

Tourism in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region

A Vital Snapshot | 2021





About the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust

The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) is your community foundation. We're one of 1,800 community foundations worldwide implementing and monitoring the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework that explicitly sets targets for reducing poverty, ending hunger, ensuring quality education, and restoring ecosystem services. We also uphold the mission and mandate of the Man and the Biosphere Programme as one of 714 designated UNESCO biosphere reserves. At our core, we build assets, capacity, and trust within our region to strengthen the development of all citizens, communities, and the ecosystems on which we all depend. We strive to build strong relationships across communities and organizations, and engage decision-makers and citizens in meaningful conversations. We are the only organization in Canada that serves as a community foundation and oversees the mandate of a biosphere reserve.

About this Vital Snapshot

Research plays a vital role in the CBT's advocacy for community and ecosystem health. Our research

efforts are carried out in collaboration with our community to make a difference locally, nationally, and internationally. This Vital Snapshot builds on our Vital Signs research program by examining the holistic impacts of tourism in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region (CSBR) and by identifying sustainable pathways to change. We hope this report will influence positive changes in the tourism sector through advocacy and policy change. Please share and discuss this report with friends, family, colleagues, and elected officials.

Our Region

The CSBR, referred to as "our region" in this report, includes Hot Springs Cove, Ahousaht, Opitsaht, Tofino, Esowista, Ty-Histanis, Ucluelet, Hitacu, Macoah, and Area C of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD-Area C). There are five Nuu-chah-nulth nations within CSBR: hiškwii?atḥ (Hesquiaht First Nation), Saaḥuus?atḥ (Ahousaht), Xa?uukwi?atḥ (Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations), Yuułu?ił?atḥ (Ucluelet First Nation), and tukwaa?atḥ (Toquaht Nation). We utilize information specific to

this regional scale, but, given our small population, this is not always possible. When that is the case, we rely on community specific data.

The 2016 census recorded 5,569 residents living in our region, however many west coast communities, especially Nuu-chah-nulth communities, have a higher number of residents than are accounted for through the census process. Therefore, in 2018 the CBT gathered data directly from communities to better estimate the regional population at 6,462.

Seasonal residents and people living in staff accommodation are not captured in population estimates yet make up a significant share of the summer population. In Tofino alone, the resident population in summer is estimated to increase from 1,967 (the population as captured in the 2016 national census) to approximately 4,000–5,000.

Cover image: Ucluelet Aquarium annual animal release day. Photo: Mirae Campbell

About Vital Signs®

Vital Signs is a national program, led by community foundations and coordinated by the Community Foundations of Canada, that leverages community knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and supports actions that improve quality of life. The CBT is committed to a long-term monitoring program for the region and our communities, and publishes a Vital Signs report every two years.

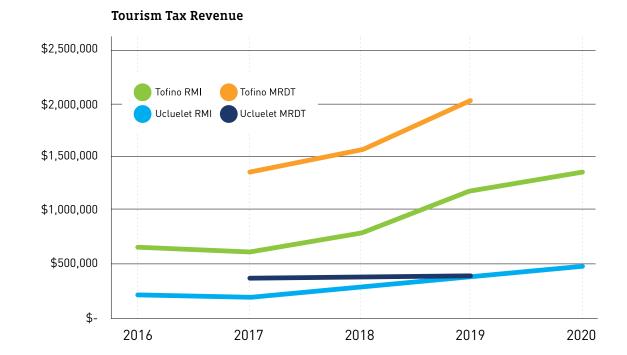
Economic Impact

The tourism, retail trade, and food services sectors employ over one-third of our region's workers. The tourism sector in Tofino alone generates 3,600 jobs (2,320 full-time equivalents) and \$110-million in wages. According to the 2018 CBT youth survey, 71% of local youth state it wasn't hard to find a job.

In 2020, business licenses issued for short-term rentals (STR) and bed and breakfasts (B&B) made up 37% of the total number of business licenses issued in Tofino and 26% in Ucluelet. Business licenses issued for STRs and B&Bs in Ucluelet and Tofino increased 112% between 2016–2020. Municipal zoning bylaws designed to manage the number of STRs in our region were revised and actively enforced during this time, resulting in a decrease in illegal STRs, an increase in business license compliance, and an increase in long-term rentals.



