

Box 161
Tofino, BC
Canada
V0R 2Z0
October 22, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to affirm my support for the continued designation of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region, established in 2000.

I have lived in the Clayoquot Sound region for 42 years, working 38 of those years as a teacher/education assistant, and am now retired. I currently volunteer, with Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, on the selection committee for approving Neighbourhood Small Grants and have had the pleasure of doing this since 2016.

For the past decade, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) has worked devotedly to advance the objectives of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve program. They strive to achieve the objectives of sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and reconciliation. They have practiced these goals through education, research and collaboration. They have a grassroots approach to capacity and community building through programs such as Neighbourhood Small Grants and the 2017 Hisinqwit Gathering. They have provided funding for so many educational, cultural, and community programs throughout the region of eight communities, including five Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations. I have witnessed much bridge-building and network development between the communities, thanks to CBT initiation and support.

In the Clayoquot Biosphere region, Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) have been awarded and successful projects have occurred that have brought neighbourhoods and communities together, as well as projects that have educated culturally across communities within the region, promoting community and regional connectivity. The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust has provided funding and incentive for passionate residents to practice leadership roles that cultivate mentorship, as well. The NSG projects provide educational opportunities in non-institutional as well as traditional ways. This fosters a welcome environment for participants to learn and develop in. Networking and friendships continue long after projects are completed. Individuals who had never had opportunities to share their knowledge realize their strengths and gain confidence. Some project leaders re-apply with new projects for subsequent grants and some encourage their neighbours to create and lead projects when grants re-open.

Projects have been accessible to all, open for attendance (pre-Covid), and free of cost for the participants. Since I have been involved with application selection there have been so many completed creative projects for neighbourhoods and communities, such as: emergency preparedness gatherings; composting education; food preservation workshops; Halloween block parties; invasive plant (such as Scotch broom) control work bees; cultural regalia sewing; ceramic art classes for children; accessible yoga classes for all ages; community gardening;

making of homemade neighbourhood safety signs; make-over haircuts for seniors; teachings of traditional medicines; beautification projects such as planting spring flowering bulbs in a remote community; "Chicken Socials" where locals raising chickens for eggs, etc. could compare experiences....This is only a sampling of past projects to illustrate the variety.

When the pandemic reached our region (March 2020), so many people felt more isolated and less socially engaged. Neighbourhood Small Grants continued to be available with the aim to involve both the project leaders and the attendees in healthy, safe and stimulating engagement. The projects had to be formatted specifically with safety protocols as Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (RNSGs) from April to August 2020, and have resumed as NSGs, following safety protocols, with applications open at the time of this writing. Many of the new projects are being designed for virtual attendance via Zoom, etc. It has been exciting to witness how project leaders adapt and apply creative thinking to reach out, support, and connect with their neighbours and community members during these times of physical distancing. This has been such a valuable opportunity for residents of the Clayoquot Biosphere region, especially during the pandemic when many, many educational, recreational, and social programs have been cancelled and/or are limited. I am so proud of what CBT offers to our entire region.

On September 17th, 2017 the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust hosted a Regional Gathering - Hisinqwit - at Kwisitis, in the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. It was created as a day for all eight communities in the Clayoquot Biosphere Region to gather and to listen. - To re-connect and to plant seeds for new relationships. - To be represented and to offer respect for the diversity of the region. I attended this gathering, as a volunteer, a participant, and a witness. It remains in my heart and mind as a significant highlight in my decades of experiences living on the west coast because of the bridge-building and respect that was shown to all of the communities, their representatives, leaders, and the individual attendees.

At this Regional Gathering, I had the volunteer opportunity to assist an old friend of mine who is a Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations elder. She was teaching the weaving of cedar bark bracelets in an outdoor workshop, sheltered from the rain by an event tent. I was warmly welcomed as a volunteer and happily engaged while assisting her. Part way through the day I went to the grand gathering tent where people from all communities were assembled. I listened to the speakers. I was very moved and honoured to witness the declarations and admissions. I am in a local writing group and a few of us were each asked by the mayor of Tofino to read aloud one of our own poems. Nervously, I read mine from the main stage. Later, several people from different communities approached me and voiced their appreciation of my poem. I felt accepted and connected to a strong vital web woven that day by all who were present.

In September 2019, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust invited me to represent our region and attend an "Art of Hosting" event on Bowen Island, BC. It was the Art of Hosting Meaningful Dialogues and Participatory Leadership Workshop, a four day training and capacity building program for Neighbourhood Small Grants staff and volunteers. Attendees had travelled from all over the province. I really appreciated the Vancouver Foundation sponsoring me and reimbursing my travel costs. I was very grateful for the opportunity to build my skills, expand my knowledge of practicing inclusion, and to network and brainstorm with attendees about

supporting diversity and connectivity in our communities. I met inspirational people and learned valuable communication skills. It was an immersion into harvesting the collective intelligence of people. Many tools for designing inclusive, sustainable innovations were demonstrated during this training. I can now reference and use these tools in my daily interactions and in my volunteer work with Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.

I am very grateful to reside under the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere designation. There is much pride and security knowing that my home region with this incredible environment surrounding it, is designated as a biosphere. I feel so much more connectivity between the different communities and with individual residents now than I ever experienced in the late '70s and '80's when I first moved here. I strongly support the continued Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere designation.

Sincerely,

Janis McDougall

mcjanis@telus.net

Box 161
Tofino, BC
Canada
V0R 2Z0