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ICET SUPPORTS COLLABORATIVE WEST COAST PROJECT

COURTENAY - 24 current and emerging leaders from eight communities on the west coast of Vancouver Island will be learning leadership skills that will support economic development for the entire region.

The 10-month program, brings the participants, facilitators, and presenters together each month, is being developed jointly by Leadership Vancouver Island and local governments, First Nations, businesses, and non-profits, and is being delivered by a collaborative, regional team with administrative support through the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.

The Island Coastal Economic Trust provided matching funding of \$30,000 - 50% of the project cost - from the organization's Economic Development Readiness program.

"Rural and remote communities are recognizing the need for cooperative approaches to economic development," said Adrienne Mason, Research Coordinator of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust. "Communities need to support the development of the capacity of their leaders, so that those leaders can work together to deliver specific initiatives that support sustainable economic development for all the communities in the region."

The 24 participants are selected from Hot Springs Cove, Ahousat, Opitsat, Tofino, Esowista/Ty-Histanis, Ucluelet, Ittatsoo, and Macoah.

Over the course of the program, the participants all come together in each of the eight communities for learning days, with seminars, specific themes, expert speakers, and group discussions. By visiting each of the eight communities involved in the project, all participants gain an understanding of the region's economic challenges and potential.

"This project really represents the new way of thinking about economic development," said ICET Chair Phil Kent. "Small communities are embracing the need to work together on regional economic development strategies, and it's a smart and sustainable way to strengthen individual communities as well as regions."

As part of the learning process, the project participants will be organized into small groups, and will undertake specific community economic development initiatives.

"One of ICET's goals is to support projects that will lead to shareable best-practice models for other communities to use," Kent explained. "The approach of this project meets that criteria and the lessons learned can be exported to other small communities around the region."

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 \$47 million for over 100 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness 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

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