The percentage of business licenses issued in Tofino and Ucluelet for all accommodation services ⁵



The **Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI)** is a provincial tourism infrastructure grant program run by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture, and Sport. The initiative supports small, tourism-based municipalities to "build and diversify their tourism infrastructure, deliver exceptional visitor experiences, and incorporate sustainable tourism practices and products." Since 2016, RMI grant revenue has increased 102% in Tofino and 133% in Ucluelet.

RMI can fund: projects that help diversify the municipal tax base and revenue, and that increase

visitation and visitor activity, resort activities and amenities, employment, private investment, tourism contribution to the local economy, and municipal tax revenue.

Fourteen communities participate in the RMI. In 2016, tourism in these communities generated over \$680-million in tax revenue for BC, which equates to approximately \$13,600 in taxes per RMI resident. In 2017, tourism in Tofino generated roughly \$57-million in tax revenue, which equates to \$28,500 per Tofino resident.⁸

"Skilled workers (e.g., managers, trades, teachers, healthcare workers, etc.) are more likely to earn above the living wage while those in occupations in tourism, retail trade, and food services are more likely to earn below the living wage." -Vancouver Island Economic Alliance

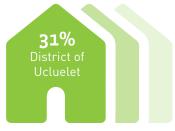


The Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) is a tax (up to 3%) that is applied to short-term accommodation rentals in participating areas of BC.¹¹ MRDT is set at 3% in Tofino and 2% in Ucluelet. Between 2017 and 2019, MRDT revenue increased 48% in Tofino and 9% in Ucluelet.¹²

MRDT can fund: tourism marketing, programs, projects, and affordable housing initiatives.

Percentage of 2019 MRDT revenue allocated to affordable housing initiatives.¹³





Quality of Life

Tourism adds to quality of life for residents by providing social and cultural assets such as festivals, events, restaurants, recreation opportunities, natural and cultural attractions, as well employment opportunities. According to Andereck & Jurowski (2006), "these positive experiences, however, can be overridden by negative effects such as crowding, traffic and parking problems, increased crime, increased cost of living, friction between tourists and residents, and changes in residents' way of life." 14

Living Wage

At \$19.63, our region's living wage—the hourly pay that each parent must earn to cover the basic expenses of an average family of four—was the highest in BC in 2019. Few people actually receive this wage, however, and more than half of the region's population earns below \$31,000. 15 Over 16% of women and 18% of men earn less than \$10,000 a year.

Between 2017 and 2019, monthly family expenses have increased by approximately \$300 (or 5%) in our region. Rising housing costs are largely driving up the cost of living. 16

Housing costs - median cost of rental units in Tofino and Ucluelet¹⁷

Rental Unit Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	% change since 2017
Room	\$663	\$700	\$700	\$700	+6%
1 bedroom	\$700	\$750	\$1150	\$1200	+71%
2 bedroom	\$1400	\$1550	\$1550	\$1480	+6%
3 bedroom	\$1600	\$1975	\$1950	\$2200	+38%

Typical assessed value of residential single-family homes¹⁸

	2019	2020	2021	% change since 2019
Tofino	\$767,000	\$877,000	\$956,000	+ 25%
Ucluelet	\$403,000	\$447,000	\$496,000	+ 23%

Percentage of households occupied by non-permanent residents¹⁹









The average number of available rental units per month has dropped significantly between 2013 and 2020. In 2013, there were an average of 17 room and/or one-bedroom rental units, 11 two-bedroom rental units, and five three-bedroom rental units listed each month. In 2020, there were three, fewer than one, and fewer than one respectively.²⁰

Impact on Public Spaces

In 2019/2020 just under 1.2 million people visited the CSBR, up 51% since 2012/2013.²¹

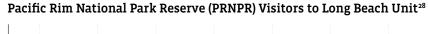
In 2018, the annual visitation to Tofino were estimated at 599,000 people and the estimated annual visitor-nights was 1,744,200. The highest volume of monthly visitors occurred in August (66,300) and the lowest was in January (28,000).²²

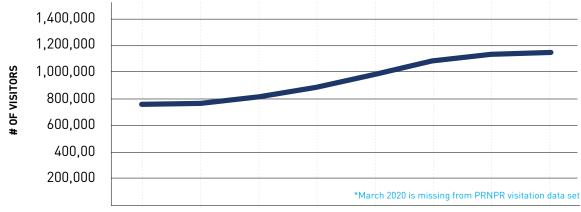
In Tofino, the net promoter score (how likely a visitor is to promote the destination) fell from 55 in the spring of 2016 to 45.2 in the summer of 2018. A net promoter score over zero is positive and over 50 is excellent.²³

Beaches and the rocky coastal shores provide important homes for many life forms, including multiple species of seaweed, barnacles, anemones, fish, sea stars, and more. They are also highly valued by residents and tourists alike, contributing to their connection to, and relationship with, land and place. Determining their environmental and social carrying capacity is essential for environmental health, sustainable land use, and quality of life.²⁴

Illegal camping, in communities and on logging roads, is a growing issue in the region as it is in BC and across Canada. In 2018 it was estimated that 60,700 non-paying campers visited Tofino. ²⁵ In Tofino, tickets issued for people sleeping illegally in their vehicles in the summer has increased from 10% of all bylaw infractions in 2017 to 41% in 2020. ²⁶ Similarly, in Ucluelet, illegal camping made up 56% of all bylaw infractions in 2020. ²⁷







YEARS 12-13 13-14 14-15 15-16 16-17 17-18 18-19 19-20

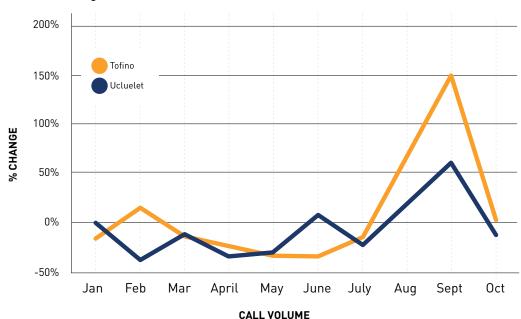
Health and Public Safety

In a May 2020 public engagement exercise, the "Tofino Thought Exchange," the District of Tofino asked: What is important to be thinking about as the west coast region responds to COVID-19 and prepares for the future? One of the top ranked responses was: "We need more support and resources for our hospital and other services to ensure they are funded for real-time populations (including visitors). So much strain and fear-based behaviours stemmed from a mismatch between our services available and our actual population."²⁹

Emergency room (ER) arrivals at Tofino General Hospital have increased nearly 60% between 2012/2013 and 2019/2020. Overall, ER arrivals are constantly growing. There is a seasonal trend of lower volumes of ER arrivals in the winter and higher volumes of ER arrivals in the summer. Summer 2020 (Jul/Aug) arrivals were 3% higher than summer 2019 and 49% higher than summer 2013.³⁰

Approximately 70% of 2019/2020 ER arrivals were residents of the Alberni-Clayoquot region and 30% of ER arrivals were visitors from outside the region.³¹

2019 vs. 2020 Paramedic Call Volume³²



Between 2018–2020, 55% of search and rescue calls were to help visitors.³³

The growing presence of visitors in the CSBR poses an increased challenge for local emergency management planning and response efforts.

Documented public safety incidents in the Long Beach Unit (LBU) of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (PRNPR) increased two-fold between 2017–2020.³⁴ The increase can be partially attributed to increased park staff presence at facilities, and reporting by tourism industry partners and the general public. In 2020, the decrease in overall incidents within PRNPR was due to the closure of the West Coast Trail and Broken Group Islands due to COVID-19.







Top five incidents by activity in the PRNPR42

- 1. Surf sports
- 2. Beach recreation
- 3. Driving
- 4. Hiking/walking
- 5. Coastal swimming



As visitation increases, the number of public safety incidents also increases.

