

War in the Woods

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IN APRIL 1993, THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ANNOUNCED IT WOULD PROTECT A LARGE AREA OF FOREST NEAR THE WEST COAST OF VANCOUVER ISLAND ... BUT AT THE SAME TIME, IT WOULD ALLOW A MUCH LARGER AREA TO BE CUT DOWN. CLAYOQUOT (KLAH-KWUT) SOUND WAS OLD-GROWTH FOREST — TREES THAT WERE CENTURIES OLD. FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS SET UP THEIR CAMP IN A CLEAR-CUT AREA KNOWN AS THE BLACK HOLE. EVERY DAY AROUND DAWN, SOME OF THE PROTESTERS WOULD STAND IN THE WAY OF THE FORESTRY COMPANY'S TRUCKS, AND EVERY DAY THE POLICE WOULD TAKE THEM AWAY. AT TIMES THINGS GOT TENSE IN LOCAL VILLAGES BETWEEN THE LOGGERS AND THE PROTESTERS. IN ALL, MORE THAN 800 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED AND SENT TO COURT OVER THE SUMMER. MORE THAN 11,000 TOOK PART. IT'S STILL THE BIGGEST PEACEFUL PROTEST CANADA HAS EVER SEEN. THE FORESTRY BUSINESS HAD ALREADY STARTED TO CHANGE, BUT THE WAR IN THE WOODS HELPED SPEED THINGS UP. LIMITED LOGGING IS ALLOWED IN THE AREA, SOME DONE BY A FIRST NATIONS-OWNED COMPANY. IN 2000, THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARED THE AREA A BIOSPHERE RESERVE BECAUSE OF ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE PLANET'S ECOSYSTEM.