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FROM VISION TO STRATEGY: AHOUSAHT PLAN WILL CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY WHILE PRESERVING HERITAGE, CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT

COURTENAY – The Maaqutusiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society (MHSS) is about to embark on a strategic economic development planning process, with financial support from the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

The strategy and action plan will build on the Ahousaht First Nation's Land Use Vision for their *Hahoulthee*, meaning traditional territory, released earlier this year.

"We have an opportunity to put a strategic, forward-thinking plan in place for our people and territory," said MHSS CEO Tara Atleo. "Our strategy will ensure that current and future economic initiatives are consistent with four key components: protecting Ahousaht cultural resources; enhancing the Ahousaht way of life; maintaining biological diversity; and providing sustainable economic well-being."

The Ahousaht First Nation Land Use Vision was the culmination of extensive community consultation. The document set out broad direction regarding resource management and land designations to help guide stewardship as well as the creation of social and economic benefits.

The Land Use Vision divides Ahousaht territory into seven designations, and each has specific potential uses identified, based on variables including traditional use, conservation, and sustainable development such as low-impact fishing, forestry, and eco-tourism, for example.

"This planning process, which looks to achieve community-validated goals by balancing opportunity with traditional, cultural and sustainable land use values, is a great example of an initiative that the Economic Development Readiness Program was designed to support," said ICET Chair Phil Kent. "I'm looking forward to seeing the outcomes of this project and the impact it will have on the community."

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is providing support for half of the total project cost of \$30,000, through the strategic planning stream of its Economic Development Readiness Program.

The project activities will include review of existing planning documents and initiatives, determining the priority of current and future economic development opportunities and consultation with community working groups, resulting in a final action plan.

The project is forecast for completion in winter 2018.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

Created by the Province of BC in 2006, the Island Coastal Economic Trust has been at the forefront of economic diversification, planning and regional revitalization for the past eleven years.

ICET is independently governed by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials, MLAs and appointees from the Island and Coast. This exceptional team of leaders collaborate to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved almost \$50 million in funding for over 170 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects. These investments have leveraged over \$270 million in new investment into the region creating more than 2500 construction phase jobs and 2600 long term permanent jobs.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca.

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