In 2020, surf sport incidents accounted for 36% of all incidents in the LBU of PRNPR. Overall, the severity of surf sport incidents in 2020 was lower than prior years.

Between 2015–2019, the total number of crime incidents increased by 25% in Tofino (661 to 829) and by 53% in Ucluelet (223 to 341), as compared to in all of BC where incidents increased by 19%. 36

The crime severity index (CSI), which tracks the amount and severity of police-reported crime over time, has increased 35% in Ucluelet (from 80.54 to 124.18) and 22% in Tofino (from 149.64 to 182.26) between 2015 and 2019. For comparison, in BC the CSI increased by 13% (from 92.65 to 104.41).³⁷

There are currently 61 liquor licensed establishments in Tofino and Ucluelet. Between 2015 and 2021, 11 new liquor licenses were issued in Ucluelet and Tofino, representing a 22% increase.³⁸

In 2019, annual per capita liquor consumption in our local health area (Alberni-Clayoquot) was 13.71L of absolute alcohol (or 804 standard alcoholic drinks per year and 15.5 per week), up 13% since 2002 and significantly higher than in BC (9.07L or 532 standard alcoholic drinks).³⁹

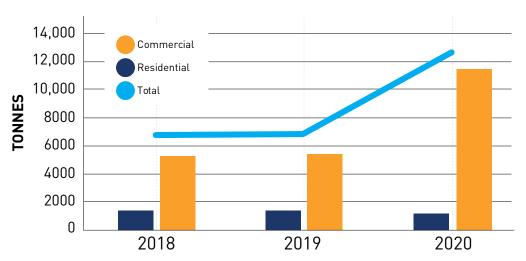
In 2020 in Ucluelet, alcohol violations made up 14% of all bylaw infractions. 40

"Tourism causes an increased number of people in a relatively small area, and contributes to the introduction of 'strangers' to local communities which can lead to problems such as crime."41

– (Lisowska, 2017, p. 31)

Environmental Impact

2018 to 2020 Residential vs Commercial Waste at West Coast Landfill⁴²



Garbage, whether properly disposed of in municipal bins, or illegally dumped/littered in the natural environment is a growing issue in the region. In Ucluelet, waste disposal at municipal bins increased by 130% between 2015–2019. As Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in takeaway food packaging as well as littered personal protective equipment (masks and gloves).

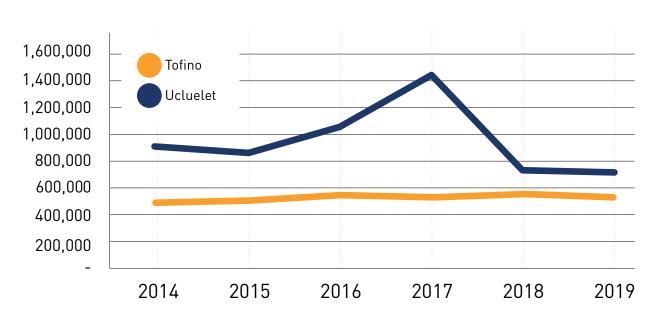
Nearly 71 tonnes of garbage has been removed from Kennedy Flats and surrounding areas by the Central Westcoast Forest Society (CWFS) between 2012 and 2020. CWFS has been hosting back road cleanups of the Kennedy Flats watersheds since 2012. Road access to these watersheds has enabled a large amount of illegal dumping to continue and these cleanups are one way to mitigate ongoing harm to wildlife and their habitats. 45



"The West Coast is in a very unique situation, where the impact from tourism creates a very different waste landscape than in other areas. In the Alberni Valley, 55% of all waste delivered to the landfill is from households, compared to only 20% on the West Coast. The other 80% of the waste is from commercial sources such as resorts and restaurants ... [The] percentage of organics in the commercial stream is 33% and recyclable material is 29%."46. –]. Brunn, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, 2019.

