



Juan de Fuca Corridor

Community First, Regenerative Tourism Plan

FINAL REPORT

September 2024

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02 | THE PLAN AT A GLANCE

SETTING THE SCENE



Why



What



Who



How

KEY CONSIDERATIONS



Land, Waters,
and Indigenous
Peoples



Blue and
Green Spaces



Distinctive
Communities

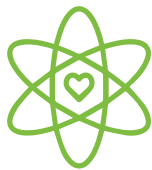


Our
Visitors



Our
Partners

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS



Vision and
Values



Goal



Strategic
Objectives



Strategic
Actions

GEARING UP



Collaborate
to Align



Manage the
Destination



Prioritize
Investment



Next
Steps

03 | SETTING THE SCENE



Mystic
Beach



Why a tourism plan?

Metchosin, Sooke and Port Renfrew, working together and with a broad range of people both within and beyond their communities, wanted to explore how the tourism potential of this remarkable part of Vancouver Island – the Juan de Fuca corridor running from Sooke to Port Renfrew along Highway 14 - could be better realized.

Through Destination BC's Community Tourism Planning program and supported by PacifiCan, the partners – the District of Sooke, the District of Metchosin and WorkLink Employment Society - enlisted the support of 4VI, Destination Greater Victoria and the Indigenous Prosperity Centre - an initiative of the South Island Prosperity Partnership - as it embarked on a highly participative process to develop the Juan de Fuca corridor tourism plan. The idea was not to impose a plan from without, but rather to work with all those similarly interested in the future of this region to collectively explore the significance of this place from within, identify areas of opportunity for advancing the tourism agenda and suggest a series of actions to move the visitor economy forward.

The plan area not only includes the hub communities of Metchosin, Sooke, and Port Renfrew, but given its regional focus, also embraces the communities of East Sooke, Otter Point, Shirley, and Jordan River. Importantly, it holds space in readiness to work with the Pacheedaht, T'Sou-ke and Sci-anew First Nations if and when they feel the time is right to engage.



The West Coast Road, also known as Highway 14, heads along the southern edge of Vancouver Island. Curling and winding like a snake, it twists around hills, crosses narrow river valleys, rising and falling, never straight for more than a minute, threading between tall trees, with just the occasional glimpse of the sea on the left. Pause at one of the viewpoints and see over the Juan de Fuca Strait to the snow-capped and glaciated Olympic Range across the border”¹

1 Hudson, R. (2020). The Botanical Highway. British Columbia Magazine, Fall 2020



What it does

This plan identifies how the economic, social, and cultural development of the Juan de Fuca corridor can be progressed through tourism without compromising the integrity of its very special natural attributes and profound cultural heritage. It provides a common vision, strategic objectives, and a series of actions to deliver on those objectives and suggests how a holistic approach to destination management might be taken forward. The plan was never about starting from scratch. It builds on existing policy imperatives and plans, achievements to date, and the good work underway to look after and manage access to the area's many blue and green spaces, its distinctive and storied communities, and its contemporary relevance.



Corridors have the potential to offer a range of attractions and experiences that are connected by a scenic and convenient route, making them popular amongst visitors who want to explore multiple destinations in a single journey, ultimately benefitting local communities."

Destination Canada



Who it's for

This plan is for all those who have a role to play in realizing the ambition for the Juan de Fuca corridor to become a destination of compelling appeal within Vancouver Island. With its focus on destination development, experience enhancement and visitor management, it is principally intended as a shared and prioritized agenda for the communities of Sooke, Metchosin and Port Renfrew to take forward with key partners locally, regionally, and provincially. It will enable all those involved to adopt a consistent, coherent, and cohesive approach to destination development activities and integrate efforts locally with the bigger moves underway regionally, provincially and at a federal level to enhance community well-being through tourism.

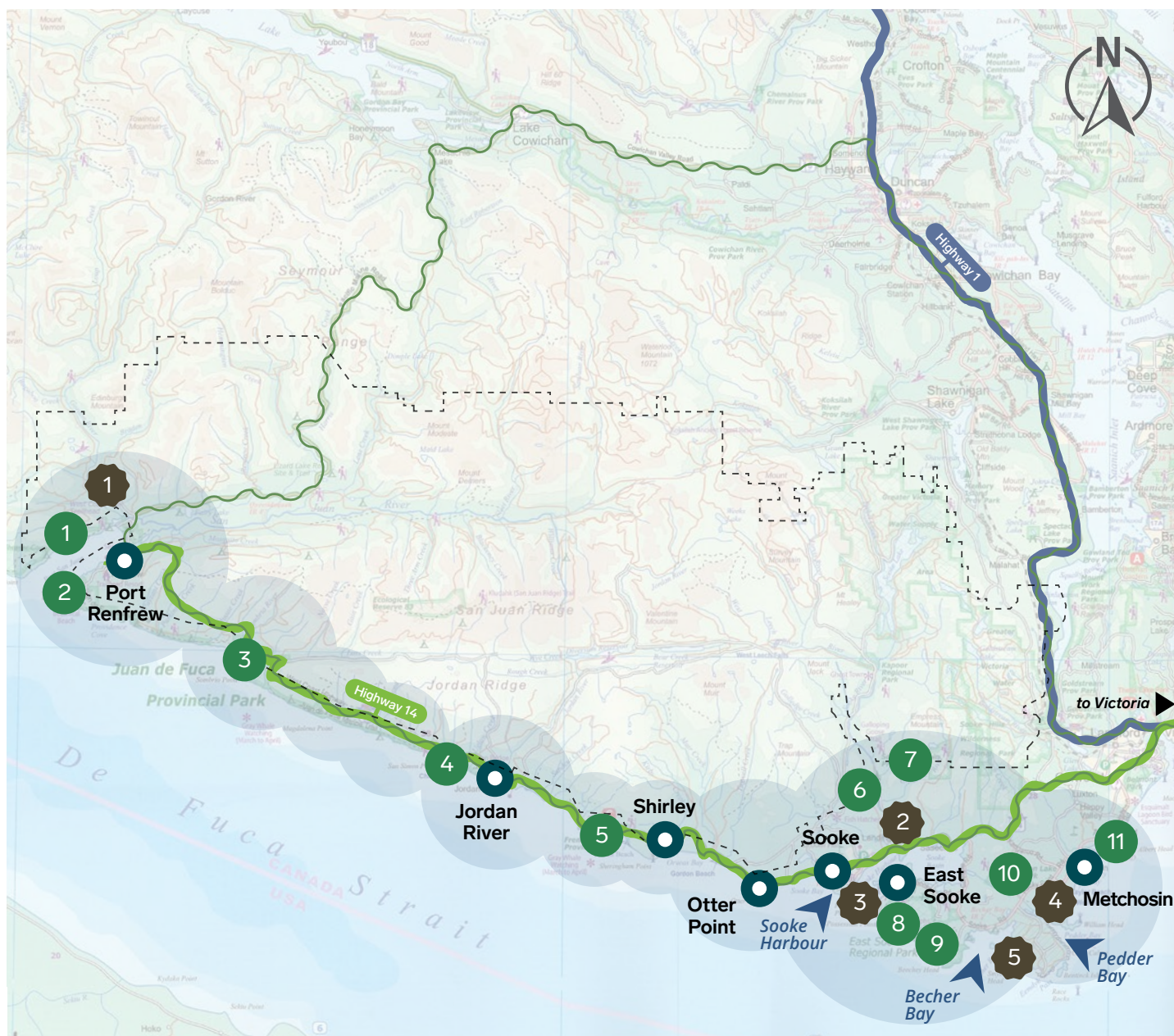


How it was developed

The development of the plan relied hugely on the sustained input from a wide range of contributors, listed on page 6, whose ideas, knowledge, experience, and expertise were sourced through one-on-one conversations, focus group meetings, two participative community workshops and site visits. Each conversation built on the outcomes of the previous one and the sentiments expressed were developed into themes which then became the building blocks of the emerging plan.

Everyone worked hard to collaboratively explore, identify, and agree the strategic actions that will not only enhance the experience of visitors to this area but will grow its visitor economy in line with their ambition and hopes for the future.

