



# Falling Boundaries

David Ellingsen



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# Falling Boundaries

by David Ellingsen

With an immigrant family history intimately connected with the forest as a backdrop, *Falling Boundaries* explores deforestation in British Columbia over the last century as it weaves together threads of resource extraction and the reverberating effects of colonialism within the deepening environmental crisis.

## PROJECT COMPONENTS

1. 14 PHOTOGRAPHS  
Original photographs combined with historic imagery from the Royal British Columbia Museum and Archives, the Cortes Island Museum and Archives, and personal family photographs.
2. TEXT: *IN CONVERSATION WITH GINA THOMAS*  
of the Tlowitsis Nation, British Columbia  
Ms. Thomas contributes an indigenous perspective to the exhibition.
3. TEXT: *FALLING BOUNDARIES; AN OPINION*  
from Forester Julie Nielsen, MSc., RPBio., PhD candidate  
School of Resource and Environmental Management  
Simon Fraser University, British Columbia





*Falling Boundary*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x37.5 inches Ed. of 5  
20x25 inches Ed. of 7



*Bulls of the Wood*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x45 inches Edition of 5  
20x30 inches Edition of 7





*Spar for the Last*

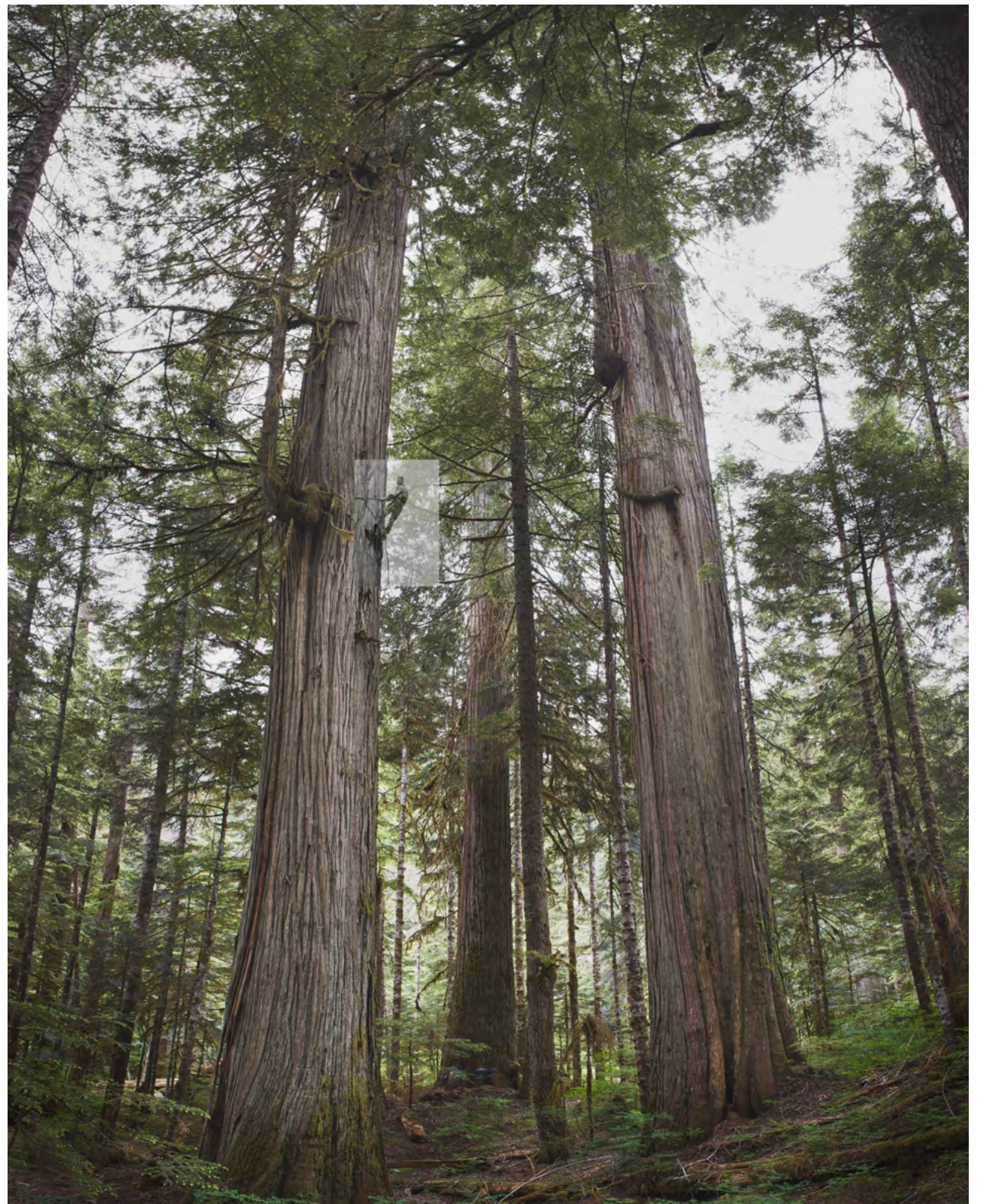
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x45 inches Edition of 5  
20x30 inches Edition of 7





