

## **GWA'YAS'DUMS CAMPING FACILITIES ENABLE LOCAL SPENDING BY ECOTOURISM VISITORS**

*New campground on Gilford Island will cater to Broughton Archipelago kayaking enthusiasts*



*Buddy Bay Campground rendering*

COURTENAY, 7 September 2022 – The Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nations, located on Gilford Island in the Broughton Archipelago, is achieving another milestone in its strategic plan with the construction of a campsite in Buddy Bay, with funding support from Island Coastal Economic Trust's [Capital and Innovation Program](#).

In recent years the Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nations government has initiated a 'Come Back Home' plan that will provide the necessary housing, education, health, transportation and other basic amenities that will allow for the return of their people to their homelands. The cornerstone of this plan is the creation of a tourism economy that will replace the once vibrant forestry and fisheries industries that employed many of their people.

"Our Nation is one of the few First Nations who are still fortunate enough to live in their traditional village site, which we have occupied for thousands of years," explains Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nations Chief Rick Johnson. "Gwa'yas'dums Village

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remains a strong draw for many of our members who live off reserve and who wish to return home."

The plan contains several strategic tourism initiatives designed to respond to increased public interest in Indigenous cultural and ecotourism experiences, including the restoration of the Gwa'yas'dums Bighouse in 2014, the acquisition of the Echo Bay Marina and Lodge in 2020, and the completion of an interpretive eco-tourism trail in Echo Bay in 2022 – all led by Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation with funding contributions from Island Coastal Economic Trust.

"Gilford Island is the largest island in the world-renowned Broughton Archipelago, and the Village of Gwa'yas'dums is well positioned to become increasingly involved in the area's growing tourism market," states Chief Johnson. "Our new permanent campground at Buddy Bay will be a 10-minute walk from Gwa'yas'dums and will support business investment and attraction related to ecotourism including kayak rentals, marine wildlife sightseeing guide outfits."

The Buddy Bay Campground will offer accommodation to visitors to the area arriving through group kayak tours, self-organized tours, and other marine excursions. Amenities will include tent pads and a covered meeting area, outdoor shower and outhouse, potable water, safety and cultural interpretive signage, and trail improvements to existing trails to facilitate easy access to the Village. Future offerings may include traditional experiences such as meals, marine tours, and cultural excursions led by Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nations community members.

"First Nations have and continue to steward these special places which visitors come to experience. Too often in the past, kayakers and ecotourism companies have used the beautiful territories of First Nations without contributing back towards their stewardship," says Aaron Stone, Chair, Island Coastal Economic Trust. "By introducing a new tourism experience to the Broughtons, this project will attract visitors to beautiful Gwa'yas'dums where they can experience Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis culture and community in a respectful way.

Campground construction is supported through the Strategic Infrastructure stream of the [Capital and Innovation Program](#). The Trust will contribute \$50,000 to a total project budget of \$324,971 and construction will get underway shortly.



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### **About Island Coastal Economic Trust**

Founded by the Province of British Columbia in 2006, the Island Coastal Economic Trust works to build a sustainable and resilient coastal economy in reciprocal relationships with First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts across Vancouver Island, the Sunshine Coast, and islands and inlets from the Salish Sea to Cape Caution. Serving over half a million residents, we partner with communities in the development and financing of their economic infrastructure and diversification efforts through our unique structure that is led by, and accountable to, communities.

Since our inception, Island Coastal Economic Trust has approved more than \$58 million to economic development initiatives that have attracted over \$308 million in new investment to our region. These investments have created over 2,750 permanent jobs, and countless positive impacts, across the coast.

Island Coastal Economic Trust acknowledges that we work for communities across the ancestral and unceded territories of the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuuchaanulth, Éyáá7juuthem, Ligwilda'xw, Pəntl'áč, shíshálh, Hul'q'umi'num', diitid?aatx, SENCŌFEN, Lekwungen, and T'Sou-ke speaking peoples.

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