Juan de Fuca Corridor | Our Plan Area



Legend

- Our Plan Area
- Pacific Marine Circle Route
- Bay
- Highway 14
- Highway 1
- Municipal/Regional Boundary

First Nations

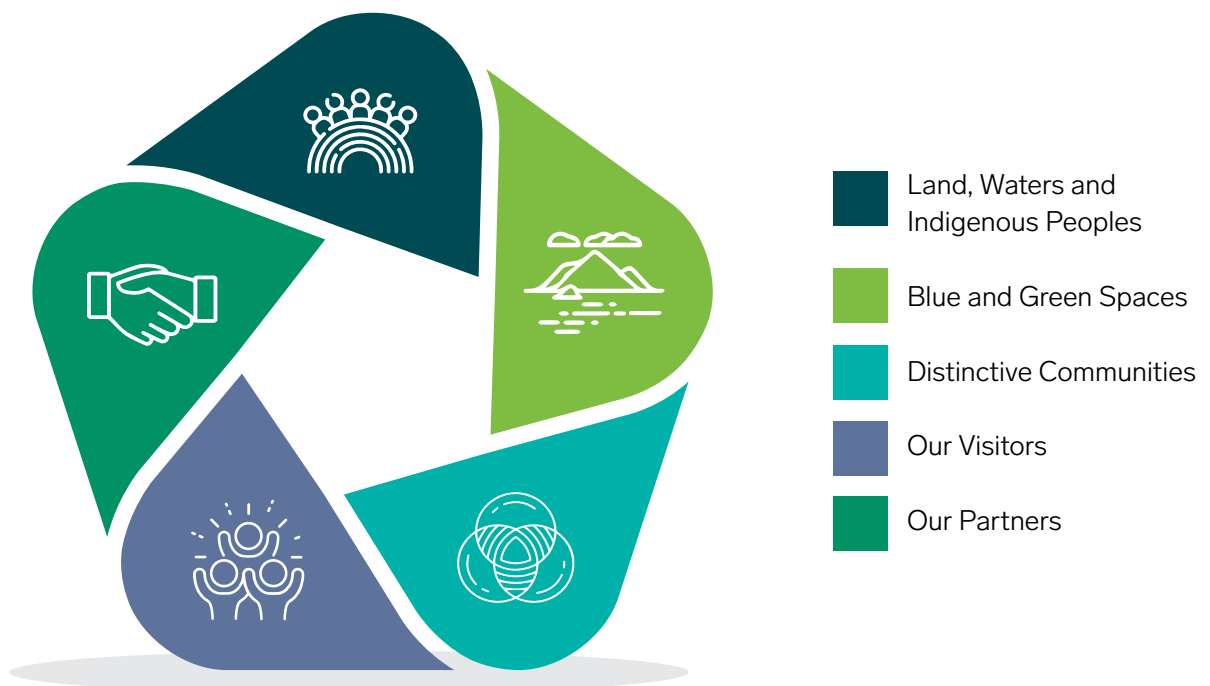
- 1 Pacheedaht First Nation
 - Pacheena 1
 - Gordon River 2
 - Cullite 3
 - Quesidaquah 4
- 2 T'Sou-ke First Nation (1)
- 3 T'Sou-ke First Nation (2)
- 4 Sci'aneew (Beecher Bay) First Nation (1)
- 5 Sci'aneew (Beecher Bay) First Nation (2)

Some Key Features

- 1 Pacific Rim National Park Reserve
- 2 Botanical Beach Provincial Park
- 3 Juan de Fuca Provincial Park
- 4 China Beach
- 5 French Beach Provincial Park
- 6 Sooke Potholes Provincial | Regional Park
- 7 Sea to Sea Regional Park
- 8 Whiffin Spit
- 9 East Sooke Regional Park
- 10 Matheson Lake Regional Park
- 11 Witty's Lagoon Regional Park

04 | KEY CONSIDERATIONS

A number of recurring themes emerged during the course of the engagement process. As foundational concepts they are presented here in terms of their scope and importance in underpinning the approach to destination development in the Juan de Fuca corridor area. Each theme is initially described, its importance highlighted and the learnings that have been identified are elevated as key areas of focus for the plan going forward.



Land, Waters and Indigenous Peoples

The geographically diverse Vancouver Island and Coast region contains mountains, fertile agricultural lands, beaches, ancient rainforests, rivers, fjords, and archipelagos, which make up the traditional territory of many Coast Salish and Nuuchahnulth First Nations. Amongst these, Southern Vancouver Island is home to Pacheedaht, Sci'aneuw, T'Sou-ke First Nations, within whose territories the Juan de Fuca corridor area is located.

paa?čiid?atx - Pacheedaht First Nation is a First Nation Government whose territory includes the lands and waters along the southwest coast of Vancouver Island between Bonilla Point and Sheringham Point, and extending inland to include the intervening watersheds, including Walbran Creek, Gordon River, San Juan River, Loss Creek, Jordan River and others. The name "Pacheedaht" translates to English as "Children of the Sea Foam."



Our sacred land is our home, which brings us peace, safety and comfort and connects us to each other and our ancestors. We are a thriving, strong and resilient community who continue to actively live the teachings of our ancestors of how to care for the land.”²



Old-growth cedar

Pacheedaht First Nation is related by language and culture to the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations whose territories are distributed along the west coast of Vancouver Island. Pacheedaht people are related by kinship, language and culture to several other First Nations on Vancouver Island, but their closest relations are with the Ditidaht to the northwest, and with the Makah across the Juan de Fuca Strait in Washington.

Pacheedaht territory contains spectacular old-growth cedars, a resource very important to the Nation in revitalizing and sustaining their cultural practices. The Nation has developed the Pacheedaht Cedar Conservation Society to manage this with the goal of ensuring a long-term supply of red cedar, which requires 400 years to grow to a size useable for ocean-going canoes and totem poles.

In January 2024, Pacheedaht First Nation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Capital Regional District (CRD) formalizing their government-to-government relationship. By outlining priority topics for collaboration and principles for working together, this MoU will directly support the creation of new processes for respectful and reciprocal government-to-government decision-making. The MoU sets out operational commitments on priority areas essential for the well-being of communities in the region, including:

- Government-to-Government Relationship
- Water Supply and Sewage Treatment Infrastructure
- Port Renfrew Official Community Plan
- Solid Waste Management
- Juan de Fuca Community Parks
- Regional Parks
- Land Use Referrals

Implementation of the MoU will have far-reaching impacts and will facilitate the incorporation of Indigenous leadership and traditional knowledge into a variety of CRD initiatives and strategies, benefitting service delivery in the region. It will identify possible partnerships to enhance economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for Pacheedaht people. Given its reference to the Port Renfrew Official Community Plan and Juan de Fuca Community and Regional Parks, this MoU holds out the prospect of the needs of the local visitor economy, and Indigenous Tourism opportunities in particular, being accommodated.

xʷčiyáṇəxʷ - Sci'aneṇ First Nation, also known as Beecher Bay, is a First Nation Government located on Becher Bay in East Sooke. The name Sci'aneṇ translates to English as “the Place of the Big Fish”, indicating the richness of the sea life in the region which sustains the Sci'aneṇ with food, shelter, medicine, and clothing.

² <https://www.pacheedaht.ca/>

Sci'aneu lands also include Fraser Island, Lamb Island, Long-neck Island, Twin Island, Village Island, and Whale Island.



Today, the Sci'aneu community continues to apply their long knowledge of environmental management in sharing their land and marine resources.”³

T'Sou-ke Nation of the Coast Salish peoples is a First Nation Government whose reserve community is located around the Sooke Basin. In the SENĆOŦEN language, the word T'Sou-ke is the name of the Stickleback fish that live in the estuary of the Sooke river.



What we are doing is something that I believe we all should be doing, and we all should take care of Mother Earth before we can have a healthy community. And when we do that, Mother Earth will be able to provide for us for future generations”⁴

For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have protected and managed the lands and waters of their territories. In recent years, many Indigenous Nations have continued to uphold their governance responsibilities and this long tradition of stewardship through the creation of “Guardian” programs. Guardians play an integral role in decision-making about the land and all that depends on it. They collect data to help communities decide where to create protected areas, where to build infrastructure, and where to zone for development. They help foster conversation between communities and companies, clarifying when to allow development and what conditions to apply.

They monitor wildlife, patrol protected areas and reduce the impacts of climate change. In the process, they honour their cultural traditions and train the next generation of leaders.

A Stewardship Program which supports Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht Guardians in their work with Parks Canada, is protecting their ancestral territories and those who visit it. The Guardians have created a cultural experience for visitors, both teaching the history of the territory, preparing them for their hike and re-instilling their connection and pride to the land.⁵

In 2023, the Province responded to calls from First Nations, to expand and fund the Guardians program and T'Sou-ke Nation is one of several now engaged in training additional Guardians staff to provide stewardship and monitoring in T'Sou-ke Territory. This will ensure that Guardians continue to undertake ecologically important activities such as marine mammal monitoring, parks and support of protected areas management, **tourism management**, land and marine use planning and economic development.



Indigenous Nations are offering a transformative model for conservation—one that sustains the land, respects rights and responsibilities, and nurtures language, culture, and well-being. This is a path out of climate and biodiversity crises: if we take care of the land, the land takes care of us”⁶

³ <https://beecherbay.ca/home>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnOk6KpdKjs&list=PL4946433BFCC65E6C&t=3s>

⁵ British Columbia. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. (2022) What We Know Summary Report Guardians Engagement across the Province of British Columbia. Available at (gov.bc.ca)

⁶ Indigenous Leadership Initiative. (2022) Indigenous-Led Conservation. Available at <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/>



Blue and Green Spaces

First Nations have governed the area for many thousands of years for spiritual, food, medicinal and other purposes. Their oral history includes stories of hunting, digging camas, gathering a range of forest and marine products, and fishing for salmon, trout, and steelhead. These blue and green spaces contain cultural heritage resources and sacred sites and continue to be used for traditional practices and harvesting. The Nations maintain a deep connection to their lands and waters, which are integral to their well-being and cultural identity.

The combination of nutrient-rich freshwater from surrounding watersheds and the salty marine waters of the Pacific Ocean gives the Salish Sea its unique oceanography and ecology, and connecting these two complex bodies of water is the **Juan de Fuca Strait**. The Strait forms a channel between Vancouver Island and Washington State and contains the international border between Canada and the United States mid-channel.

