



Friday, January 15, 2021

Re: Renewal of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Designation

Dear Clayoquot Biosphere Trust,

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation strongly supports the renewal of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Designation, which we believe is an important tool for supporting reconciliation, justice and equity, and fostering an understanding the Tla-o-qui-aht Haḥuuli vision and the visions of the three First Nations whose territories encompass Clayoquot Sound.

We are grateful to UNESCO for this ten-year review process, which presents a valuable opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in the previous decade, what challenges remain, and how we might collaboratively envision a more resilient and just future.

The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust has been a strong partner in recent years. They have hosted important conversations within and between our communities like *Tofino's Vital Conversation on Sustainable Tourism* in 2019; they have supported conversations our Nation has hosted like our most recent Tribal Parks Annual Gathering; and they have been vocal advocates of our Tribal Parks Allies programme, which seeks to promote right relations in ethical space with our non-Indigenous residents and guests.

What will distinguish the next decade for the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation is that Canada has become party to the United Nations' Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and BC has committed to implementing UNDRIP by legislating Bill 41. This shift changes the standards for right relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Clayoquot Sound and BC. While CBT has maintained an apolitical position in these unceded landscapes over the past two decades, the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation no longer believes this is an appropriate trajectory for the future, given the policy shifts just mentioned. So, while we do voice our ongoing support for the renewal of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation and for CBT to continue its important community-focused work, we strongly desire to see fundamental changes to the stated positions and funding priorities of the organization. The support of our Nation comes with both privileges and responsibilities, and BC's legislation of Bill 41 places a greater responsibility on UNESCO designations than ever to be models of right relationship.

We hope that the following decade - in keeping with the 2030 Agenda commitment to 'Leave no one behind' - will be a decade where the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust prioritizes supporting our people and our homeland. This means protecting Indigenous Rights and Title, promoting equality and non-discrimination, contributing to the revitalization of Indigenous cultural heritage, knowledge, and languages, supporting our Tribal Parks and other Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), enabling culturally appropriate education and development, and advocating for Indigenous self-determination, participation, and free, prior and informed consent. Being pro-reconciliation and supporting Indigenous resurgence is no longer a political stance. Rather, it is one that has been formally supported by provincial legislation and federal court precedent. We believe, that as part of the privilege of having this Biosphere Reserve designation renewed, it is the CBT's obligation to explicitly strive to foster interrelationships of right relations in ethical space, to stand in solidarity with the court precedents that acknowledge multiple sovereignties on these unceded ancestral lands, and to lead by example in our communities and region.

At this time, inequities between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous residents of Clayoquot Sound remain pronounced and we feel that UNESCO and the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust have important roles in closing the gap. We are hopeful that by elevating this priority, the CBT can strive towards more fully embodying UNESCO's policy on engaging with Indigenous peoples in the ways we have listed here. We continue to stand in solidarity with CBT and look forward to doing our part in supporting this vital work. The survival of our culture, our language, and indeed our people may depend on it.

ʔuušćakšič (Thank You),



Chief Moses Martin  
Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation