



2010 Annual Report

Or...

The Start of Something **BIG**

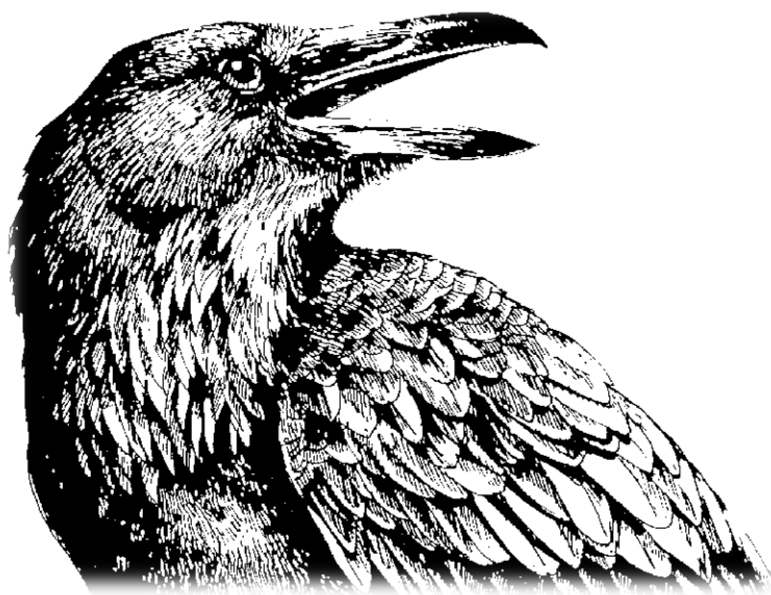


Fig. 1 - Raven: Bringer of the light; creation and knowledge.



2010 was RAVEN's first full year in operation as a Canadian non-profit charitable organization. This report also takes in the last few months of 2009 when RAVEN took flight so to speak, with the creation of a logo, website, and actual presence.

Among the first steps were to decide on a mandate. When we formed RAVEN we recognized the need to redress an inherent imbalance. To obtain justice in the courts for Canada's First Nations in their struggle to protect rights and lands, native leaders, advocates and their legal teams almost always face overwhelming odds when going against the established interest of large corporations.

Governments and wealthy corporations are able to hire large teams of lawyers and experts to bolster their arguments. Their resources appear almost limitless to cash-strapped First Nations and their dedicated legal teams that all too often work *pro bono* because of their belief in the cause. The background research and other costs attendant on the fight for native rights are invariably immense. Yet, without adequate research and background information, native causes are bound to fail in non-native legal systems.

RAVEN believes first and foremost that our legal system should dispense justice based on the best evidence available regardless of wealth and power imbalances. Our goal is to bring light to this issue, and in so doing, also bring some balance to the legal game.



Fig. 2 – Hummingbird: Intelligence, spirit messenger.



RAVEN took guidance from the intelligence of the tiny hummingbird, which has the ability to hover, move up, down, sideways and backwards and still maintain its flight path.

We had to learn the way forward for RAVEN because, as it turns out, our mission to assist Aboriginal people's within Canada in protecting or restoring their traditional lands and resources filled a gap. It also addresses critical environmental challenges such as global warming by strategically enforcing their constitutional rights through the courts in response to unsustainable settlement or industrial exploitation. RAVEN enables Aboriginal groups to enforce their legal rights to environmental protection. No other NGO is doing this in Canada.

Aboriginal rights are the strongest environmental laws in Canada, but they are expensive and difficult to enforce. However, RAVEN found that we could match appropriate lawyers, including *pro bono* lawyers and reduced fee lawyers, to the most pressing, winnable and worthy environmental cases, and seek to support these efforts by matching available funding as necessary to sustain these efforts.

It has taken some stamina, something a hummingbird is known for, to stay the course and get the word out that we a) exist and b) offer something unique and substantive to First Nations in Canada. But by the end of 2010, RAVEN had achieved many goals and assisted worthy projects like the Tsilhqot'in campaign to save Teztan Biny and the Beaver Lake Cree Nation's challenge to the onslaught of Alberta's tar sands developments.