Infrastructure Demand

Annual Water Consumption (m³) for Tofino and Ucluelet47



The limited supply of fresh water is a concern for sustainable infrastructure and services on the west coast. The District of Tofino 2020 Official Community Plan identifies the present and future capacity to support the rising need for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure as "tangible limits to growth." Similarly, the District of Ucluelet 2020 draft Official Community Plan states "in the medium- to long-term an alternate source of water will be needed to support growth and industry within the District." While water consumption rates are lower in Tofino than in Ucluelet, the current water capacity will not support the current rate of growth.

Moreover, water conservation initiatives must also accompany investment in the infrastructure to eliminate pollutants and harmful contaminants from entering the wastewater and stormwater conveyances. However, the question of who pays for reducing these environmental costs is an ongoing challenge for sustainable growth management.

"The demand data available to the District indicates that peak water use in Tofino is driven by the number of visitors, which is regulated by the limited total number of available accommodation units, rather than residential growth. Recent analyses have indicated that commercial accommodation, and small and medium commercial, industrial, and institutional annual water use accounted for approximately half of the District's annual demand, including the majority of peak water demands during the summer months." 50

- Official Community Plan, District of Tofino

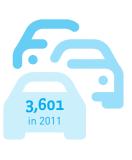
Average daily **traffic** at the Ucluelet-Tofino junction⁵¹

Year-round





Summer







Annual average daily traffic at

the Ucluelet-Tofino junction (the intersection where Highway 4 connects to the west coast) between 2011-2019⁵²:

Experienced an overall increase of 31%

and a summer average increase of 18%

- 2011 summer traffic was 84% higher than the annual average
- 2019 summer traffic was 66% higher than the annual average⁵³

This indicates an overall trend of increasing traffic volume over time and an increase in traffic volume in the shoulder- and off-seasons.

Inequities of Tourism

Tourism can be a driver for healthy community development, but only when local communities and all rights and stakeholders are involved in its design. The economic benefits of tourism are not equitably distributed within the region. The tourism sector is highly concentrated in Ucluelet and Tofino, in the respective ha-houlthee (territory) of λa?uukwi?ath (Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations) and Yuulu?il?ath (Ucluelet First Nation), with many businesses providing tourist services in the respective ha-houlthee of Saahuus?ath (Ahousaht), hiškwii?ath (Hesquiaht First Nation), and tukwaa?ath (Toquaht Nation). Nuu-chah-nulth-aht continue to uphold traditional stewardship practices, despite colonial damage to these practices, within their ha-houlthee yet are largely isolated from the revenues generated within them.⁵⁴ Indigenous nations have the right to benefit from and control economic activities occurring on their lands as affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by Canada in 2016 and adopted by BC in 2019 through Bill 41.

To address these problems and achieve a more socially and ecologically just Clayoquot Sound, these Nuu-chah-nulth nations and their partners/ allies have developed contemporary land visions, management plans, and other strategies. 55 These land visions and associated management plans are inextricably linked with Nuu-chah-nulth cultural values and interconnected relationships with the land and waters in their respective ha-houlthee. Human well-being is directly linked with the health and wellness of local ecosystems and therefore all living beings must be respected equally. 56 The implementation of these land visions will help ensure that economic practices are sustainable and benefit both human and environmental health and should therefore be prioritized and supported. Models for a sustainable tourism economy exist and are gaining momentum across the CSBR.



Gathering this information is just the first step, it's what we all do with it that really counts.

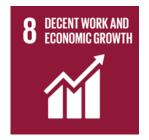
At present, the onus is on local communities to manage the impact of visitors without any significant financial support. As a result, the communities bear the brunt of having to provide services to a seasonal population many times the size of the resident population, on which provincial and federal budgets for services are calculated. There is an opportunity to advocate for a broader use of RMI and MRDT

revenues, shifting them from simply funding projects and programs that attract visitors to ones that respond to regional health and sustainability needs. Also, "tourism infrastructure" must be understood to include the basic infrastructure elements "required to transport, feed and house, provide energy and water, and manage waste and wastewater for the growing number of visitors and tourism workers." 57 (Wood, M. et al, 2019, p. 12)

How can the SDGs help us create a healthy and sustainable local tourism economy?

