

October 29, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to submit this letter of strong support for the continued designation of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region, established in 2000. The changes that our region has experienced over the last 20 years highlight the value of this designation and the focus it puts on maintaining a sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship between people and place.

The communities within and adjacent to the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region are growing. The number of residents attracted by the unique opportunity to enjoy a high quality of life in a place of great natural beauty is increasing, and a local industry based on hosting and providing services for a far greater – and similarly increasing – number of visitors is expanding. I think it's safe to say that the vast majority of residents and visitors alike would rank the relatively intact natural ecosystem, the liveable communities of the region and the well-developed network of formal and informal social services high on the list of things that set our region apart. I also think it's safe to say that most folks would realize all of these things don't simply come to be, rather they are maintained, cultivated, tended. The role of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust in this process is significant. The programs promoted and offered by the CBT and its partners all underscore the importance of sustainable growth and development to ensure that our region and our communities collectively retain and maximize and celebrate the benefits we enjoy, while identifying and constructively addressing the challenges we face.

The organization I work with is focused on environmental education and so much of the collaboration we have enjoyed with CBT over the years been in that field, and those are the types of programs I am most familiar with on a professional basis. I am, however, well aware that the CBT's efforts to develop and support functional community networks look to serve MANY other needs as well; financial security, food security, community engagement, cross-cultural learning and communication, scientific research and biological monitoring and many, many more. These initiatives, grants and programs collectively highlight the goals of the UNESCO designation, and I think the greatest compliment I could pay the CBT as far as their work and efforts over the last two decades is that so many of us living here have come to take it for granted that we can expect a level of informed discourse and community engagement that ultimately lets us make wise decisions to maintain and improve the standard of living for one and all. Again....these things don't simply come to be.

Our region has worked together over the past decade to advance the objectives of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve program. As a partner of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, our organization has been able to contribute to achieving the objectives of sustainable development, biodiversity conservation and reconciliation, through education, research and collaboration. Some examples of initiatives that we have undertaken with the support of the CBT include:

- Co-leading sustainable development and biodiversity conservation projects, such as an ongoing multi-partner study of shorebird habitat use in our region. I am particularly proud of this work, and especially grateful for the support we received through the CBT to carry out this research.
- Participating in programs and events that develop cross-cultural understanding and advance reconciliation, such as our Field School program, featuring a curriculum reflecting First Nations language, culture, and history. This program reaches every single K-7 student in our region.
- Developing alliances and partnerships to strengthen the development and engagement of citizens, communities, and ecosystems, such as a variety of adult education programs featuring topics and issues of local relevance which promote environmental awareness and promote local stewardship.
- Developing and promoting education tourism opportunities through participation in the West Coast N.E.S.T., such as educational courses, guided walks and other registration-based programs that highlight the local ecosystem and promote educational tourism.
- Contributing to the achievement of several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, most notably Sustainable Cities and Communities; Life Below Water and Life On Land.

We are proud to support the continued Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere designation, and look forward to participating in the next ten years of activities in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Maftai', written in a cursive style.

Mark Maftai
Executive Director
Raincoast Education Society