*High Rigging*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
37.5x30 inches Ed. of 5  
25x20 inches Ed. of 7





*Deep Time, Shallow Step*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x37.5 inches Ed. of 5  
20x25 inches Ed. of 7





*Former Shadow Future*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x45 inches Ed. of 5  
20x30 inches Ed. of 7





*Misery Whips and Double Bits*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x45 inches Ed. of 5  
20x30 inches Ed. of 7





*A Clearing*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
20x35 inches Ed. of 5  
10x17.5 inches Ed. of 7



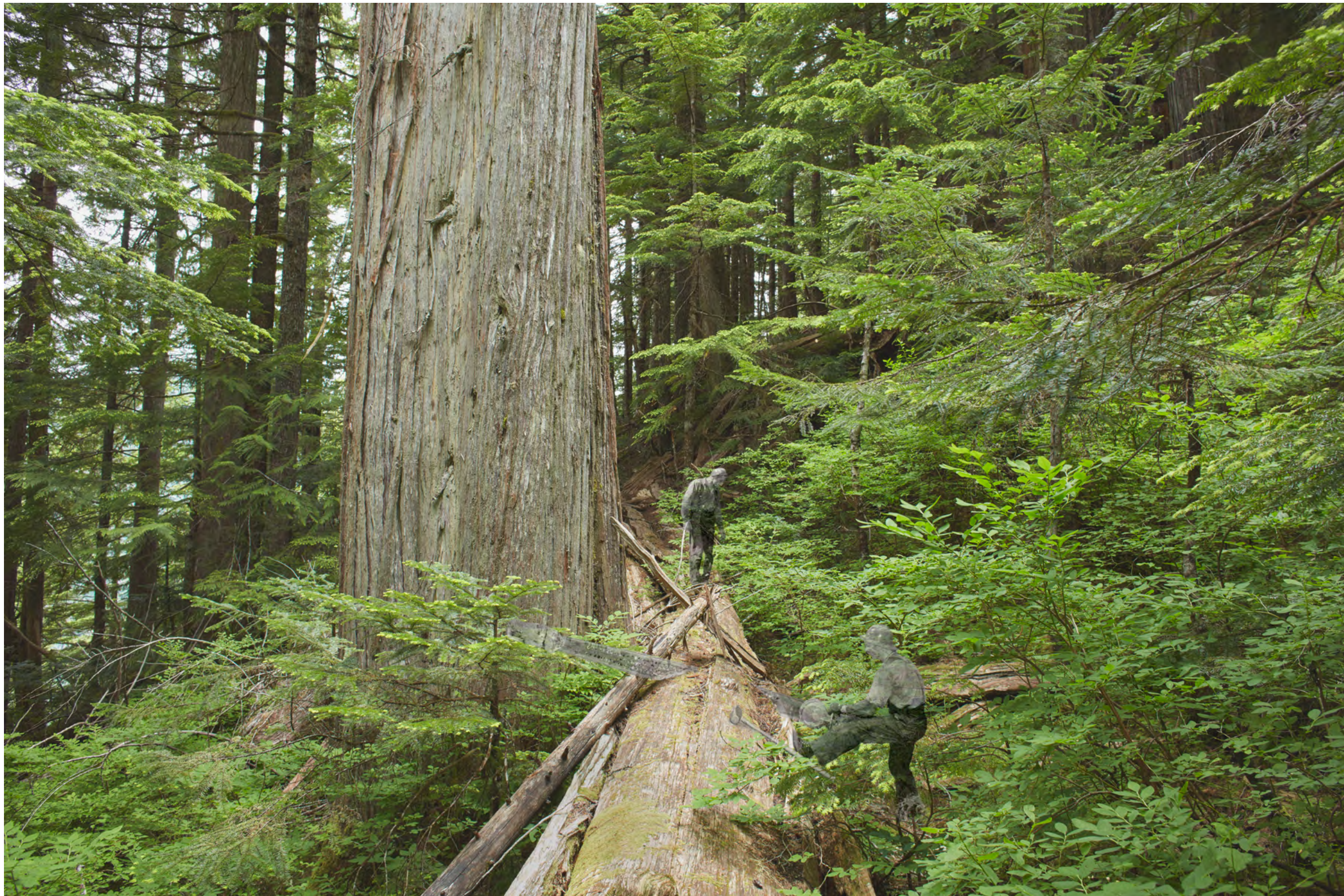


*Out From Under*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x37.5 inches Ed. of 5  
20x25 inches Ed. of 7







*Bucking Up*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x45 inches Ed. of 5  
20x30 inches Ed. of 7



*Undercut*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
37.5x30 inches Ed. of 5  
25x20 inches Ed. of 7





*Selective Memory*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x45 inches Ed. of 5  
20x30 inches Ed. of 7





*Timberfall*

Pigment ink on cotton rag  
30x37.5 inches Ed. of 5  
20x25 inches Ed. of 7





## STATEMENT

With an immigrant family history intimately connected with the forest as a backdrop, *Falling Boundaries* explores deforestation in British Columbia over the last century as it weaves threads of resource extraction and the reverberating effects of colonialism within the deepening environmental crisis.

In 2018 I joined a biologist working in an area on northern Vancouver Island that held some of the last remaining old growth cedar trees in the province. These particular trees were scheduled to be cut three months later and I returned to photograph the remains in 2019. In 2020 I