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NEW WEBSITE LINKS BUSINESS TO FIRST NATIONS

NANAIMO - A new portal on the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance website is giving First Nations, businesses, and investors an easy way to connect and form partnerships that will enhance economic development all across Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

“More than fifty First Nations, Tribal Councils, and First Nations Economic Development Organizations are represented on the new www.viea.ca website, and with a single click, potential business partners can connect to the relevant First Nations organization,” said Dallas Smith, President of the Nanwakolas Council and Director of the Island Coastal Economic Trust. “Partnerships with First Nations make good economic sense, and this new portal provides the first step to allow us all to connect.”

First Nations are a significant part of the regional economic landscape, and with numerous treaty settlements and reconciliations complete or underway, the opportunity for business partnerships and economic development investment is quickly growing.

The Island Coastal Economic Trust contributed half of the cost of the development of the portal through its Economic Development Readiness program.

“VIEA exists to support economic collaboration in our region, and profiling First Nations and their representative organizations to foster new partnerships is a smart move for the whole region,” said VIEA Chair, Dan Smith.

The lasting tool will be a map of the region showing the three tribal areas, clickable locations for each of the 53 First Nations with direct links to their websites or to websites representing their interests along with a clickable list of First Nations Economic Development organizations and Tribal Councils.

The Trust’s Economic Development Readiness program supports projects that provide a regional, collaborative approach to economic development. This program provides up to \$30,000 in non-repayable matching funding contributions to support the growth of economic development readiness in communities of all sizes. Funding may be used to develop lasting economic development tools, develop economic strategies, regional marketing and investment attraction initiatives or for other activities focused on investment attraction and economic growth.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET funds community driven economic development initiatives in targeted sectors to spark new and sustainable regional economic growth. These sectors include: forestry, transportation, tourism, mining, energy, economic development, agriculture and aquaculture, and small business.

ICET is managed by an independent Board of Directors comprised of thirteen members – eight Mayors and five provincial appointees from the ICET Region.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$47 million for more than 100 projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$260 million in incremental funding into the region.

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

-30-

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