

# Homalco First Nation

Homalco Wildlife Tours  
Orford River Valley  
Population: no permanent residents



Homalco Wildlife Tours is an Indigenous tourism operation offering guided bear-watching, marine life and cultural tours through the Bute Inlet and along the Orford River for over a decade.

## 2 Project works

Upgrades include: 10 large signs, hand-carved by local artists in the Homalco language and a large 'Welcome' sign at the dock and entrance; two additional bear observation towers; reinforcement and rebuilding of the road leading to two towers; an interpretive centre; and a staging area.

## 3 ICET Partnership

Homalco Wildlife Tours received support to reinforce and capitalize on the Orford area's economic potential to use the resident Grizzly bear population as a unique and sustainable resource for their community's Economic Development Strategy.

## 5 Community Impact

The rebuilt and reinforced road helped secure the salmon spawning habit, which is a stable food supply for the bears. A consistent grizzly presence in August through October ensures regular guest bookings and the observation towers provide a safe viewing platform. The orientation centre is used to train staff and share cultural knowledge.

## 1 Context

Homalco Wildlife Tours needed infrastructure and facility upgrades to fully develop into a world class, sustainable and marketable wilderness site. Works have helped create an enjoyable, safe and educational experience for visitors, including during the shoulder seasons. Facilities are used by a range of regional wilderness tourism providers.

## 4 Process

The facility upgrades and construction took place from 2010 to 2012.

## 6 Regional impact

The facility is used by multiple wildlife operators. Other businesses, including tourism operators, have been impacted by the strengthening of the region's reputation as a world class destination for adventure wildlife experiences. There have been value-added benefits of including an early summer cultural tours component to the regular end of summer bear tours.

## 7 Spin-off benefits

Several private sector and training partnerships with high end eco-lodges have developed. Indigenous youth have benefitted through cultural and ethnobotany training (medicinal plants, drumming, storytelling...). A new gift shop in the interpretive centre provides a more seamless retail experience.

**The project has created a beneficial circle allowing us to encourage cultural knowledge sharing and development of new tour programs, which has increased employment, revenue and interest from other community members.** JP Obbagy, Tourism Development Officer, Homalco Wildlife and Cultural Tours