Fig. 3 – Beaver: Creative, determined.



When you are a new non-profit at a time when financial markets are crumbling, foundations are fumbling and competition is escalating, the only way to survive is put-your-head-down determination with a little creative flair to generate interest both within and outside your organization.

RAVEN emerged during the worst times of the global financial crisis. Foundations and other grant-making organizations literally shut down their funding for 2009 and many only began a slight re-introduction of granting in 2010.

But we doggedly built our foundation, and we got creative about networking in order to leverage our capacity to make change and be effective. In both 2009 and 2010, RAVEN actively developed relationships with other similarly aligned organizations. For example, RAVEN became active with the International Funders of Indigenous Peoples (IFIP), participating in their 2009 conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico and then becoming involved in conference planning for 2010. That partnership allowed RAVEN to sponsor a presentation during one of the of the 2010 sessions in Tofino, BC, which directly led to financial assistance by a large, private U.S. family foundation for one of our key projects – the caribou judicial review launched by several First Nations in Alberta aimed at saving the threatened woodland caribou and stopping the expansion of the habitat-destroying tar sands industries.

RAVEN also partnered with First Nations groups like the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) and First Nations Women Advocating Responsible Mining (FNWARM). We worked with other eNGOs such as Council of Canadians, MiningWatch Canada, Sierra Canada, David Suzuki Foundation and Friends of the Nemaiah Valley. We forged relationships with socially responsible corporations like the Co-operative Bank in Manchester, England. And our list of networks continues to expand as groups come to understand the unique niche RAVEN provides in terms of creating tangible change to protect First Nations traditional ways of life and the environment.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



What is it that sets RAVEN apart? Why do people want to be involved in what we have to offer? Maybe it's that we focus a lot on getting the work done, and not so much on the trappings of running a non-profit. We don't have a big office, or a big staff for that matter. RAVEN isn't leading the charge when it comes to highly visible, high-priced advertising campaigns or hanging from the top floor of a city skyscraper to drape banners that capture attention.

While we honour those who put effort into more public campaigns, we have chosen a somewhat different path. By using the courts as a way to bring about substantive change, RAVEN hopes to leave a lasting legacy that benefits all Canadians.

If you have read this far, you will know it's been a busy year plus. In the following pages, we will detail exactly what transpired with our key programs:

- Support for the Beaver Lake Cree Nation – 900 Woodland Cree in central Alberta, suing Canada and Alberta over tar sands developments which threaten their constitutionally protected rights;
- Support for the Tsilhqot'in people of British Columbia who were trying to prevent construction of a gold and copper mine in the salmon-bearing watershed of the Fraser River,

a project which could completely destroy the sacred Fish Lake (Teztan Biny), based on assertion of their proven constitutionally protected aboriginal rights.

There are other worthy projects that RAVEN has to date been unable to take on due to limited resources; however, we hope that funding resources in 2011 permit an expansion of our current program list.

Suffice to say here that RAVEN has achieved many goals in a very short span. I want to thank all those who believed in our values and vision and supported us financially: Co-operative Financial Services, Donner Canadian Foundation, Fitzhenry Family Foundation, Friends of the Nemaiah Valley, Global Greengrants, Small Change Fund, Tides Canada Foundation and Threshold Foundation. Some donors prefer anonymity, and I extend our thanks to them as well. Quite a list for an upstart organization.

But that's because when you want to protect a lake or caribou habitat, and preserve the rights of those who have lived on that same land for centuries, RAVEN is the place to come. I hope you'll join us too, as we continue to make a difference.

