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MEDIA RELEASE

## BC's West Coast Announces New Initiative for Education Tourism

*Clayoquot Biosphere Trust and community partners welcome visitors to "the ultimate classroom"*

March 1, 2017 — (Tofino, B.C.) — Clayoquot Biosphere Trust and its community partners today announced the launch of West Coast N.E.S.T. ([www.westcoastnest.org](http://www.westcoastnest.org)), an education tourism website that serves as a portal for learning-focused travel on Vancouver Island's west coast. The NEST provides information on the wide range of academic courses, certification programs, ecology and wildlife tours as well as cultural experiences available in the region for students and travelers of all ages and levels who are looking to learn in an outdoor environment.

West Coast N.E.S.T. (representing Nature, Education, Sustainability and Transformation) is a regional collaboration between local organizations, cultures, and communities from Hesquiaht to Ucluelet.

"The NEST speaks to people who are looking to experience life, learning, Indigenous culture and community in a safe, affordable, natural setting," says Rebecca Hurwitz, Executive Director of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust. "This website is for everyone interested in education and authentic experiences that bridge communities to build a stronger, better future for all."

"We came together as a region to boost our tourism economy and local capacity, and it is tremendously exciting to see this website launch. During the course of the project I really think we discovered a shared regional identity that has strengthened the ties amongst our communities and organizations. We are 'walking the talk' about how we can achieve more by working together, listening, learning and applying our collective strengths," adds Hurwitz.

"West Coast NEST is offering tourists a unique opportunity to learn about the health of our ecosystems, understand the importance of our traditional and local knowledge, and celebrate the diversity of our wildlife. There is no better way for tourists to truly experience Vancouver Island and leave with a better appreciation for the region," said Member of Parliament, Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni).

The NEST initiative has received support from the Island Coastal Economic Trust and the Pacific Salmon Treaty Economic Capacity Building Fund.

"ICET's Economic Development Readiness Program was designed to help support just this type of broad regional collaboration," said Mayor Phil Kent, ICET Chair. "It is truly exciting to see how West Coast communities and First Nations have united to leverage their unique assets to develop a more diverse year-round tourism economy."

### **About West Coast N.E.S.T.**

West Coast NEST provides opportunities for transformative learning experiences in one of the last great natural environments on the planet—opportunities to research or study, to explore what education really means through one-on-one experiences in a spectacular setting, or to have a personal a-ha moment. Our main purpose is to be a catalyst for people to share information and develop healthy, meaningful connections. The NEST is a collaboration between regional organizations, cultures and communities on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Canada. For more information, visit [www.westcoastnest.org](http://www.westcoastnest.org).

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