The Strait is a passageway for many species of migrating salmon moving from the ocean to freshwater rivers to spawn, the Fraser River near Vancouver being the largest spawning river for salmon in the area. It is a resting ground and final feeding area for dozens of migrating humpback whales from late August until December. It is also one of the busiest shipping lanes on the Pacific seaboard, as all vessels coming from the Pacific Ocean heading to ports in Victoria, Vancouver, Seattle, the Inside Passage and other smaller locations must pass through the Juan de Fuca Strait.

The **coast** includes extensive tracts of forests, beaches, pocket coves, estuarine areas, and rocky shorelines with spectacular coastal headlands and tidal pools, and off Vancouver Island, many islands, large bays and sounds, as well as fjord-like inlets. Strong offshore currents limit the opportunities for ocean kayaking and canoeing. Despite this, there is both windsurfing and surfing, offshore fishing, wildlife viewing, and beachcombing.

Indigenous Trade Networks⁷

Trade in abundant products was a standard feature of the traditional economy of Indigenous groups on Vancouver Island, with neighbouring and regional groups exchanging special, localised or abundant products with one another. Indigenous trade and commercial networks extended in several directions along the west coast of the continent. **Pacheedaht** territory, in particular, lies at an important crossroad for trade extending in four directions. The Pacheedaht participated in trade with:

- ✓ Nu-chah-nulth neighbours to the north and west, and other Nations further north, including trans-Pacific trade via Alaska and Siberia
- ✓ The Makah a short distance across the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and through them with other tribes as far south as California, and to the Interior along the Columbia River
- ✓ Neighbouring Nations to the east and south along the Juan de Fuca Strait, Puget Sound, Gulf of Georgia and the Interior by way of the Fraser River
- ✓ Neighbouring Nations on the east coast of Vancouver Island by way of overland routes through the San Juan River and Jordan River valleys.

⁷ Pacheedaht Heritage Project, Pacheedaht First Nation Treaty Department, Traditions Consulting Services, Inc. (2019) Pacheedaht First Nation Traditional Use and Occupancy Study Report for Port Metro Vancouver Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project



View from Loss Creek Suspension Bridge, Juan de Fuca Marine Trail

Operating within the traditional territories of many First Nations, including but not limited to Pacheedaht, Sci'aneuw and T'Sou-ke, the Capital Regional District (CRD), since its incorporation in 1966, provides and maintains a network of **regional parks** and **regional trails**.

Of particular interest for the Juan de Fuca corridor area are the regional parks which:

- Share a **Water's Edge** location: Albert Head Lagoon, Witty's Lagoon, Devonian, Matheson Lake, Roche Cove, East Sooke, and Jordan River
- Are located within the **Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt**: Ayum Creek, Kapoor, Sea to Sea, Sooke Potholes, and Sooke Wilderness Regional Parks

Water's Edge

These regional parks facilitate access to the Juan de Fuca shoreline, open coast, tide pools, sheltered coves, lagoons, estuarine environments, freshwater creeks, and lakesides.

Albert Head Lagoon <i>A Regional Conservation Area</i>	This small lagoon serves as a wildlife sanctuary and refuge for a variety of birds. It is a popular spot for family picnics, birdwatching, and beachcombing.
Witty's Lagoon <i>A Regional Conservation Area</i>	This seashore park contains a diverse landscape with woodlands, freshwater creek, salt marsh, sandy seashore and rocky headlands providing habitat for an equal diversity of plants and animals. Forest trails, sandy beach and rich bird life make this an ideal destination for the whole family.
Devonian <i>A Regional Conservation Area</i>	Tucked between Metchosin farmlands, this small nature sanctuary offers a quiet refuge, preserving many diverse habitats. The Beach Trail winds through woodlands and past Sherwood Creek, before emerging at the open coast.
Matheson Lake <i>A Natural Recreation Area</i>	This 156-hectare park features a picturesque lake, a wide range of recreational opportunities and sensitive ecosystems.
Roche Cove <i>A Natural Recreation Area</i>	Primordial temperate rainforest surrounds a uniquely serene, sheltered cove providing opportunities to hike along a creek or paddle still waters in early morning light.
East Sooke <i>A Regional Wilderness Area</i>	Encompassing 1,435 hectares of natural and protected coastal landscape, this park provides over 50 kilometres of trails through forest, marsh, and field, with pocket beaches, rocky bays, and tide pools for exploring.
Jordan River <i>A Natural Recreation Area</i>	Jordan River Regional Park is a 187-hectare mixed coastal forest park along the Juan de Fuca Strait. This park has a campground and offers a scenic view of the Olympic Peninsula.



*Matheson Lake,
Metchosin*

Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt

The Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt stretches from the Saanich Inlet to the Sooke Basin (north to south), and from the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to the Sooke River (east to west). The vision for the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt is to protect a contiguous area of approximately 10,000 hectares, of which over 8,000 hectares are currently held as provincial, regional, and municipal parks. The mountainous area features important wetlands, old-growth forest, rocky bluff ecosystems and several lakes and streams. It is a popular area for swimming, bird watching, fishing, camping, walking and cycling. Located within this system of protected areas are five regional parks –

- Ayum Creek Regional Park
- Kapoor Regional Park
- Sea to Sea Regional Park
- Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park
- Sooke Potholes Regional Park

Ayum Creek *A Regional Conservation Area*

This six-hectare park protects the stream-fed estuary of Ayum Creek, which empties into the Sooke Basin. The creek flows through mixed forest and riparian habitat and is a spawning stream for wild coho and chum salmon as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout. One of the few remaining estuaries in the region, it provides a quiet spot for a walk around the creek on the designated trail and excellent bird watching. It lends itself well to education, contemplation, and nature study.

Sea to Sea *A Regional Wilderness Area*

Sea to Sea is one of the largest CRD regional parks. This Regional Wilderness Area encompasses almost 4,000 hectares and offers outstanding outdoor recreation that allows park visitors to remain in close touch with the natural environment. Empress Mountain, one of the highest peaks in the area, affords -vantage views of Mount Manuel Quimper and Mount Brule. Scenic lakes include Crabapple, Grass, Peden and Sheilds.

Sooke Potholes *A Natural Recreation Area*

This park is the best spot for viewing the famous potholes. The Sooke River here plunges through narrow rock canyons over a series of waterfalls. The deep, crystal-clear pools offer some of the best freshwater swimming in the region. The Sooke River is the second largest on southern Vancouver Island and home to a salmon run every fall.

Kapoor *A Natural Recreation Area*

This park lies along the Sooke River, beyond the Sooke Potholes Regional Park. Numerous old trails and roads wind through the property, which includes almost two kilometres of riverfront land. It provides important habitat for golden and bald eagles, as well as black-tailed deer, northern alligator lizards, red squirrels, and pileated woodpeckers.

Sooke Hills *A Regional Wilderness Area*

The largest park in the region, the Sooke Hills provides a buffer to Greater Victoria Water Supply Catchment and includes Mount Braden which at (471m) is one of the highest peaks in the CRD Regional Parks system.



*Sooke River
Trail*

This network of regional parks is complemented throughout the region by very many community parks, linear parks, nature parks, neighbourhood parks, special purpose parks, and open spaces, under various regional, district and community management arrangements.

It's about 71 kilometres (44 miles) from Sooke to Port Renfrew 'where the road turns inland, and in all that distance, it seldom comes close to the shore. Occasionally there's a sign next to a paved road that leads down to a car park near the water. The names are synonymous with special places – Sandcut Beach, Jordan River, French Beach, Mystic Beach, China Beach, Bear Beach, Sombrio Beach and Botanical Beach. And, the iconic Juan de Fuca Trail threads a contorted route through deep salal, old-growth forest and river canyons, stitching together Juan de Fuca Provincial Park'⁸

8 Hudson, R. (2020) The Botanical Highway. British Columbia Magazine, Fall 2020

At a provincial level, **BC Parks** has responsibility for looking after a number of sites including:

- > Juan de Fuca Provincial Park
- > Sooke Potholes Provincial Park
- > French Beach Provincial Park
- > Sooke Mountain Provincial Park

Pacheedaht First Nation works collaboratively with BC Parks to share responsibilities and advance the role of the Nation in caring for these places.

Juan de Fuca	This park extends from China Beach, just west of the community of Jordan River, to Botanical Beach near Port Renfrew. It offers scenic beauty, spectacular hiking, marine and wildlife viewing, and roaring surf in its course along the Pacific coastline of the Juan de Fuca Strait. The park contains waterfalls, grottos, estuaries, salmon streams, and habitat for cougars and bears. Whales, seals and sea lions can often be spotted offshore.
French Beach	Located between Shirley and Jordan River on Highway 14, this park provides excellent whale-watching opportunities, particularly for gray whales. Killer whales, otters, seals, and sea lions can also be seen offshore. It's also a great place to see seabirds, bald eagles, and ospreys. Frogs, salamanders, and small mammals such as minks, squirrels, and raccoons are also evident. The campground offers year-round vehicle-accessible camping.
Sooke Potholes	This is first park visitors encounter along Sooke River Road heading north off Highway 14. This 7.28-hectare day-use area protects old-growth Douglas fir and associated sensitive plant communities that line Sooke River. The park is on both sides of the river and extends just past Todd Creek. Todd Creek offers a waterfall and the restored Todd Creek Trestle, a 100-year-old, 4-story wooden trestle and historic landmark of the former railway line that ran from Victoria to Leechtown.
Sooke Mountain	This park fulfills a significant conservation role in protecting threatened ecosystems such as Garry oak and rocky outcrops. The creek and moist valley forest provides valuable habitat for amphibians, reptiles, and birds. The park also protects some of the watershed for the important fish-bearing Sooke River. It is one of the largest areas in the region for protecting large predator and prey habitat including Roosevelt elk, gray wolf, black bears, and cougars. Grouse, songbirds and hawks are also found throughout the park.