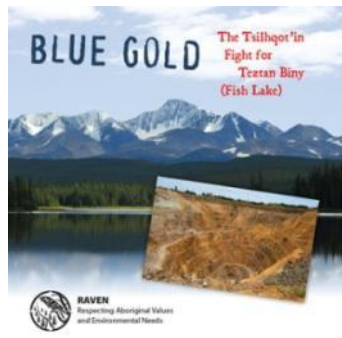
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Shitten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'S' being particularly large and stylized.

TEZTAN BINY (FISH LAKE) PROGRAM



We enjoyed a significant success in 2010 in the effort to save Teztan Biny from becoming a toxic waste dump for an open-pit gold and copper mine. We were able to help mount a formidable campaign that enabled the Tsilhqot'in National Government and Xeni Gwet'in First Nation to achieve success in defence of Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) and a sacred homeland.

RAVEN's assistance started with the making of the documentary



film *Blue Gold: The Tsilhqot'in Fight for Teztan Biny* which presented the Tsilhqot'in people's unanimous rejection of Taseko Mines Ltd.'s plan to drain the lake at the headwaters of the salmon-bearing watershed of the Fraser River in order to stockpile mining waste for its massive gold

mine. The inappropriately named Prosperity project would have completely destroyed the sacred lake and surrounding lakes and territory. RAVEN supported the Tsilhqot'in based on assertion of their proven and constitutionally protected aboriginal rights.

The film was finished in time to be presented at the federal environmental review panel hearings – in fact it was one of the first things the independent panel heard. Following that, RAVEN raised funds, and assisted with raising awareness of the issue, and was able to continue supporting the campaign by covering the costs of crucial scientific reports, legal arguments, and ensuring the right experts were on hand to present their arguments at the hearings.



The review panel results, issued in a report in July 2010, were later coined as “scathing” by Canada’s environment minister. The final report found that Taseko’s plan would cause “significant adverse effects” on both the environment and on the Tsilhqot’in people and culture. And after months of deliberating – during which time RAVEN helped to keep the issue alive with screenings of the film – the federal government agreed with the findings and rejected the mine.

We anticipate even greater victories in the courts of the land with the continued assistance of those who, like us, believe that our legal system should first and foremost dispense justice based on the best evidence available regardless of wealth and power imbalances.

BEAVER LAKE CREE NATION vs. THE TAR SANDS



RAVEN's values are embodied in our program to support the Beaver Lake Cree Nation's fight against the Alberta tar sands developments.



RAVEN is among those who view the massive destruction of the landscape as an environmental crime. It is also illegal and unconstitutional because the climate-destroying tar sands are in violation of the treaty that guarantees the Beaver Lake Cree people to the right to hunt and fish on their traditional territories for all time. [Courtesy of Garth Lenz](#)

The law is clearly on the side of First Nations - the greatest barrier to justice for the Beaver Lake Cree is the high cost of the legal system. And as you might imagine Canada and Alberta do not want to lose this case, so they are putting up a serious fight. Up against the bottomless pockets of two levels of government are the 900 Woodland Cree whose traditional lands are directly in the path of the planned tar sands industrial expansion. RAVEN has intervened to attempt to bring some fairness to this situation. Here's what we have done over the past year and a bit to build a support base for this legal action:

- In the winter of 2009/2010 we launched a series of speaking events across Canada, including Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary and Salt Spring Island and featured the lead lawyer on the case, Jack Woodward from Woodward and Company, plus other well-known climate activists such as Andrew Nikiforuk and James Hoggan. Many of the events were sponsored by other ENGOs like Environmental Defence



(Toronto) and Sierra Canada (Ottawa) – helping us to leverage every dollar into a broader reach of the messages.