worked with the provincial archives to inject historical imagery into the new images, along with personal photographs of my family. In the construction of these collages, I returned to simple layering techniques used in earlier projects, now in an effort to compress into single images the last century of industrial logging, a period of unprecedented loss of forests that have stood since the last ice age with individual trees often reaching 1200 years of age.

My family were among the early European immigrants to the Pacific Northwest and the first to settle on remote Cortes Island in 1887. In contrast to the worldview of the indigenous nations - at least those remaining after initial colonization - settlers brought with them their cultural perspectives on the seemingly inexhaustible forest, now viewed as a “resource” within an extractive market economy. As industry mechanization progressed from the end of the 19th century to present day the easily accessible tracts of forest were removed first. When those trees were gone, and the value of timber increased, harvesting slowly progressed up the mountainsides and into inhospitable areas once considered to be inefficient from a cost perspective. This wood is now so valuable that those concerns have evaporated.

The ancient forest of British Columbia now finds itself effectively nearing an end - of the original forest currently only 2.7% remains of its “big tree” old growth.



David's great grandfather and great uncle "falling timber the hard way".  
Courtesy Cortes Island Museum & Archives.



## Accompanying Text No. 1

### In Conversation with Gina Thomas

Coastal Guardian Watchman

Tlowitsis Nation, British Columbia

In conversation with the artist, Ms. Thomas contributes an indigenous perspective on land use, forestry, colonialism and reconciliation.