The **West Coast Trail** is one of the world's top hiking trails, located within the territories of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations. Part of Pacific Rim National Park, the trail is famous around the globe for its spectacular old-growth forests, beaches, waterfalls, and salmon rivers. In the early 1900s, it was a life-saving trail used by survivors of shipwrecks off the West Coast. Gordon River, at Port Renfrew marks the route's southernmost trailhead.

Pacheedaht Beach is an iconic central space in Port Renfrew. The existing campground is well used, and it also serves as an important trailhead for the West Coast Trail. There may be an opportunity to work with Pacheedaht First Nation to explore other ways of supporting, enhancing or promoting this important space.⁹

9 Urban Systems. (2023) Port Renfrew Outdoor Recreation and Trails Master Plan. Port Renfrew Economic Development Task Force.

The **San Juan River** originates in the Seymour Range - a low mountain range to the south of Lake Cowichan - and flows in a south-westerly direction to empty into the southeast corner of Port San Juan adjacent to Port Renfrew. There are a number of small lakes on the river system including Fairy Lake, Lizard Lake, Pixie Lake, Dimple Lake, Doe Lake and Maid Lake, and both Fairy Lake and Lizard Lake have a campsite, beach access and boat launch. The **Gordon River** Watershed is located to the north and adjacent to the San Juan Watershed. Its headwaters are located in the highlands south of Lake Cowichan and it flows in a southerly direction to empty into northeast corner of Port San Juan.

These river systems provide important spawning and rearing habitat for salmonids including chinook, pink, chum, sockeye, coho, and steelhead trout. Pacheedaht First Nation is actively engaged in restoration activities in both rivers. Old-growth forests¹⁰ in these watersheds contribute to these species' survival as they;

- ▶ provide a continuous source of energy to streams from leaves which supports stream food webs
- ▶ contribute large, fallen trees to streams and rivers that create channel structure and instream cover
- ▶ ameliorate temperature extremes and flood peaks in streams and rivers
- ▶ hold together the soil and rocks, controlling sediment input and stabilizing stream channels.

The **San Juan River Valley** is renowned for its wealth of large old-growth forests. The valley is critically important to Pacheedaht First Nation for its cultural and ecological values. While these ancient trees are one of the primary draws for visitors to the Port Renfrew area, there very few places where visitors or residents can experience them up close.



With big tree viewing at the top of many visitor itineraries, there is a continued risk that people visiting areas that have no forms of protection or management will lead to environmental damage. By providing a well- developed, safe, opportunity for big tree viewing, it could draw people away from areas that are not (and may never be) ready for visitors, allowing them to recover or remain intact for future generations.’¹¹

San Juan River Estuary Ecological Reserve

was established to conserve a representative sample of the lower alluvial forest communities on the San Juan River flood plain, as well as to protect the tooth-leaved monkey flower, which is a rare plant unknown elsewhere in Canada. While ecological reserves protect special natural ecosystems, support research and education, and are not intended for outdoor recreation, this ecological reserve is open to members of the public for non-destructive activities like hiking, nature observation and photography. Hunting, fishing, camping, or foraging are prohibited, as are motorized vehicles. This area comprises very important habitat that Pacheedaht First Nation works hard to keep in good ecological health.



Avalanche Lilies, Kludahk Trail

¹⁰ <https://oldgrowthforestecology.org/>

¹¹ Urban Systems. (2023) Port Renfrew Outdoor Recreation and Trails Master Plan. Port Renfrew Economic Development Task Force.



Loss Creek, Juan de Fuca Trail

The **Kludahk Trail** is approximately 50 kilometres long and runs along the San Juan Ridge. It is managed by the Kludahk Outdoor Club through Recreation Sites and Trails BC and in cooperation with the forest industry. Its vegetation is unique, ranging from old growth stands of red cedar, to sub alpine meadows, bogs, and lakes. The trail has abundant wildflowers and some wildlife. The trail, the western end of which is very accessible from Port Renfrew, provides for hut-to-hut hikes from several access points. Huts are owned, managed, and maintained by the Kludahk Outdoors Club (KOC) a registered not-for-profit society. A key concern for the Kludahk Trail relates to its management with regard to fire safety.

Running almost parallel to the inland Kludahk Trail, the **Juan de Fuca Marine Trail** is a scenic, rugged 47-kilometre trail within the Juan de Fuca Provincial Park. It runs between **Botanical Beach** and **China Beach** with trailheads located at these locations as well as at **Parkinson Creek** and **Sombrio Beach**. The trail and park are located in Pacheedaht territory. According to the Nation, there are three historical village sites within the area of the trail. These include a fishing and seafood gathering village known as Qwa:qt̓is located at the mouth of Sombrio River, a village called T̓'ehib at Boulder Beach (between **Mystic Beach** and Bear Beach), and a winter village and defensive site known as ɬi:xwa:p on top of a bluff at Botanical Beach. A looped trail connects Botanical Beach to Botany Bay, providing a wonderful walk through a forest of windswept and twisted trees.

Botanical Beach	Botanical Beach provides visitors with access to uniquely rich tide pools and shoreline trails with fantastic geological features. The extensive variety of marine flora and fauna in this intertidal zone includes red, purple, and orange starfish and sea urchins, white gooseneck barnacles, blue mussels and green sea anemones and sea cucumbers. Coralline algae, periwinkles, chitons, and sea stars can also be seen at Botanical Beach. Pacheedaht First Nation is actively engaged with BC Parks on the management and future development of Botanical Beach. The area has been incredibly impacted in recent years, especially due to increased local visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The safety of parking areas is of concern in the summer, and visitor volumes need to be reviewed to ensure the environmental integrity is maintained.
Parkinson Creek	This moderate section of trail takes hikers through regenerating logged areas and old-growth forest fringe and along the beautiful, rugged shoreline. Marine mammals frequent this area.
Sombrio Beach	This pebbled beach can be reached via a 250-metre access trail from the Trailhead parking lot, off Highway 14. With three designated wilderness camping areas, visitors can explore or hike east or west along the beach, enjoy a picnic or try surfing in this world-class surfing area. It has not one, but two secret waterfalls, regarded as sacred places by Pacheedaht First Nation.
Mystic Beach	Mystic Beach is one of the smaller beaches on the Juan de Fuca Trail at just 350m long. The highlight here is the beautiful white sand and the waterfall that tumbles over the cliffs at the east end. As a designated campsite along the Juan de Fuca Marine trail, camping is allowed on the beach, with a small, forested campground available at China Beach.
China Beach	China Beach is a sandy beach that is great for walking and enjoying the oceanside scenery. There are many fine views looking across the Strait towards the state of Washington and marine wildlife can sometimes be spotted, such as orcas or seals. Access to China Beach is via a trail from one of two parking lots off Highway 14. The first of these services access to Mystic Beach, the trailhead for the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail. The other services access to the beach via a gently descending trail through forest. Pacheedaht First Nation will be reviewing the plans for this area to ensure adequate infrastructure is included.



Upon reaching the end of the (China Beach) trail, you are greeted by the expansive and breathtaking view of China Beach, sandwiched between the calming waters of the Juan de Fuca Strait and the dense forests and steep shoreline. China Beach offers a picturesque landscape that captures the heart of Vancouver Island's rugged coastline. The beach stretches out, a mix of sand and pebbles edged by the rolling waves of the Pacific Ocean, offering a serene and almost untouched natural environment."¹²

12 <https://vancouverislandbucketlist.com/experiences/china-beach/>



*Galloping
Goose Regional
Trail, Metchosin*

The **Galloping Goose Regional Trail** starts in Victoria and ends in Leechtown, an abandoned gold mine town north of Sooke. The Trail is a key attraction that connects Sooke's parks and trails with those of the surrounding communities and provides a multi-use trail, running through Metchosin, Colwood, Langford, View Royal and Saanich. Administered by CRD Regional Parks, this 55-kilometre long, multi-use trail was opened in 1987, and was named after an unusual gasoline-powered railway car that once carried mail and up to 30 passengers between Sooke and Victoria twice daily during the 1920s.

Ridin' the Goose

Gas-powered passenger car No.15813 was gawky and noisy. But the Galloping Goose motored past some of the finest landscapes on the Vancouver Island: fern-draped rock cuts, streams, and rolling hills. From its first run in 1922, the Goose carried mail and 30 passengers twice daily from Victoria to Sooke. The CNR dropped the Goose after a brief nine-year run.¹³

Built along a former railway line, the trail is generally flat with only slight inclines, except for occasional hills and valleys where bridges once stood. Most parts are accessible for wheelchair users as well, and sections of the trails are also used by horseback riders.



A larger vision!

