



## She Means Business

### Sub-Title

What's next for one of the most formidable environmentalists in the world? Lingerie.

### Author

by CORI HOWARD



Tzeporah Berman has come a long, long way from wearing fleece and leading protests in the clearcuts of Clayoquot Sound. Two years ago, the internationally renowned environmental activist found herself in a Brussels boardroom, grappling with self-doubt.

In a business suit, sitting beside the head of the Belgian paper industry, the chief foresters of the province of B.C., and private logging giants Interfor and Western Forest Products, she was the only woman and the youngest participant. She had done this hundreds of times before. Her presentation, aimed at getting big companies to stop buying paper from old-growth forests in B.C. and around the world, was solid, powerful, and often successful.

This time, however, the stakes were different. A couple of days before the meeting, she'd been told that Western Forest Products had already started building a road into the heart of the massive Great Bear Rainforest, the very area she was hoping to protect. "I felt like a flea on the elephant's back," she recalls from her home on Cortes Island.

Suddenly, everything shifted. After a break, the paper buyers came back into the room with a statement that recharged her completely. "They said it was untenable that old-growth rainforests were being logged for paper and they didn't want any part of it. And they recommended that all companies in Belgium stop buying products from Canada."

It was the tipping point for what became Berman's most successful campaign. Days later, Office Depot announced it, too, would stop buying paper from old-growth forests. Staples, the largest paper retailer in the world, had already rejected paper products from Canada's endangered forests and had agreed to use more recycled products.

Western Forest Products stopped the road, and just last spring, Berman found herself beside B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell, being called an environmental hero. The Great Bear Rainforest, along the mid-coast of B.C., had been saved—all two million hectares of it. The

area is three times the size of Prince Edward Island. It was a monumental and unprecedented convergence of parties that had, for so long, been enemies: government, industry, First Nations, and environmentalists.

Then, she turned her attention to lingerie. One would think lingerie has a tenuous connection to forest issues, but Berman found a way to sex up her campaign: she targeted Victoria's Secret, a company that produces a million catalogues a day. Using protests and full-page ads in the New York Times, she's tried to pressure the company to change the paper it uses, a quarter of which comes from endangered forests in Canada.

"In order to negotiate agreements with logging companies, they need to know they're under scrutiny from people who buy their products," Berman says.

Last year, the organization she represents, Forest Ethics, received extra publicity when its ads were censored from high-profile, glossy magazines, such as InStyle and Time, because the publishers didn't want to offend current advertisers. So far, the strategy against the lingerie company has produced some small changes: clearance catalogues are now printed on paper with more than 80 per cent recycled content, and they are in the midst of writing an environmental policy and will soon announce whether they'll continue buying wood products from Canada's boreal forest.

The sexiness of the Victoria's Secret campaign notwithstanding, Berman has had a low profile in recent years, compared to her early days. After volunteering for the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and Friends of Clayoquot Sound, Berman became the face on the nightly news talking about the huge protests that were happening in the old-growth watersheds of Clayoquot Sound.

It was Berman who set up the peace camp, led 10,000 protesters, and negotiated with loggers, the RCMP, and government to change the way the area was logged. She and her team did just that: Clayoquot Sound was declared a UN Biosphere in 2000, and since then, logging is subject to approval following a review by a scientific panel. From Clayoquot, she went on to work for Greenpeace International in Amsterdam and then to San Francisco, where her husband, Chris Hatch, was working for Rainforest Action Network.

She had met Chris in Clayoquot. He had been the first protester to arrive at the peace camp. Their first date was in a clearcut. Today, almost 15 years later, they have two sons—Forrest, age seven, and Quinn, age three. Chris has quit his job to stay with the boys at their Cortes Island home. Berman works as campaign director for Forest Ethics, the \$2.4 million US non-profit organization she founded, from her small island office. She has a staff of 30 and a job that requires her to travel at least one week a month to various global points: New York, Ottawa, London. "My life is crazy and (the family's) is very stable," she says. "But I love the work I do and I'm lucky because my husband is home and my kids live in paradise. They go to an alternative school on an organic farm. There's an incredibly vibrant and engaged community here, and the land is very beautiful."

Berman created Forest Ethics, at one time called the Coastal Rainforest Coalition, back in her Clayoquot Sound days. Her theory was that companies couldn't avoid listening to the marketplace. Her success was fast and astounding—convincing American retail giants such as Home Depot and Staples to change the way they buy their forest products. Along the way, she

has not only helped save the Great Bear Rainforest, but also a 245-hectare swath of boreal forest—known as the lungs of the northern hemisphere—in Northern Canada.

Now, she's taking the success of what has been achieved in B.C. to other countries. She's been working with groups in Chile, for example, organizing meetings between Home Depot, Chile's two largest forest companies, and Forest Ethics. All this led, recently, to the preservation of half a million hectares of forest.

If it's a long way from her days in the clearcuts of Clayoquot Sound, it's not just because of her suits and her slide shows; it's her tactics.

“What I've learned is that it's incredibly important to set really far-reaching and radical goals for what we can achieve,” she says. “You can spend just as much time campaigning and negotiating for one valley as you can for an entire region. And it's just as important to build relationships with the people on the other side of the table. When I first started, I thought they were my enemies. But just because you build a relationship with them, doesn't mean you're selling out. You don't change what you're trying to achieve. You're just building bridges to get there.”

Her strategy—combining tough negotiating and strategy with heart and relationships—is Berman's legacy. But she's no sentimentalist. She's onto the next project: the caribou in the inland temperate rainforests of B.C. “They are the canaries in the coal mines,” she says, without skipping a beat. “They're the species that lets us know about the health of our ecosystem and they're declining rapidly. That's what most concerns me right now.”

*Cori Howard used to live in Clayoquot Sound at the height of the protest era. Her first book, an anthology on motherhood called *Between Interruptions*, will be published by Key Porter next fall.*