



ICET ANNOUNCES FUNDING SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL TOURISM ATTRACTION PROJECT

For Immediate Release

May 8, 2013

Courtenay, BC. The Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) today announced funding approval of \$120,000 towards the Kwicksutaineuk Haxwa`mis First Nation Bighouse Restoration and Eco-cultural tourism initiative. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$290,000.

For the past five years, the Kwicksutaineuk Haxwa`mis First Nation (KHFN) have been planning the redevelopment of Gwa-yas-dums, their homeland village situated on Gilford Island. The cornerstone of this plan is the creation of a tourism economy that will replace the once vibrant forestry and fishery industries that traditionally employed their people. At the centre of the tourism attraction strategy is the Bighouse, which is ideally situated as a visual draw to boaters passing by and will serve as the first level of marketing for tourists in the area.

ICET funding will be used to restore the 100 year old Bighouse to its original state while preserving its history and significance. Work will include reinforcing the old beams, restoring the original cedar siding and painting a traditional design based on archival photographs of the village. The restored Bighouse will be used to share the KHFN culture through a range of packaged tours which will feature culture, traditional feasts and traditional craft making. The Bighouse will be the hub of a series of other Aboriginal tourism products and ventures, which will be progressively implemented.

“The Island Coastal Economic Trust is pleased to support this community driven initiative to breathe new life into Gwa-yas-dums and support the creation of new economic drivers which will spark new business development and new employment opportunities,” stated ICET Chair Phil Kent. “This project is an example of how the Island Coastal Economic Trust can support remote communities and help them leverage the opportunities that the growing Aboriginal Tourism sector offers.”

“The Bighouse rebuild will contribute significantly to the economic opportunities envisioned within our Comprehensive Community Plan where Eco-cultural tourism was identified as a primary effort,” stated KHFN Chief Councillor Bob Chamberlin. “It will also provide a safe and appropriate place for the Kwikwasutinuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation's culture to continue to flourish. Building from this strong foundation of Family, Community and Nation will especially serve our youth in many ways, which will create a brighter future for us all.”

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. ICET has approved \$47 million for almost 90 projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$260 million in additional funding to the region.

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

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