Agenda 2030 inspires us to envision a tourism economy that leaves no one behind — communities or ecosystems.

While sustainable tourism practices can help us to directly or indirectly achieve all of the SDGs, three of the goals include tourism in their targets:



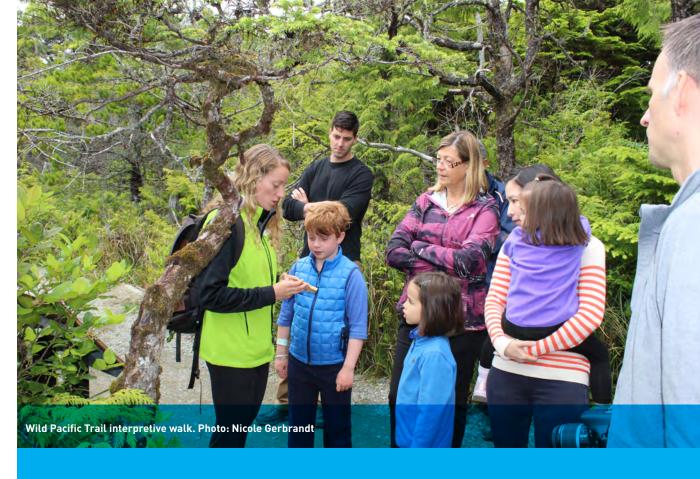
Target 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.



Target 12.b. Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.



Target 14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

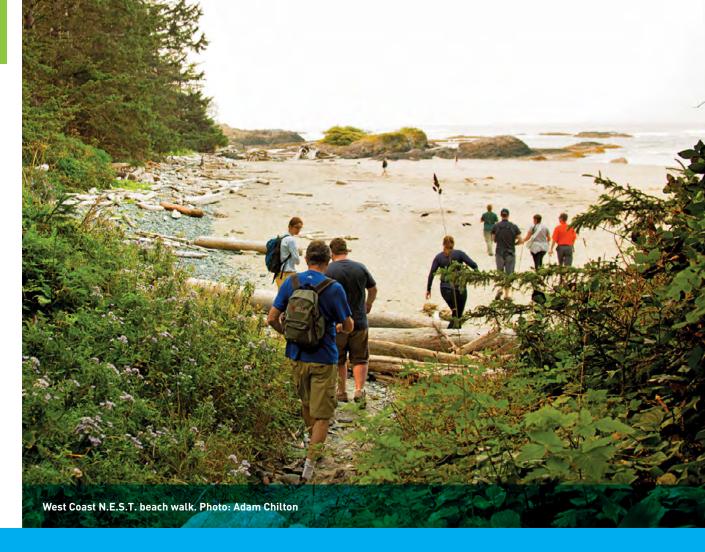


"Local capacity to manage the ballooning costs of tourism is hindered by a lack of quality analysis that accounts for the cost of managing each tourist on local municipal ledgers. This invisible set of local budgetary obligations is placing destinations in a position of financing additional required infrastructure for energy, waste, waste water, and the protection of natural and cultural resources, without recompense from the tourism economy."58

– (Wood, M. et al., 2019, p. 1)

Pathways to Change

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the short-comings of the region's current tourism economy and highlighted the need for a sector that aligns with the values of sustainable and regenerative tourism. As our region regroups after the pandemic, it is an opportune time to invest in models of tourism that help our region achieve the vision "to live sustainably in a healthy ecosystem, with a diversified economy, and strong, vibrant, and united cultures." ⁵⁹



According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism "takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities," whereas regenerative tourism goes beyond addressing needs to adding benefit, recognizing that "tourism has the potential to become an agent of positive transformation that can contribute to a better quality of life for all." 60





Nature. Education. Sustainability. Transformation.

