

# 07 Port Alberni – Tseshaht First Nation

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In 2002 the DIRT Club for youth a non profit organization in North Vancouver, British Columbia lobbied local municipality to allow a legal bike park that featured dirt jumps designed, built and maintained by teenagers. Realizing incredible success founder Jay Hoots continued to dream of more opportunities for both riders and youth to build, ride, and develop skills through creating bike parks in their communities.



After a 5 year gestation period, a culmination of events came together at just the right time to start an amazing community-driven pilot project that captures the essence of these ideas through the development of a summer youth work program.

In January 2006 Jay Hoots started collaboration with Amber Zirnhelt, an avid downhill racer and assistant research coordinator for the University of British Columbia Coastal Community Project.





Through her continued work with First Nations on education issues and community development projects, Amber developed intimate contact with the Tseshahat First Nation while regularly taking the youth mountain biking. During a summer Youth Action Project Amber worked with Tseshahat youth to develop vision and priority areas for the community which included a keen interest in mountain bike trails and a dirt jump/skills area. An active coach and youth advocate Amber has worked with many communities to use cycling as a tool to encourage physically fitness and active lifestyle.

A series of discussions among the Tseshahat community's youth, staff, Chief and Council led to the decision to move forward with the project and locate the mountain bike skills area at the end of their baseball field while locating the trail in the woods keeping both areas of activity adjacent to the park and Youth center.



The pilot project was designed for the Tseshah by Hoots, with feedback from staff to include a supervisor and 6 youth who received intensive training to be considered for a summer job building a sustainable multi-use trail and developing a 'skills park' for bicycles adjacent to the trail access point.



The youth were given an extensive 2 day course on sustainable trail planning, layout and building techniques including tool use and on site safety. Use of clinometers helped in developing appropriate grades and other skills like rock armouring and trail flow using natural contour all prepared the boys for the upcoming job.





A detailed 'skills park' design and build manual outlined all park features that were to be pre-built during the program with the supervision and guidance of local trades persons.

The summer work program was created as a six week program that was broken down into two components. Four weeks were dedicated to the youth building trail that they designed and flagged during trail school. One week of the program was planned to work with a carpenter/trades person to pre fabricate skills park features and one week was allocated to build the 'skill park' with volunteers in the community under the direction of Hoots.

Three youth were hired for the program based on their performance and received work wear, tools and a set wage from the Band, while the remaining 3 youth were given the opportunity to volunteer build in a 'sweat equity program'. The sweat equity program offered volleys' a higher rate per hour in credits that were applied directly toward the purchase of bikes from the Band.

Recognizing the value of the youth's skill development and community participation generated through the project, a local Canadian bike manufacture (Brodie bikes) stepped up to support the program by supplying bikes at a super discount. This provided the Tseshaht First Nation and youth working on the project with affordable access to durable high end bikes.

Through the six weeks of the project both Hoots and Zirnhelt monitored the program offering support and assistance to Tseshaht staff while the youth worked toward a very successful trail build. The project was detailed and overseen by experienced Tseshaht management comfortably handling the usual pilot project challenges and youth issues expected.

As of August 2007, the program realized success at all levels - The completion of a 700 meter sustainability built multi-use trail which is super fun on a bike!

In addition the youth centre, and youth involved with the project purchased new bikes and gained trade experience with machinery operators.



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A proud trail builder/bike owner

On the first night the park was complete, over thirty people from the ages of three to twenty, and adult community members came out to help, ride and celebrate the success of the community's new park!



The Tseshah community is already talking about the potential for next summer's program and the possibility of expanding the park to include more lines and challenging features, while integrating fun competitions..

The pilot project was designed for the Tseshah, with great feedback from staff to include a supervisor and 6 youth who underwent training to be considered for a summer job building a sustainable multi-use trail and developing a 'skills park' for bicycles adjacent to the trail access point.