



Maaqtusiis Schools
General Delivery
Ahousaht, BC V0R 1A0

Re: Maintaining the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Designation for the Clayoquot Sound

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Maaqtusiis Elementary and Secondary Schools (MES & MSS), it is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support to maintain the UNESCO designation for the Clayoquot Sound.

The Clayoquot Sound UNESCO designation maintains the natural environment of the traditional territory of the Ahousaht people. As students' identity is inherently connected with the land, it is integral to the revitalization and preservation of Ahousaht language and culture. Each year, Maaqtusiis students are given the opportunity to explore their territory, connect with local knowledge, learn about language and engage in cultural practices. First, through trips around the Clayoquot Sound, students identify the traditional lands of their families. They walk the beaches and forests of their ancestors, and in turn, develop a deep connection and understanding of who they are and where they come from. Second, through the locally developed language and culture classes, they learn about the medicines, the foods and the stories connected to the land. Elders and other knowledge-holders in the community share their experiences, wisdom and stories of the local territory. Also encouraged is the on-going learning of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth language. Through the support of adults and Elders, students are encouraged to use language as they engage in various land-based activities. They listen as fluent speakers use the language to pray, communicate, connect. Additionally, staff and students at MES and MSS use the Clayoquot Sound to host other schools, including St. Michaels University School and Kitsoo Community School during annual cultural exchanges. Students connect with one another through outdoor activities such as kayaking, hiking, fishing, etc. Finally, the UNESCO designation for the Clayoquot Sound gives students the opportunity to develop core competencies as recognized by the new BC curriculum, (including communication, collaboration and critical/creative thinking skills) while strengthening their identities as Indigenous persons. Each year the Grade 11/12 Environmental Science class is challenged to work with the Department of Fisheries, local fishermen and biologists to answer the question: "Where have all the salmon gone?" Through this research-based inquiry project students collect data, monitor ecosystems, and identify the importance of sustainable practices as they relate to local resources. Undoubtedly, the UNESCO designation ensures the protection of this natural environment which is the backdrop to student learning and the foundation of students' identities as First Nations People.

If you require any additional information, please contact me via email: kate.drexler@ahousahted.ca or via phone: 778-228-8280.

Kind regards,

Kate Drexler
Principal, Maaqtusiis Schools