

# **CROTEAU LAKE GROUP-SITE SHELTER**

*Completion Report for Island Coastal Economic Trust*

*Submitted by Strathcona Wilderness Institute*

*December 2017*



*View of completed yurt on old historic lodge site – October 2017*



*Eugene Croteau at old lodge site*



*New cedar yurt with staircase to lake*

## SECTION 1 – Grant Recipient Information

Name of Organization:	Strathcona Wilderness Institute		
Street Address or PO Box:	P.O. Box 3404		
City/Town/Village:	Courtenay	Postal Code:	V9N5N5
Phone:	250-336-2460	Fax:	
Email:	<a href="mailto:judynorbury@shaw.ca">judynorbury@shaw.ca</a>		
Incorporation/Business/Society Number:	Non-Profit Registration Number S33671		

### Designated Officer (Signing Authority)

Officer's Name:	Judy Norbury		
Title:	Chairperson		
Street Address or PO Box:	P.O. Box 3404		
City/Town/Village:	Courtenay	Postal Code:	V9N5N5
Phone:	250-336-2460	Fax:	
Email:	<a href="mailto:judynorbury@shaw.ca">judynorbury@shaw.ca</a>		

## SECTION 2 – Project Information

### 1. PROJECT NAME:

Croteau Lake Group-site Shelter

### 2. Project Dates:

Start - July, 2017 / Completed October, 2017

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strathcona Wilderness Institute (SWI) is a charitable non-government organization whose mandate is promoting Environmental Awareness and Natural History Education primarily in support of our parks and protected areas.

To complement the new community funded, backcountry group-site developed at Croteau Lake in Strathcona Park, (first park in BC), SWI proposed to develop a permanent group shelter. The completed shelter will not only attract new visitors to the region and park

(estimate approximately 40%-50% of visitors are attracted from outside region), but provide a unique backcountry facility which can be used by a large variety of people and groups for a broad range of uses. The site chosen for this facility is where Eugene Croteau, one of Strathcona's pioneers, had built a rustic lodge and campground. The new new shelter links the past to the present, while helping to maintain the opportunity for the public to experience the natural wonders of this area.

The Croteau Lake Group Site Yurt construction was completed October 26, 2017. While the project faced delays due to the redesign and engineering of both the yurt roof (to meet snow-load requirements) as well as the foundation/floor (bedrock was confirmed lower than expected). To meet the preferred and original goal of completion in 2017, much time was saved in the pre-fabrication of all components off site which would enable a speedier construction once in the field. Although the air transport of all components took place on October 19, 2017 (approximately one month behind schedule), once on site, the 4 person crew completed the construction in 8 days, despite being challenged with numerous snow, rain and severe wind storms. Final inspection was completed by the Project Manager and BC Parks staff on October 31, 2017.

The unavoidable design changes resulted in project costs increasing from the original projection of \$61,500 to \$75,800. In addition, the changes also impacted some in-kind donations. However, additional funds and in-kind donations were solicited and eventually confirmed allowing the project to proceed. While three of the four major invoices have been paid to the yurt contractor (One-of-a-Kind Woodcrafting), the final invoice cannot be paid until the Strathcona Wilderness Institute (SWI) receives the anticipated grant funds from the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

BC Parks has involved their marketing department who will be developing and implementing a marketing strategy over the 2017/18 winter. A new reservation system is also being developed and is anticipated to be completed in February 2018 providing ample time for visitors to make bookings for stays starting in May/June through October.

#### **4. Statement of Completion of Project Objectives**

The Croteau Lake Yurt project was successfully completed as planned and on time, ready for full operation in the 2018 Spring/Summer season. The yurt, which complements a new group campground, will encourage groups to visit the region and experience Strathcona Park for multiple days.

## **5. Project Objectives Not Completed**

All major objectives were completed.

## **6. Changes in Scope of Project**

The yurt project faced some significant design challenges associated with the roof and foundation. Significant snow load parameters forced re-design by engineers once detailed calculations revealed that the original conceptual design would not provide a reasonable level of confidence. Also, some assumptions associated with bedrock levels proved to be wrong once soil sampling was done after the late snow cover finally melted. With deeper bedrock than expected for foundation anchoring, a new foundation design was required. While both these challenges forced some re-designing and increased costs (also loss of some original in-kind donors), the overall project did remain within the scope of construction with the only actual increase in the scope, being the decision to add an additional window late in the design stage. As any extra windows had to be accommodated in design due to impacts on the structural integrity, the project did not have the luxury of adding a window(s) at a later date. The extra costs were mitigated with some in-kind design and labour donations.