*Excerpt:*

**DE: I come from a settler background with four generations, to date, working in the BC forest industry. I am keenly aware of the values our culture brought with us around resource extraction, capitalism and racism, values which arguably have brought us to this environmental precipice. Do you have any thoughts on reconciliation and its relationship to a shift in the way settler culture views the natural world?**

GT: *I think that reconciliation and its relationship on how we treat the natural world still needs to overcome many challenges. One of the largest will be working with government agencies which manage our resources in a very colonial, disconnected manner. The natural world cannot be managed in neat little boxes, with statistical analysis being the primary decision maker. The problem with managing resources today is that we never have enough information; nature is completely interconnected and to understand any singular component we must first look at the bigger picture with a more holistic approach. Those who manage resources should be people who are directly impacted by the outcome of those resources, otherwise it seems too easy to forget the consequence of our actions on our environment.*

...

*The horrible aftermath and impacts on communities having children stripped away from their families, completely removed from their cultures and everything they knew, are still being felt and can only mend with time.*



Tlowitsis Guardian Gina Thomas stands on a cedar stump at a Western Forest Products cutblock near Rooney Lake, Vancouver Island.

(Photo: Serena Renner)

*Something that must happen before reconciliation actually works is this understanding of what actually transpired, the after effects of both sides, and acceptance that the hurt will only heal with time. Colonial perspectives will never and cannot ever understand First Nations communities wants and needs. There must be some wiggle room in terms of perspectives, seeing and understanding both sides is what is needed to truly begin reconciling.*

*All this talk about reconciliation must be followed by real action to protect the natural world, if it is meant sincerely. The 'precipice' is a perfect term for where we are at; we can come together and work towards a healthier future, or we can simply let things go and spiral into disaster...*

[Read the complete conversation here](#)



## Accompanying Text No. 2

### *Falling Boundaries; An Opinion* by Julie L. Nielsen

MSc., RPBio., PhD candidate, in the School of Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University

Ms. Nielsen brings an academic yet personal perspective on the state of the last old growth trees in British Columbia.

Excerpt:

*If there is one thing I have learned as a biologist, forest ecologist and ally of Indigenous peoples, it is that everything is connected. We are a part of the ecosystems we disturb, which is apparent through critical feedbacks that occur between ecological and human well-being. If our natural resources are in poor health and become less resilient, so too will this manifest in society. But, in general, if we take care of the land, it will take care of us. In doing so, it will mean we accept that the protection of the remaining old-growth trees and forests is more salient to human well-being than harvesting timber to meet our immediate needs. It will mean turning over a new leaf for this era of forest management and working towards a stewardship approach that promotes ecological health and resilience. It will mean prioritizing the conservation of large old trees for their ecological, biological, cultural, and social values, through the protection of contiguous tracts of old-growth forest. And really, given that the economic value of ecosystem services provided by old-growth forest far outweighs the income generated from harvesting old-growth trees, isn't this our only economically viable long-term option?*

[Read the complete conversation here](#)



Julie Nielsen at work, northern Vancouver Island





## BIOGRAPHY

David Ellingsen is a Canadian photographer creating images that speak to the relationship between humans and the natural world. He works predominantly in long-term projects with a focus on climate, biodiversity and the forest.

Recent exhibitions include China's Lishui Museum of Art, the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, Lithuania's Kaunas Photo Festival and Canada's Campbell River Museum. Ellingsen's photographs are part of the permanent collections of South Korea's Datz Museum of Art, China's Photography Museum of Lishui, and Canada's Beaty Biodiversity Museum and Royal British Columbia Museum. They have been shortlisted for Photolucida's Critical Mass Book Award, appeared with National Geographic, and awarded First Place at the Prix de la Photographie Paris and the International Photography Awards.

Ellingsen lives and works in the Pacific Northwest with a place-based practice formed by the landscape he grew up in. His photographs are made primarily between his home in Victoria and the island of Cortes, where he was raised, 150 miles to the north. Since arriving as that island's first immigrant settlers in 1887, five generations of his family have resided on these traditional, unceded territories of the Klahoose, Tla'amin and Homalco First Nations.





