and community activism build support for a new generation of activists. When children grow up seeing successful examples of people living their values, exercising their voice, taking action for the things they believe in, they too become agents of change.

Lesson #6 – Make it fun

The Friends have produced a music video in advance of any further movement by Imperial Metals to build a mine in Clayoquot Sound. Just watch the video to see how much fun it could be to be a member of The Friends and to stand with them against this possible mine. There is singing, dancing, laughing, holding hands, twirling in circles and it's a catchy tune too. Who wouldn't want to be a Friend?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3Dp7rNmBys>

Lesson #7 – Have a visible presence

As noted in Lesson #2, with funding you can have a visible presence, which increases the familiarity and power of your message. Have the office in town, the posters everywhere, the website, the video, the post cards and the petitions means your values and message are ever present and become part of the prevailing psyche. The values of the Friends are directly linked to the images, sounds and emotions of the Clayoquot Sound. They are inseparable – the message, the people, the place are one and the same. No mining, logging or other company has a chance. Plus if you hold a "Secrets" evening every week during the months of tourist season, you'll create many new missionaries.

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Lesson #8 – Facts don't matter that much

When we work with organizations that want to collaborate and meaningfully engage citizens, we advise them that facts are irrelevant in the face of the power of the emotion people experience. That doesn't mean you don't talk about and discuss the key issues, but that first you must very respectfully, empathetically and openly engage them about what they feel, think and believe. Facts come later, when you have a little trust and credibility (which happens if you behave with integrity). Remember, too that for almost any piece of science or research you have, there will be a piece of science or research that says the opposite. All that said, at the end of "Secrets" presentation The Friends responded to answers from audience questions with an astonishing lack of accuracy related to the facts. Even I knew their facts were wrong in many cases and I don't know a lot about fish farming, mining or logging. It didn't matter though, because the audience was already singing from the same song book.

Lesson #9 – Opponents would be wise to walk away

I think this was the biggest lesson I learned. If a company or a government is planning something that may be viewed very negatively by those who are impacted, and these 9 lessons or practices are present, they would be wise to walk away. The damage to their reputation, the solidifying and confirmation of the opposition they will face, the potential conflict, controversy and negative media coverage, and the total lack of social license – these are all likely outcomes. Imperials Metals should pay attention to this lesson.

Companies or organizations who want to create change in situations where these conditions are present will need to do things dramatically differently than they have been done in the past, will need much more time than before, will need to go far above and beyond the letter or the spirit of the law or legislation, and will need to live and breathe REAL corporate social responsiveness. They'll need to be authentic and committed to a different course, to not just doing things differently, but to actually being different.

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I look at Enbridge's Gateway Project, TransCanada's Keystone Pipeline, many wind projects in Ontario, even some municipal light rail projects....these are all examples of the 9 conditions being present, and the same approach being taken. The outcomes, conflict and polarization speak for themselves. Then I look at some of polarized, conflicted projects we've worked on, where the outcomes have been very different. It takes a different approach for different results.

Maybe it's time for change. What do you think?

Sincerely,

Stephani

P.S. You too can be a supporter of the Friends of Clayoquot. Go to their [website](#) for more information.

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