## **7. Number of Temporary Jobs Created**

A total of 7 temporary labourer jobs was associated with the construction.

## **8. Number of Permanent Jobs Created**

No immediate permanent jobs have been generated from this project, however, if successful in attracting the anticipated visitors to the Croteau Group Site, at least one full time seasonal position is a likely outcome.

## **9. Information related to Economic Impact of project**

The uniqueness of this facility, coupled with its semi-remote location and the fact that this opportunity doesn't exist elsewhere in this region, or in fact any other park in the province, suggests there are no similar direct competitors or impacts to other businesses in the area. Conversely, this yurt facility will compliment other regional opportunities and encourage economic benefits to local businesses.

The potential external draw of this proposed yurt facility is based on the following collected data:

- Strathcona Wilderness Institute visitor information collected at their Paradise Meadows Trailhead centre over the last 3 years, indicates that approximately 36% (est 46% if including Victoria) of those who visited the centre, were from outside the Vancouver Island Region.

- BC Parks backcountry registration data, indicates approximately 60% of those pre-registering were from outside the region. Cape Scott was similar at 57%.
- Strathcona Park Operator (43K Wilderness Solutions) provides an anecdotal estimate of external to region, backcountry user origin, at approximately 25%-30%
- Alpine Club of Canada – Vancouver island– provided their averages of alpine hut use, indicating 27% of hut guests were from out-of-province (low 19%, high 45%)
- Parks Canada – Lake O’Hara group campsite, estimated users outside region = 45% (30% international and 15% Canada). The figure is higher if including visitors from Edmonton (500 km) or Calgary (200 km).
- Parks Canada – Jasper, provided user origin data for their backcountry use, showing approximately 42% of visitors were from outside their region. This figure is significantly higher if including visitors from Edmonton (360 km) or Calgary (600 km).
- Based on the above information, it would be fair to estimate a draw of visitors from outside the region conservatively at about 40% to 50%.

## 10. Lessons Learned and next steps

### Lessons Learned

While acknowledging and appreciating the support that ICET has provided for this and many other worthwhile projects (Thank You), a reassessment of current policies should be done to ensure the Trust is accessible and useable to all organizations, including small, cash poor ones like SWI, and that procedural policies are in fact reasonable given the challenges of “cash flow”. Each situation should be evaluated on a case by case basis without jeopardizing the main intent of ensuring the project is completed, within the allocated time frame and budget. “If” circumstances can provide a level of confidence which fulfills the intent without much or little risk, then ICET should consider providing a mechanism for a variance to assist with cash flow issues, i.e. if eligible work is confirmed completed and invoiced properly, it would help small organizations immensely, if ICET could provide the funds (usually ½) necessary to pay the invoice(s). Requiring the organization to pay the full amount up front, is essentially requiring them to solicit 50% more funds necessary in order to maintain a cash flow (solicited donations are usually used up first in order to pay initial invoices, leaving little to no reserves for late or final invoices). SWI was very fortunate to have formed a partnership with BC Parks who helped and supported the project significantly leading to its success.

### Next Steps

- Recognition signage will be developed and installed on site in Spring/Summer 2018
- Reservation system is being developed for online use by March 2018
- Marketing strategies are being developed and implemented over winter
- Operational details and opening to be planned over winter

## 11. Media Coverage

The yurt facility will be marketed through BC Parks, SWI and Park Operator websites. BC Parks has also enlisted the services of the Ministry of Environment Marketing specialist to help promote this new facility through a variety of ways, including social media, print media and direct information distribution to strategic groups, businesses and organizations.

It had been debated whether to draw media attention to the new yurt and group site in 2017. However, due to unpredictable weather and construction logistics, there was not enough confidence in completion during 2017 to initiate contact and attract local media. Instead, it was decided to wait until Spring of 2018 when media will be provided with a full story and encouraged to visit the site. It is unknown at this time whether a “Grand Opening” celebration will be promoted and who might attend, although, if supported, the Minister of Environment and/or Deputy and Assistant Deputy Ministers will be invited.

## 12. Location Maps





*Google Earth Image of Croteau Lake and Schelter Location*

### 13. Project Photographs



*Eugene Croteau's old lodge site*



*New Yurt on old lodge site*



*Croteau Lake from new Yurt location*



*New tent pad adjacent to yurt location*



*Yurt and new tent pads*



*Yurt and group site blends in to terrain*



*Aerial view of Croteau Lake group camp site with new yurt shelter*