Installation  
Campbell River Museum, BC, Canada



CV (selected highlights)

b. 1969, Campbell River, Canada  
Lives in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

San José Institute of Contemporary Art  
Foto Museo Casa Coyoacán  
Campbell River Museum  
Beaty Biodiversity Museum  
Kaunas Photo Festival  
Griffin Museum of Photography (virtual)  
Capture Photography Festival  
Turkish Photography Foundation (projected)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Photography Museum of Lishui  
The Center for Fine Art Photography  
Center for Photographic Art  
Two Rivers Gallery  
Space BE Gallery with the Datz Museum of Art  
Highlights, Salt Spring National Art Prize  
The Mattatoio Museum

AWARDS

Director’s Award, The Center for Fine Art Photography  
Finalist, Photolucida Critical Mass  
Finalist, Salt Spring National Art Prize  
First Place, International Photography Awards  
First Place, Prix de la Photographie

COLLECTIONS

Phoography Museum of Lishui  
Datz Museum of Art  
Beaty Biodiversity Museum  
Royal British Columbia Museum & Archives  
Cleveland Institute of Art  
Four Seasons Hotel  
Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center  
The Center for Fine Art Photography

[View complete CV here](#)

San José USA  
Mexico City Mexico  
Campbell River Canada  
Vancouver Canada  
Kaunas Lithuania  
Winchester USA  
Vancouver Canada  
Istanbul Turkey

Lishui China  
Fort Collins USA  
Carmel USA  
Prince George Canada  
Seoul South Korea  
Victoria Canada  
Rome Italy

Fort Collins USA  
Portland USA  
Salt Spring Canada  
Los Angeles USA  
Paris France

Lishui China  
Gyeonggi-do South Korea  
Vancouver Canada  
Victoria Canada  
Cleveland USA  
Toronto Canada  
Boston USA  
Fort Collins USA





PRINT SALES INFORMATION

	<p>Bulls of the Wood</p> <p>30x45 inches (on 34x59 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x30 inches (on 24x34 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Falling Boundary</p> <p>30x37.5 inches (on 34x41.5 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x25 inches (on 24x29 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>High Rigging</p> <p>37.5x30 inches \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>25x20 inches (on 29x24 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Spar for the Last</p> <p>30x45 inches (on 34x59 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x30 inches (on 24x34 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Deep Time, Shallow Step</p> <p>30x37.5 inches (on 34x41.5 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x25 inches (on 24x29 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Former Shadow Future</p> <p>30x45 inches (on 34x59 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x30 inches (on 24x34 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>A Clearing</p> <p>20x35 inches (on 24x39 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950 framed</p>	<p>10x17.5 inches (on 14x21.5 paper) \$1500.00 print \$2150 framed</p>

	<p>Bucking Up</p> <p>30x45 inches (on 34x59 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x30 inches (on 24x34 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Out From Under</p> <p>30x37.5 inches (on 34x41.5 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x25 inches (on 24x29 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Selective Memory</p> <p>30x45 inches (on 34x59 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x30 inches (on 24x34 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Timberfall</p> <p>30x37.5 inches (on 34x41.5 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x25 inches (on 24x29 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Misery Whips and Double Bits</p> <p>30x45 inches (on 34x59 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>20x30 inches (on 24x34 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>
	<p>Undercut</p> <p>37.5x30 inches (on 41.5x34 paper) \$3100.00 print \$4100.00 framed</p>	<p>25x20 inches (on 29x24 paper) \$2250.00 print \$2950.00 framed</p>



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OTHER WORK



*The Last Stand*

Immigrant family history and the first forests in the Pacific Northwest.

[See the project online](#)



*Projections*

Exploring the extinction crisis through species that share our urban spaces.

Project ongoing.

[See the project online](#)



*Wildfire*

The atmospheric smoke from incinerated forests provides an interpretation of the increasing prevalence of wildfires, both local and global.

[See the project online](#)



*Unknown Entities*

Revealing plastics, as the unknown entities they are, as they diffuse and evolve into the fabric of life.

[See the project online](#)



*Weather Patterns*

An anecdotal archive - functioning as memory - recording, encoding, and storing milestones of climate change. An index of incremental change.

Project ongoing, daily since 2011.

[See the project online](#)



*Anthropocene*

Grappling with ideas of humanity's place in the natural order.

[See the project online](#)