Story Idea: Logging History

Summary: Logging has been one of the biggest industries on the islands for many years.

Facts:
• For thousands of years the Haida selectively harvested trees for use in building and carving.
• In the years of the maritime fur trade passing ships harvested occasional trees to replace damaged parts.
• In the early 1900's pioneers began to clear land for agriculture and town sites, and the new homesteads were built with local wood. In 1908, the town site of Queen Charlotte got its start with the establishment of a sawmill owned by the American Timber Holding Company of Seattle. Remains of this sawmill can still be seen on the beach near the community hall.
• The First World War brought Haida Gwaii's premium quality spruce lumber to the attention of the world. At this time Sitka spruce became popular for constructing aircraft due to its abundance and high strength to weight ratio.
• The 1920s and 30s were the heyday of small logging camps, located along coastlines where wood was easily accessible, and often based on floating camps that could be easily moved from place to place. These were the years when it became common to ship large quantities of raw logs off the islands, rather than milling wood locally. The logs were transported in Davis rafts- giant bundles of logs that were towed by a tug.
• During the Second World War the light, strong wood of Sitka spruce was once again used in aircraft such as the Mosquito fighter-bomber. Mosquito Lake, on Moresby Island, was named for these aircrafts.
• In the 60's, 70's and 80's logging was a booming industry on the islands. However, changing regulations and the declining supply of valuable old-growth timber have led to a gradual decline in logging in more recent years.
• Concerns over the environmental impacts of clear-cut logging resulted in several well-publicized logging protests on the islands. The best known is the blockade at Lyell Island which led to the protection of the southern Moresby Island and eventually to the creation of Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site.
• Many locals still rely on logging for income although they have been faced with uncertain employment and repeated layoffs in recent years. This has led many families to move away from the islands.

Suggested Itinerary:
Visit the Port Clements museum to view old logging equipment and learn about the history of logging on Haida Gwaii (250)557-4576.

Speak to locals in the communities of Sandspit and Port Clements, both of which have been logging towns for many years.

More Information:
A detailed history of the islands, including logging operations, camps, and sawmills, can be found in Kathleen E. Dalzell's *The Queen Charlotte Islands 1774-1966*. (Terrace, BC: C. M. Adam, 1968). Look for this book in local libraries.