The Galloping Goose Regional Trail is part of something bigger: the Trans-Canada Trail, a national multi-use trail system linking similar trails from coast to coast. As one of the first completed sections of the Trans-Canada Trail, the Goose is also part of the CRD Regional Trail system that will some day link Swartz Bay and Port Renfrew.¹⁴

13 CRD Parks. The Official Guide: The Galloping Goose Regional Trail

14 CRD Parks. The Official Guide: The Galloping Goose Regional Trail



Distinctive Communities

Tourism should be a positive and regenerating force, contributing to the creation of flourishing places and thriving communities. It should be valued by local communities for the contribution that it makes to them directly by creating sustainable jobs, opportunities for enterprise and better places to live, and, by extension, making them more attractive places to visit.

Metchosin

Located approximately 16 kilometres southwest of Victoria, Metchosin is a community of over 5,000 people. The District is bounded by the City of Colwood, the District of Langford, and the District of Sooke. Its unique and diverse natural environment has a strong maritime orientation which, along with its collection of regional and local parks, golf courses, a marina and resort area, provides significant regional recreational and tourism opportunity. Agricultural production in Metchosin began in the early 1850s and remains a key characteristic of the rural landscape. The cultivation of potatoes, vegetables, strawberries and tree fruits as well as the establishment of dairy, pig and sheep ranching enterprises are important features of the rural economy. A

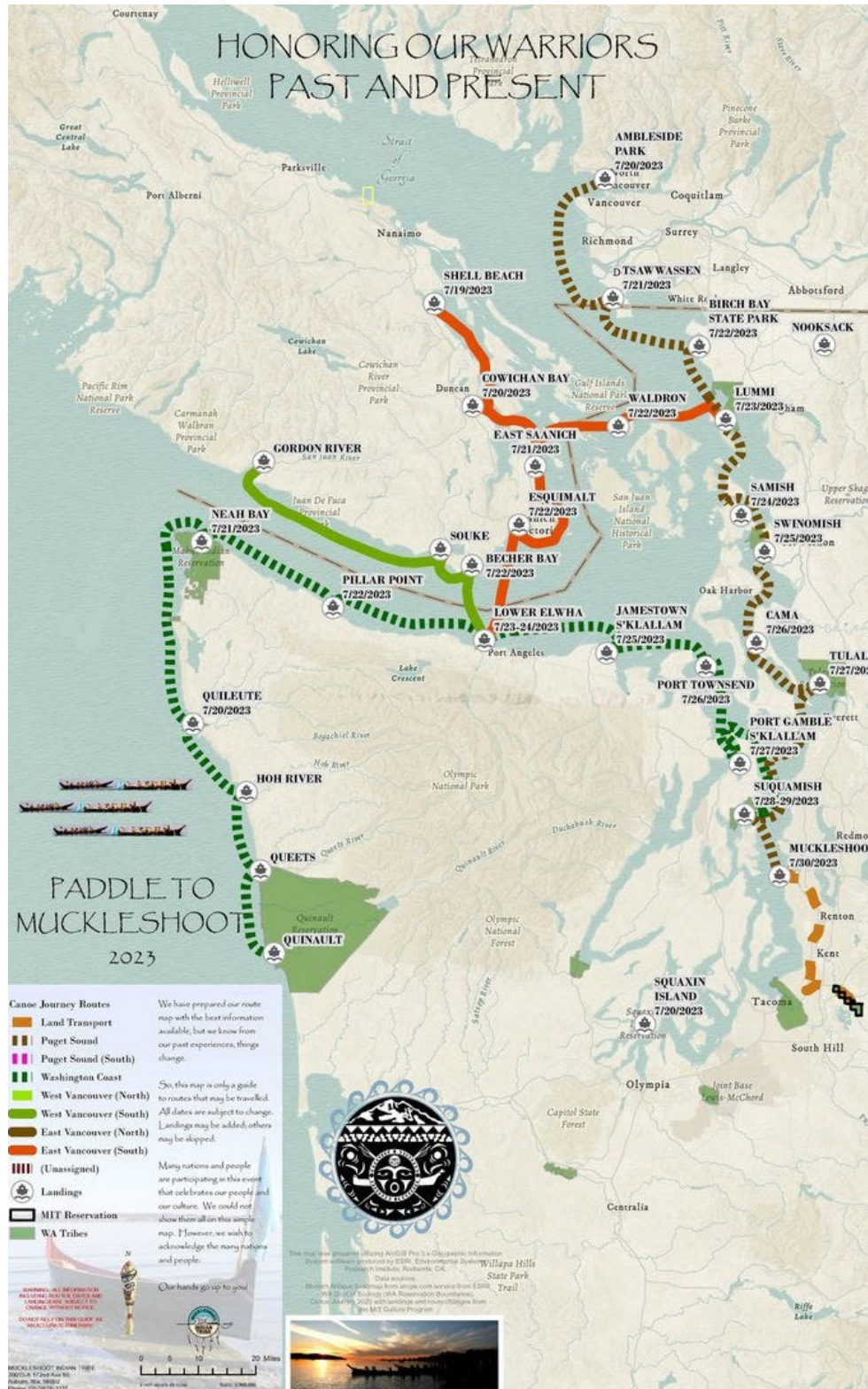
more recent increase in the number of viable, smaller lot farming operations in Metchosin, has coincided with a rise in organic farming and specialty product or niche farming which are important considerations for the development of food tourism.

Metchosin's 42 kilometres (26 miles) of coastline (excluding islands), have substantial potential for a variety of recreational uses. Rocky shorelands combined with salt and freshwater marshes, sandy bluffs and beaches at Witty's Lagoon for example, constitute an ecosystem of exceptional significance. Rare plant communities flourish within the wooded uplands, and creeks and streams roll through the lowlands to the sea.



*Farm Stand,
Metchosin*

Sci'new (Beecher Bay) First Nation currently has eight reserves, of which the largest, with a population of 221 is Beecher Bay 1, also the community's main village site. Other reserves include Beecher Bay 2, Fraser Island 6, Lamb Island 5, Long Neck Island 9, Twin Island 10, Village Island 7, and Whale Island 8. Establishing and maintaining regional ties with other Indigenous communities remains a long-standing priority for Coast Salish Nations such as Beecher Bay.



Beecher Bay families participate in Tribal Canoe Journeys, a long-distance canoe trip hosted each year by different Nations of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Nations from the coast of Alaska, British Columbia, and Washington state participate every year in these journeys which are a major source of regional social networking, maintenance of identity, culture, and kinship ties. This event is a significant undertaking, with much pre-planning, and around which many communities structure their summer activities. It is a critical “touchstone” of cultural exchange, regional networking, reuniting, and strengthening inter-generational teachings.

Tribal Canoe Journeys is a celebrated event for the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Nations from the coast of Alaska, British Columbia, and Washington state participate every year in these Tribal Canoe Journeys. They are a sequence of canoe journeys taken up by canoe families, nations, and groups who travel in ocean-going canoes, either authentic replicas of traditional canoes, made out of solid cedar logs or various replicas using more modern techniques and materials.¹⁵

With a population of 1,820, **East Sooke** is a rural community of clustered residential settlements, set within an abundance of scenic beauty, native plant and animal life, and public park land. It lies within the traditional territory of the T’Sou-ke First Nation and the Sci’anew First Nation. The community here is concerned to ensure that the intrinsic character of East Sooke is protected and sufficient lands in their natural state retained to permit a diversity of plant and animal life. East Sooke has a magnificent coastline and marine environment with significant forested areas providing habitat to a variety of animals, birds, and plants. Bald eagles have been sighted, as well as rare and endangered wildlife using the area. Adjacent to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the coastal boundary region of East Sooke is classed as a sensitive coastal bluff ecosystem, much of which is located within the East Sooke Regional Park. Old-growth forests contain trees over 100 years old and provide habitat distinct from that found in second growth forests. Along with intrinsic habitat values, they provide opportunities for eco-tourism, research, and environmental education. Old-growth forests can be found along the west side of East Sooke Regional Park, Creyke Point in East Sooke Park and in Roche Cove Regional Park.



*Sooke
Harbour*

15 <https://wcmrc.com/wcmrc-joins-tribal-canoe-journey/>

For centuries, the area around Sooke Harbour and Basin and along the Sooke River was a thriving Coast Salish settlement. The **T'Sou-ke** peoples lived alongside a salmon river and within a sheltered harbour, an area where seafood was in abundance along the seashore, and game, roots and berries were harvested in the forests. Most community members now live on the southern 41-hectare reserve, situated on the left bank of the mouth of the Sooke river at the head of Sooke Harbour, while the First Nation's many administration offices are located on the 26-acre reserve along Highway 14.

The T'Sou-ke first Nation exemplifies what it means to be stewards of the land. In collaboration with organizations such as the Coastal Restoration Society work continues on projects such as the monitoring of green crab populations, marine shore clean-up, emergency response, and monitoring of wild salmon populations. The Coastal Restoration Society supports environmental remediation projects in alliance with First Nations and government agencies, as well as community members and businesses in the marine industry.¹⁶

Situated on the north shore of Sooke Harbour and Basin, the land upon which **Sooke** has been established has been stewarded by the T'Sou-ke and Sc'ianew peoples since time immemorial. Incorporated in 1999 and now with a population of 16,494, the District of Sooke is surrounded to the north, west and south by the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and to the east by the District of Metchosin. It offers a variety of recreational activities reflecting its natural surroundings, with excellent fishing, boating, hiking, and horseback riding. It has a predominantly rural character with a landscape that varies from steep and gradually sloped, wooded hillsides, to the Sooke Hills further north. The community of Sooke overlooks the Juan de Fuca Strait and Olympic Mountains range. Commercial activity is predominantly concentrated within the town centre, with some commercial uses 'dotted' along the waterfront.

