

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EDUCATIONAL TOURISM WILL BRING YEAR-ROUND OPPORTUNITIES TO THE WEST COAST OF THE ISLAND

COURTENAY – Summer on the west coast of Vancouver Island is prime time for tourists, but visitors in July and August alone can't sustain a region through the shoulder and winter seasons.

A project funded by the Island Coastal Economic Trust and a group of regional stakeholders aims to highlight and promote the fast-growing trend of year-round educational tourism.

This project aligns perfectly with the ICET's goal of helping communities create the conditions that enable economic growth and diversification," said Phil Kent, ICET Chair. "We're pleased to see this initiative move from regional collaboration and strategy development to implementation. That is what ICET's Economic Development Readiness funding program is all about."

The regional partnership project began in 2014 with an inventory of assets and a strategy around developing a knowledge-and-innovation economy on the west coast.

This region-wide initiative is bringing together First Nations, local governments, and stakeholders in a collaborative process to develop an education economy that sees visitors learning alongside residents.

Coordinated by the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, and supported by funding from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, the Districts of Ucluelet and Tofino, the Yuulu?it?ath Government and the Toquaht Nation, the project will implement a range of regional educational tourism marketing activities.

Outcomes from this process will include the development and implementation of a suite of marketing tools, and resources, including social media campaigns to the launch of new websites, and more.

By focusing on education and research in the shoulder and winter seasons, the regional economy becomes more sustainable, and new business opportunities can develop thanks to more year-round activity.

Rebecca Hurwitz, Executive Director of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, said that this project is about attracting a new type of visitor in the shoulder seasons.

"Leveraging and promoting our regional assets in education and research will help bring visitors to our region, as well as provide new opportunities for local residents," Hurwitz said. "This allows us to build an economy that matches the vision and values of our region."

The Regional Marketing of Educational Opportunities project will begin immediately, with deliverables in place by the end of this year.

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 is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$49 million for over 160 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have generated over \$278 million in incremental funding into the region.

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

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