

CBT 2017 Research Award and Canada 150th Grant Support Nuu-chah-nulth Language Revitalization in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region

Congratulations to chuutsqa Layla Rorick, this year's recipient of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) Research Award!

Chuutsqa grew up in Hot Springs Cove and, as an advanced adult learner of the Hesquiaht language, has dedicated much of her life to increasing the number of Nuu-chah-nulth (NCN) speakers. In 2016 she completed her Master's degree in Education specializing in Indigenous Language Revitalization. Currently, chuutsqa is a doctoral candidate in the faculty of Education Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. Her PhD research on, *Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview and Place-based Language Revitalization*, "aims to collaborate with fluent NCN elders to identify compatible approaches for training a working-age generation of NCN educators," and create a land-based NCN language revitalization program in Clayoquot Sound.

This is the third year the CBT has offered the Biosphere Research Award, a single grant of \$20,000. The purpose of the award is to support research within the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region (CSBR) that advances local understanding of conservation challenges within the marine and/or terrestrial ecosystems and helps us to prioritize conservation actions. To be eligible, research must address key species and ecosystem threats and/or address a degrading trend for species or ecosystems of ecological and/or cultural importance. According to CBT's Research Director, Dr. Laura Loucks, "The CBT's volunteer Research Award Technical Review Committee was very impressed with the high caliber of chuutsqa's application. One of the outstanding aspects of chuutsqa's research proposal was her ability to make the link between endangered ecosystems and endangered cultures, explaining how Nuu-chah-nulth language patterns are inherently connected to both". As one Committee member put it, "if language is the most endangered element on the West Coast, this is the conservation action we need to take."

Chuutsqa's research proposal addresses the loss of First People's languages and the inherent loss of sacred connections with place that are integral to the formation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The percentage of fluent NCN language speakers in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region has decreased from 3.1% in 2012 to 1.7% in 2016 (Vital Signs, 2016). Furthermore, the majority of fluent speakers are elders, making the threat of NCN language and cultural loss that much more imminent. As chuutsqa explains, "[the] Nuu-chah-nulth (NCN) language and worldview has grown out of a coastal location and contains environmental markers that tie our language and our daily actions to the land and seascape." She says, "NCN culture and the biodiversity of the region, cultivated from our ancient system of unique socio-cultural relations on this land and seascape over thousands of years, has been subjected to continuously erosive and targeted threats since the beginning of the relatively recent settler colonial era."

The NCN worldview and place-based language revitalization project will host a language camp in which curriculum will include daily conversations with fluent speakers, friends, family and children. Her vision is to revitalize culturally based stewardship principles intrinsically embedded in the NCN language and stories. Moving forward, this project aims to celebrate culture, land and language and provide practical tools for learning both in-place and on-line. Moreover, chuutsqa's research is inspiring people to gather, connect and re-build community. Further funds were secured for this initiative through the Community Fund for Canada's 150th, a collaboration between the CBT, the Government of Canada, and extraordinary leaders from coast to coast.