Sooke's sense of place is inherently connected with its natural setting. Natural spaces are cherished by residents and visitors alike as places for recreation, cultural practice, stewardship, and restoration. Sooke's identity has long been rooted in arts and culture, and the District of Sooke is committed to continuing to invest in and diversify Sooke's vibrant and evolving arts and culture sector in order to bolster the economy, advance equity and reconciliation, and support community well-being.

The development of a diversified and sustainable economy is a key objective of the Official Community Plan for Sooke, which details general and specific policies to support a diversified local economy through encouraging low impact tourism, industrial, renewable energy opportunities, businesses supportive of climate action, value added forestry, fishing and agriculture, and home-based businesses.



Whiffin Spit, Sooke

16 <https://www.nautsamawt.org/single-post/tsouke-first-nation-the-epitome-of-stewards-of-the-land>

Otter Point

The **Otter Point** area lies immediately to the west of the District of Sooke, and within the territory of T'Sou-ke First Nation. With a population of 2,115, it is primarily a rural community with large tracts of forest and Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) lands, and single-family rural residences. The rural and mostly natural setting of this area provides good terrestrial and marine habitat for wildlife. There is abundant second-growth forest in the area, which is important not only in socio-economic terms for its contribution to the forestry industry but also in terms of providing wildlife corridors for connecting habitat patches, buffers around more sensitive areas such as wetlands or streams, habitat for a broad range of wildlife as well as and non-timber forest products such as salal, wild mushrooms, and wild berries.

With a combined population of 650, **Shirley** and **Jordan River** are two small communities nestled along Highway 14. With amazing vistas and easy access to nature and the ocean, the residents here treasure the peaceful ambience of this special area and are keen to maintain its rural character. Jordan River is the closest community to the eastern end of the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail and the China Beach Campground in Juan de Fuca Provincial Park. Surfing and windsurfing are popular sports off Jordan Beach.

As identified in the Shirley – Jordan River Official Community Plan (2018), agriculture, home based businesses, renewable resource activities and low-impact tourism uses are viewed as Shirley – Jordan River's contribution to the regional economy.



The Sheringham Point Lighthouse was designated a National Heritage Lighthouse in 2015 and is operated by the Sheringham Point Lighthouse Preservation Society.



At first glance the ocean around Jordan River in winter looks grey and barren. The surprise, once you get out into it, is how alive it actually is. Seals pop up in the kelp beds to check your style, while black cormorants cruise around outside the takeoff zone. Waves average 2- to 4-foot sets of rights that break off the point. When it's cold and raining, with the water temperature in single Celsius digits and a sky growing darker as the day wears on, you may well have the swells to yourself.”¹⁷



Cold Shoulder Café, Jordan River



Surfing at Jordan River

17 <https://handsomedans.ca/jordan-river/>

Port Renfrew

The community at **Port Renfrew** is located on the south side of Port San Juan Harbour, near the confluence of Port San Juan Harbour and San Juan River. It is located approximately an hour west of Sooke along Highway 14. It can also be reached by travelling through Lake Cowichan via Harris Creek and the San Juan River Valley. To the northeast, situated on the broad low floodplain of the San Juan River, lies the Pacheedaht First Nations community, as well as a small cluster of properties next to the reserve known as “Elliottville”. The Pacheedaht Nation has close to 300 members. About 120 live in the Pacheedaht community. Long a forestry and commercial fishing hub, the town has transitioned to being a centre for outdoor recreation including sports fishing, hiking, old-growth forest tourism and eco-tourism. It is most famous as the trail head for both the West Coast Trail, and the Juan de Fuca Trail, as well as, for being home to some of the best saltwater salmon and halibut fishing on Southern Vancouver Island.

As the Pacheedaht First Nation continues to exercise its stewardship role, a key and ongoing challenge is trying to build and sustain the capacity and infrastructure needed to

manage safe access to the natural resource base, whilst also progressing co-management arrangements with a range of different agencies in order to maintain the integrity and health of the area's ecosystems. This challenge needs to be recognized and planned for as an integral part of growing the wider visitor economy.

Coastal Restoration Project¹⁸

The project is already reaping natural dividends. In a murky channel, dozens of salmon fry, six centimetres long, dart back and forth, moving faster than the eye can follow. “The fish have moved in already,” the Chief says. “Mainly small, juvenile coho. It’s fantastic, it’s really good to see that.” He says the nation is looking forward, not backwards, focusing not on the damage caused by historic logging but on the successful repair work underway. “Overall, we’re just happy to have the opportunity to employ Pacheedaht members in projects like this. It’s a whole new learning process for everyone that’s part of the project. We just carry on.”



Seals, Port Renfrew



The Renfrew Pub, Port Renfrew

18 <https://thenarwhal.ca/pacheedaht-fairy-creek-bc-logging/>



Our Visitors

Based on performance from 2019¹⁹, half of all overnight **visitors** to the region²⁰ are from within Canada (primarily B.C., Alberta, or Ontario), almost one-third are from the USA (mainly Washington, California, or Oregon), and one in five are from international locations (mostly the United Kingdom, Australia, or Germany).

The mix of overnight visitors from within Canada, the USA and international locations varies seasonally. Visitation from within Canada is proportionally greater in winter and spring, while visitation from the USA or international locations is highest in summer and fall.

Relatively few overnight visitors are part of an organized group or tour. Most visitors who are part of an organized group or tour are international travellers rather than from within Canada or the USA. Although many overnight visitors are visiting family or friends or for business or a conference, the region is primarily a leisure and vacation destination each season. It is also the main or only trip destination for the large majority of visitors per season, although to a lesser degree over summer when trips away from home tend to be longer and include more locations.

On average, during each season except fall, overnight visitors stay three nights, while in fall the average is two nights. During their visit only approximately one in three visitors travel to areas of Vancouver Island beyond the region.

More than two-thirds of overnight visitors arrive in Greater Victoria on BC Ferries or by flight into Victoria International Airport. This proportion is consistent each season and highest over winter. Arrivals by ferry from the USA are markedly more seasonal, peaking in summer and considerably less frequent in winter. More than two thirds of visitors arriving on BC Ferries travel with a vehicle.



Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal

¹⁹ Destination Greater Victoria. 2019 Visitor Survey Report.

²⁰ The region is here defined as the Greater Victoria Destination Development planning area which encompasses all of the Capital Regional District (CRD) excluding the Gulf Islands.



Sooke Night Market

Two-thirds of overnight visitors stay in serviced accommodation, while the remainder stay in a short-term vacation rental or with family or friends. Travellers from within Canada are more likely than other visitors to stay with family or friends; those from the USA are more likely than others to stay in a vacation rental.

Visitors typically engage in a wide range of activities; although these vary seasonally, many are outdoors or attractions oriented. Uptake of organized or guided tours is more seasonal than most other aspects of overnight visits and is greatest for outdoor activities over summer, including whale watching, walking, sightseeing, and boating.

Two-thirds of visitor spending is allocated to accommodation (42%) and food and beverage (25%), with a further 13% spent on shopping. Whereas allocation of spending to accommodation or shopping varies considerably each season, spending on food

and beverage and local transportation is highly consistent. Expenditure per overnight visitor averages CAD\$710 over the year and ranges from \$652 in summer to \$888 in winter. Expenditure per visitor per night averages \$237 over the year, from \$232 during summer to \$326 in fall.

Most visitors arrive by ferry or flight, highlighting the need for enhanced access and seamless transportation options between the Juan de Fuca Corridor and Greater Victoria. Destination Greater Victoria actively invests in improving regional access, including cooperative marketing with ferry operators and strategic air route development, to ensure efficient connectivity and to bolster the tourism sector's economic impact. To ensure seamless connectivity, regional collaboration toward advancing visitor access and improved transportation is a key consideration for the plan.



Our Partners

Working in partnerships to deliver on the ambition for tourism is essential, because by working collaboratively with relevant partners at the right time, we can make a real difference and have a much greater impact than working on our own. Building on longstanding and more recent relationships established during the plan preparation phase, it will be important to continue to think regionally, nurture new relationships, and involve the right partners with the needed expertise and influence at the right time.

Key partnerships will include:

- ✓ Working with all levels of regional and local government including First Nations, CRD (relative to its role serving as local government for the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area), the District of Sooke and the District of Metchosin to advance community well-being through tourism
- ✓ Working closer with Parks Canada, BC Parks, CRD Regional Parks, and at district level to progress experience development priorities, visitor access and management initiatives, signage and other wayfinding enhancements
- ✓ Working with the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MOTI) to support and progress plans to improve connectivity and safety along Highway 14, and build new infrastructure to support the active travel experience
- ✓ Working with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to take action to keep forests healthy and protect communities in the face of climate change and extreme weather events
- ✓ Working with the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, Regional Economic Operations (JEDI) to champion innovation, and support economic development and tourism investment attraction within the corridor area
- ✓ Leveraging partnership arrangements with Destination Greater Victoria (DGV), and 4VI to raise awareness of the Juan de Fuca region, facilitate joint marketing initiatives, support tourism development investment opportunities, facilitate connections with other potential project partners, access best practices, help develop project plans and identify funding opportunities. Greater Victoria is a premier gateway destination with a globally recognized brand. Leveraging its mature visitor economy and the unique appeal of the Juan de Fuca Corridor presents a substantial opportunity.
- ✓ Working with Destination BC, 4VI, Indigenous Tourism BC and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport to advance the ‘Invest in Iconics Strategy’ which is a long-term strategy to responsibly increase the benefits of tourism throughout British Columbia through the development and marketing of inspirational routes and places that will strengthen travel appeal in all regions of BC, in all seasons.
- ✓ Working with local tourism partners, arts, heritage and cultural experience providers, tourism businesses, business associations, chambers of commerce, economic development taskforce groups, and not-for-profit groups, right across the region who all have a critical role to play in the success of tourism.