West Coast NEST is a collaborative effort established to develop the region's education tourism economy in order to expand local education opportunities, diversify the economy, and establish new employment opportunities. Education tourism involves connecting visitors with experiential learning opportunities led by local instructors and knowledge holders. In support of developing sustainable and healthy communities, West Coast NEST works with its partners to increase sustainable development education programs, to increase learning opportunities offered in off-peak tourism seasons and in less-visited communities within the region, and to create equal employment opportunities for individuals whose knowledge has not historically been paid for, such as having Indigenous knowledge holders determine set program pricing, rather than having learners pay an honorarium fee of their choice.61

Seven Principles for Education Tourism in Clayoquot Sound:

- 1. Attract co-learners: we welcome others to learn with us.
- 2. Community reciprocity: we share benefits within the region.
- 3. Local knowledge holders are experts: we reimburse people for sharing their knowledge.
- 4. Learning networks of practice: together, we are creating a culture of learning and collaborative problem solving.
- 5. Stewardship-in-place: every community has an outdoor classroom and a place to learn from the land.
- 6. Holistic hands-on learning: we learn best by applied learning and practice.
- 7. Cultural safety and sharing: we create safe spaces for learning and healing across cultural boundaries.

Learn more about West Coast NEST and its regional partners by visiting westcoastnest.org



Tribal Parks Allies Program is an example of regenerative tourism in the region.

"The Tribal Parks Allies are a community of entrepreneurs and organizers united by their love and respect for this place and the culture that keeps it alive.

We certify participating businesses and organizations who meet our certification standards, which include helping to share our story and supporting the Tribal Parks Guardians and other regional services." Allied businesses and organizations support the Tribal Parks by collecting a 1% ecosystem service fee on behalf of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations. The revenue is reinvested back "to the people and ecology that comprise the life of this place."

Learn more about Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks and the Tribal Park Allies program by visiting tribalparks.com

Calls to Action

We hope this report encourages you to seek pathways for change to achieve a more sustainable and regenerative model of tourism in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region. These actions will help move us in a positive direction.

- Advance conversations about the carrying capacity of local communities and ecosystems.
 Where do we need to consider setting limits to tourism growth?
- Advocate for an increased allocation of tourism tax revenue to municipalities and First Nation governments and for broader uses such as to support regional health and social services, infrastructure, and stewardship.
- Learn about and support the implementation of the Nuu-chah-nulth land visions and resulting management plans implemented with the cooperation of Canada and BC.

- Participate in regenerative tourism programs such as the West Coast NEST and Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks.
- Adopt a community- and ecosystem-first approach to planning and policy development based on the principles of regenerative tourism.⁶⁴
- Work at a regional scale to develop a framework that monitors "data on tourism demand and the supply of resources to support the tourism economy," ⁶⁵ (Wood et. Al, 2019, p.27) to inform decision-making and a regional strategic tourism plan.



Background

In 2015, Canada and all other 192 United Nations Member States adopted the 17 SDGs as our commitment to Agenda 2030: a global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure no one is left behind. Aligned with this action, the Man and the Biosphere Programme strategic plan (2015–2025) adopted the UN SDGs with the expected results that biosphere reserves,

"act as, and are supported by, all levels of government as models for promoting sustainable development and advancing the implementation of the SDGs relating to healthy societies and settlements." (Lima Action Plan 2016, p.18)

In the spring of 2019, the CBT and the District of Tofino, co-hosted Tofino's Vital Conversation about Sustainable Tourism. The objective of the conversation, identified by District of Tofino staff and council, was "to better understand how Tofino's tourism economy interrelates with community life in Tofino and to consider this experience through the lens of varied community stakeholders." 68

Six key findings, identified as lines of tension and social-ecological system pressure areas, emerged:

1. As the number of visitors increases, the health of natural environment decreases.

- 2. As costs increase for visitors, job satisfaction decreases.
- 3. As the number of visitors increases, local access to emergency services decreases.
- 4. As the number of visitors increases, demand for high-cost infrastructure increases and affordability of municipal property tax decreases.
- 5. As the proportion of work force in tourism increases, individual median wage decreases.
- 6. As the number of visitors increases, the sense of well-being for locals decreases.

Acknowledgements: This Vital Snapshot is possible thanks to the help and support of several community organizations and community members. Thank you to every person and organization that provided insights and information and to those who will continue the work through advocacy efforts and policy change.

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