- In April 2010 RAVEN co-sponsored a speaking event in Washington, DC with the GW Institute for Sustainability. It featured renowned photographer Garth Lenz, and a variety of speakers including Margery Moore of I-SEA (Institute for Sustainability, Education and Action) and Ron Lameman of Beaver Lake Cree Nation.
- In May, RAVEN participated in the 9th annual conference held by the International Funders of Indigenous Peoples. The conference, in Tofino, BC, brought together nearly 200 delegates from around the world. RAVEN also co-sponsored a session at the conference on the tar sands, featuring Chief Al Lameman of Beaver Lake Cree Nation, and representatives from Corporate Ethics and the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN).
- We launched the RAVEN Facebook and Twitter sites, allowing us to use the most popular of the social media sites and keep people updated daily on both our programs and related issues.
- In September, RAVEN travelled with Chief Lameman and Jack Woodward to the U.K. as guests of the Co-operative Bank for the launch of the major exhibition *Tarnished Earth*. Through this, RAVEN assisted in facilitating the assistance of a major U.K.-based law firm which has generously offered to assist by supplying a legal team to work *pro bono* on some costly procedural motions.
- Also in September 2010, RAVEN collaborated with the Indigenous Environmental Network to arrange for meetings between film director James Cameron and Chief Lameman, among other First Nations Chiefs, to explain how the tar sands developments have affected the band members.



SAVE THE CARIBOU; STOP THE TAR SANDS



When First Nations tell us that the caribou have virtually disappeared from their traditional lands, we listen. As Chief Lameman puts it, the caribou are the canary in the coal mine. If they are suffering because of loss of habitat, there will likely be other species suffering as well.

So RAVEN went to work, raising funds for a scientific study produced by University of Alberta caribou expert Dr. Stan Boutin. The final report, entitled *Expert report on woodland caribou [Rangifer tarandus caribou] in the Traditional Territory of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation*, contained evidence that the herds are on the verge of regional extinction if no action is taken soon to protect their habitat.



The report, funded by the Co-operative Bank, fueled the next step – to launch a judicial review at Federal Court in Edmonton, Alberta on behalf of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Beaver Lake Cree Nation and Enoch Cree First Nation.

The legal action is an effort to save the dwindling caribou herds before it's too late. The animals are being threatened by industrial development, including the expansion of the tar sands industries; so the argument is that the federal environment minister has a statutory duty to protect the animals under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA).

So now the battle is in court, and we are waiting to hear the outcome. Best case scenario – a court-ordered protection plan that requires government to live up to its obligation and forces a moratorium on tar sands developments until an effective, working plan to save the caribou is in place.

FINANCIALS

2010

Revenue

Foundation Grants	222,861
Contributions from Individuals	63,291
Other Income	82,419
Total Support and Revenue	368,571

Expenditures

A. Program Services

Caribou Report & Judicial Review	198,079
Fish Lake	72,226
Beaver Lake Cree Nation	105,125

Total Program Services	375,430
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B. Support and Services

General & Administrative	10,661
Fundraising	2,366

C. Donated Administrative cost:

Executive Director Salary	38,213
Office Space	3,974

Total Support Services (B & C)	55,214
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R.A.V.E.N. 2010 Balance Sheet

Cash	11,911
Total Assets	11,911
Total Liabilities	0
Total Retained Surplus	11,911

FINANCIALS

2009 (May – December)

Revenue

Foundation Grants	32,709
Contributions from Individuals	8,480
Other Income	140,098
Total Support and Revenue	181,287

Expenditures

A. Program Services

Fish Lake	5,575
Beaver Lake Cree Nation	144,238

Total Program Services	149,813
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B. Support and Services

General & Administrative	969
Fundraising	1,414

C. Donated Administrative cost:

Executive Director Salary	28,129
Office Space	2,980

Total Support Services (B&C)	33,492
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R.A.V.E.N. 2009 Balance Sheet

Cash	29,586
Total Assets	29,586
Total Liabilities	0
Total Retained Surplus	29,586

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When you donate to RAVEN, you can take some satisfaction knowing that 100 per cent of the funds go toward research, support and litigation in an effort to protect our planet and the rights of First Nations. And all donations are tax-deductible.

Find out more at www.raventrust.com or call us at 250.383.2356.

Finally, a thank you to the hundreds of donors, supporters, volunteers, activists and allies who helped us to achieve such a successful year!