Partners located along the Juan de Fuca corridor can use this plan to inform their own planning and create alignment with the broader vision. They can also use this plan to elevate and gather support for those local projects positioned as strategic priorities in the regional context in addition to providing benefits locally and supporting local aspirations.

05 | DEVELOPMENT FOCUS



Vision

The well-being of communities will be at the heart of the Juan de Fuca visitor economy. The visitor experience will be responsive to the culture and values of the people who live here, supported by all levels of government, and brought to life by public, private and not-for-profit enterprises that share a high level of responsibility for the impact they have. A special place in every season, residents

and visitors alike will learn about and experience its quiet beauty and changing moods, and encounter people keen to share their deep sense of commitment to looking after it by working collaboratively to shape its future. Our visitors will be enriched by the Juan de Fuca experience, whether they have travelled from nearby or faraway arriving here as visitors but leaving as committed friends.



Values

At its core, this plan is about building good relationships - with the Indigenous Peoples who are the first and ongoing stewards of this place; with our tourism businesses and not-for-profit enterprises who work tirelessly to provide memorable experiences for our visitors, with our destination management colleagues, as well as with our partners across all levels of government who have a key role to play in enabling tourism to contribute to the well-being of the communities along the Juan de Fuca corridor.

In developing this plan, we have sought to ensure that the type of tourism we develop will:

- ✓ enhance respectful sharing and celebration of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and languages
- ✓ safeguard the integrity of the area's natural ecosystems
- ✓ amplify the distinctive identity and particular characteristics of each of the different communities within the region
- ✓ advance the well-being of those communities and earn the support of residents
- ✓ secure the profitability of tourism businesses and the prosperity of the region
- ✓ enrich the experience of visitors who value and respect what this area has to offer





Goal



The future visitor economy of the Juan de Fuca corridor will be **regenerative** and **resilient**.



It will deliver benefits across four inter-related well-beings - **social, cultural, environmental**, and **economic**.



Visitor growth will be managed responsibly in line with **community values** and the need to safeguard the **ecological** and **cultural integrity** of the region.



Strategic Objectives

More specifically, the plan is concerned to ensure that we continue to work collaboratively towards achieving the **following objectives**:



Hold space on our journey towards growing a thriving visitor economy in readiness to work with the Pacheedaht, T'Sou-ke and Sci'aneu First Nations if and when they feel the time is right to engage



As part of a larger Biosphere certified destination, reframe the visitor economy's relationship with the **natural environment** on principles which emphasize Indigenous self-determination, shared stewardship, and transformative reconciliation



Develop the role of Sooke, Metchosin and Port Renfrew as **key hubs** and places of orientation for visitors at either end of the corridor area



Improve public access, universal accessibility, and **connectivity** across the corridor, to the water's edge and with neighboring destinations



Support the development and enhancement of year-round **experiences** that enable visitors to enjoy the abundance of natural beauty; safely participate in outdoor activities; uncover the stories and hidden depths of this place; celebrate its cultural and creative expression through art, performance, events; sample farm stands, farmers' markets and nurseries and discover the artisan producers, makers and creators behind local food and beverage businesses



Develop a creative and innovative approach to visitor servicing including the provision of **visitor information**



Identify the opportunities to augment visitor **accommodation** capacity in key locations



Foster alignment and **regional collaboration** with partners across all levels of government who have a role to play in enabling the sector to flourish in a sustainable way



Build capacity from within the region to drive this agenda for tourism forward through evolving, with the help of 4VI and Destination Greater Victoria, a fit for purpose **destination management** model



Strategic Actions



Hold Space

The Government of BC is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous communities. Reconciliation starts with understanding and appreciating Indigenous histories and cultures. It's rooted not just in an awareness of the past, but also in building relationships for the future.

Actions to deliver on this objective include:

- ✓ Establish a process for relationship-building with the Pacheedaht, T'Sou-ke and Sci'ane'w First Nations
- ✓ Work with Indigenous tourism leaders to understand, encourage and support a sustainable way into a prosperous future through tourism
- ✓ Support the development of Indigenous owned and operated tourism businesses and experiences within the Juan de Fuca corridor area



Work with Nature

Destination development must always be mindful of the capacity of existing experiences to accommodate growth. In order to conserve the **ecological integrity** and cultural significance of the places visited and maintain tourism's social license, visitor volumes and impacts need to be managed in accordance with community values as to what constitutes acceptable change.

Across Canada, approximately 30 teams of **Indigenous Guardians** are working to conserve and manage their lands. While they monitor wildlife, patrol protected areas and reduce the impacts of climate change, there is no enforcement or real stature to these programs currently.

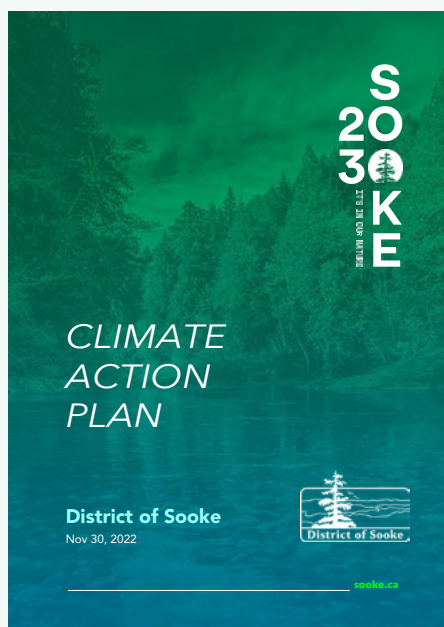
Along the West Coast Trail, as the traditional and on-going guardians of the lands and waters, Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht Guardians work with Parks Canada to care for the trails and protect the land and visiting hikers. The guardians — four or five from each nation — are there not only to help maintain the trail, but more than that, they're there to protect and share their culture and the history of the land.



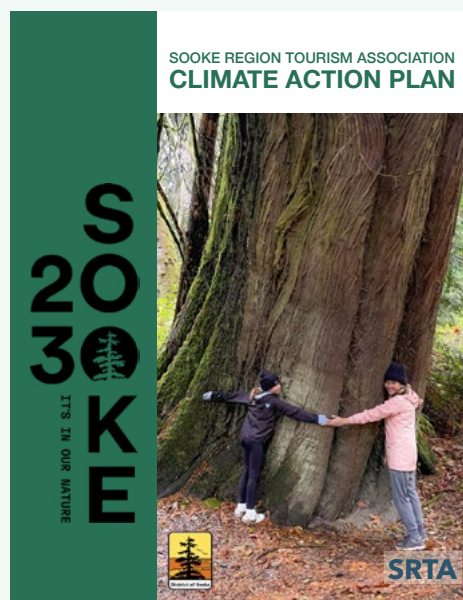
*Every Indigenous community, regardless of where they are, has a story. One that predates contact. One that talks about being a sustainable, resilient community. People need to realize that we've done this before, and we can do it again."*²⁰

20 Kukpi7 Chief Patrick Michell, Kanaka Bar Band, Climate Solutions Council member, quoted in Government of British Columbia (2022) Climate Preparedness and Adaptation | Strategy Actions for 2022-2025. Available at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/adaptation> (Accessed 17 January 2024).

Indigenous Peoples are essential partners in work underway across B.C. to prepare for and adapt to **climate change**. B.C.'s Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy outlines a broad range of actions for 2022-2025 to address climate impacts and build resilience across B.C. Actions in the strategy are grouped into four key pathways and build on the work already underway across governments, First Nations, businesses, academia, and non-profits.



The Sooke 2030: Climate Action Plan encompasses actions the District of Sooke can undertake to help reduce GHG emissions in district operations as well as within the community. It combines both mitigation and adaptation concerns within the same document, providing the Low Carbon Resilience lens that Council has determined is to be utilized for District planning and operations. The plan is strongly rooted in existing, mostly recent Sooke master plans. It provides clear direction for District action, both independently and in collaboration with other levels of government, non-profits, community groups and multiple other partners.



This Climate Action Plan outlines a future where tourism flourishes while also preserving our unique environment. Our commitment to sustainability aligns with the broader vision of a net-zero coastal town, underscoring the delicate balance between human activities and the natural world.



Through responsible tourism, we strive to uphold the charm of Sooke while actively contributing to a cleaner, greener, and more resilient future for both residents and visitors."

The BC Tourism Sustainability Network (BCTSN) offers meaningful, one-on-one support and resources for all tourism operators regardless of prior sustainability experience, helping businesses define a clear roadmap for integrating sustainability in their operations, strategy, and storytelling. The BC Tourism, Climate Resiliency Initiative (BCTCRI) is a provincial project that focuses on building a foundational program to support a **resilient tourism sector** that is prepared to adapt to climate change. This initiative was created through a provincial partnership with Destination BC, the BC Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, BC's six Regional Destination Management Organizations (RDMOs)²² and Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC).

The Biosphere Certification Program is a collaborative industry initiative that supports tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices as an extension of Vancouver Island's and greater Victoria's Biosphere destination certification. Using the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as the guiding framework, this program aims to empower tourism stakeholders to take action across the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability.

Actions to deliver on this objective:

- ✓ Work with Pacheedaht First Nation to support its stewardship role, and identify opportunities to build the Nation's capacity and the infrastructure required to develop, maintain, sustain, and co-manage safe access - where appropriate - to the natural environment for recreation and tourism
- ✓ Reach out to BC Parks and CRD Regional Parks to better understand the challenges they encounter when managing visitation for recreation and tourism

- ✓ In conjunction with Pacheedaht First Nation, revisit the model for how BC Parks and CRD Regional Parks sites operate with a view to transitioning to an ethically and economically responsible system.
- ✓ Share information on good practice in visitor management across organizations to enable peer to peer learning within the tourism sector
- ✓ Where relevant, provide educational resources and, where appropriate, advice on the ground, to promote responsible trail use and appropriate behaviour when interacting with nature and wildlife
- ✓ Work with businesses to encourage sound environmental practices, and encourage them to pursue sustainability certification as appropriate
- ✓ Develop models to enable visitors to engage in activities to benefit the environment such as, for example, beach clean-ups
- ✓ Explore the scope to develop Port Renfrew as a model of a 'green community' whereby, if appropriate resources were consolidated, the unsustainable and adverse impacts of unplanned and poorly regulated tourism growth experienced by destinations elsewhere on Vancouver Island could be avoided
- ✓ Consider establishing a Visitor Management Roundtable, comprising representatives from parks, regional and local government, tourism, search and rescue and related sectors to address management visitor concerns.

22 Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association, Northern BC Tourism Association, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region, and 4VI



Tourism Squamish

Botanical Beach



Tourism Squamish launched a successful **Destination Stewards** program a couple of years ago in response to a surge in visitors and recreational users. With the help of grant funding, they were able to establish the Destination Stewards program and hire 'Stewards' for the summer months. These Stewards were stationed at key 'hot spot' locations, such as trailheads and lakes, within the community. Their role is to provide visitor services, promote responsible recreation, safety, proper travel etiquette, and educate visitors about 'Leave No Trace' principles.



Tourism Squamish has also implemented a **Visitor Management Roundtable**. This group includes representatives from parks, the regional district, local government, tourism, search and rescue and related sector associations that utilize the land. They meet monthly and bi-weekly during the summer to address visitor management issues at hotspot locations and coordinate key messaging across the organizations. This has been quite effective in managing visitor issues.



Enhance the Hubs

A tourism hub is a town or village which provides a welcome and a point of **orientation** for visitors new to a destination. Ideally a visitor would be able to stay overnight, have a variety of things to do and see, and a variety of places to sleep and eat. As well as having access to a cluster of products, services, activities, and experiences, a hub will also be characterized by intangible elements, such as its character, image and identity and can function as a touring base for visitors.

The process of arriving in and getting around a destination hub has to be easy and pleasant for visitors, who are generally unfamiliar with the area. Orientation and managing visitor flow are important considerations. An integrated approach to **intuitive wayfinding** - making the town or village accessible to visitors through a variety of methods that include signage, public realm enhancement, interpretation, use of key buildings or public art, technology, lighting, maps, and other mechanisms that can subtly encourage visitor flows in particular directions – is vitally important in inspiring the confidence of visitors to explore their surroundings. Importantly, consideration needs to be given to the specific requirements of different user groups, including visitors with restricted mobility.

Sooke, Metchosin and Port Renfrew have an opportunity to enhance their respective reputations as great communities to spend time in, with features to see, things to do and places to stay. Creating a sense of arrival at key approaches to each of these communities combined with clear signage and wayfinding will raise awareness of what is on offer and will encourage visitors to stop, stay, explore, and return. Visitors need to know that they have arrived, feel welcome and are confident about where to go and how to access the different experiences that each of these communities has to offer. It is critically important that information is available, signage works, and a sense of arrival is evident so that visitors feel reassured and the curiosity of those passing through is aroused.

Port Renfrew is well on the way to enhancing its position as a key point of orientation at the western end of the corridor area. Known for its role in providing the southern trailhead for the West Coast Trail, which is located at the mouth of the Gordon River at the Pacheedaht campground near the town, it is also a key point of interest along the Pacific Marine Circle Route connecting the town with Lake Cowichan to the northeast, and to Sooke, heading south along Highway 14.



*Port Renfrew
Visitor Centre*

Key challenges identified as part of the engagement process related to the lack of wayfinding signage, the absence of pedestrian infrastructure on Parkinson Road, a shortage of staff housing, as well as concerns around trail maintenance and the condition of road infrastructure more generally. It is envisaged that many of these infrastructural matters will be identified within the context of a new Port Renfrew Official Community Plan, to be taken forward on a collaborative basis as a priority area essential for the well-being of the community identified in the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the CRD and the Pacheedaht First Nation. It is envisaged that the new school, health care, essential services, fire protection, marine safety and potentially the water and sewage treatment will all be led by the Pacheedaht First Nation government. In the meantime, Port Renfrew Economic Development Taskforce, in conjunction with the Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce, continues to progress a range of projects geared towards raising the profile

of this destination on the ground through Indigenous language signage and visitor information provision.

While in **Sooke**, the waterfront is a key distinguishing feature, opportunities for members of the public to get to and along the water's edge are limited. Some waterfront access points are not available or accessible to the public, and private land occupies most of the shoreline. There are three major and highly popular locations for enjoying the shoreline environment – Whiffin Spit, the Marine Boardwalk and Rotary Pier. In total, there are some 24 waterfront access points of which 11 provide access to the shoreline. However, these sites are highly variable and comprise a combination of small park spaces near the water, access trails to the waterfront, and viewpoints with no access to the water's edge. A key challenge relates to the fact that there is nothing in terms of signage to indicate a waterfront access point, nor any reassurance provided as to what constitutes public as opposed to private space.



Entrance to Whiffin Spit



Pacheedaht First Nation continues to increase economic development capacities with the forestry partnership, investments in expanding our landbase and growing numerous enterprises, such as the Pacheedaht Campground, Seafoam Seafoods, Queesto Sawmill, San Juan Market, Pit Stop Gas Station and Soule Creek Lodge.

While the Nation welcomes more and more visitors to our lands each year, the Pacheedaht Campground has reached maximum capacity during the high season, highlighting the potential for the Nation to expand our hospitality offerings in this area. The recent treaty settlement of Middle Beach now links our reserve lands and presents an opportunity to build on the success of the existing Campground to provide an enhanced tourism offering that focuses on cultural storytelling, indigenous experiences and an online booking platform that improves the consumer journey.

As such, we are working on the next phase of economic development for Pacheedaht First Nation: a masterplan lands strategy, consumer-facing brand identity and bookable website platform that will increase revenue while reducing operational and administrative burdens for both Staff and Community.

A central theme of this brand identity focuses on the generosity and abundance of the Pacheedaht Nation's community and territory—welcoming guests to experience the bounty of the area and the Nation's self-determination in stewarding these lands since time immemorial. We see this brand as a critical evolution of the destination marketing sector—one that is led by Nations in promoting their land and territory.

Once launched, the new brand identity and website presence will be a significant step for Pacheedaht in opening our doors to share our culture and provide Indigenous tourism experiences to local, national and international audiences.”



Metchosin looked its best, the beautiful slopes, the richly tinted foliage, the bright clear sky, the warm sunshine, the glassy smooth sea, and the grand mountains in the distance, formed a combination of indescribable beauty. I felt an exhilaration of mind which led me to wander away through the woods towards the white cliffs bordering the sea from whence I contemplated its placid waters with delight.”²³

Focused around the junction of the Happy Valley and Metchosin Roads, the Village Centre in **Metchosin** is a compact area, and the community vision is for it remain that way. Nevertheless, as a rural community and cultural core, it provides services and recreation opportunities that will be of interest to visitors. It is home to valued heritage landmarks, including the Metchosin Schoolhouse Museum and Metchosin Pioneer Museum, both dedicated to the heritage of those who settled in this part of Vancouver Island in the 1800s as well as an active arts scene, as evidenced by the Metchosin Arts and Cultural Centre which is housed in the old Elementary School Building. As is the case in Sooke, connecting the village core to parks and community focal points, developing waterfront access and creekside trails, and making these visible for visitors are all important considerations for enhancing the hub function of Metchosin.



Metchosin Arts and Cultural Centre

Actions to deliver on this objective:

- ✓ Work with each of these communities to create a sense of arrival, enhance the approaches to each of these hub destinations and, where absent, provide “welcome to” signage and a greater sense of a coherent ‘town centre’
- ✓ Support the provision of sidewalks and improved walking, cycling and trail infrastructure and make these opportunities for slow travel more visible to visitors
- ✓ Support the ambition to improve public access to and along the waterfront at Sooke in terms of providing safe, coherent, and consistent physical connections, linking key facilities together, and providing opportunities to take in great views and vistas
- ✓ Support Metchosin’s ambition to create linkages that connect to existing or planned trails through the Village, fostering an environment that encourages walking, biking, and alternative modes of transportation
- ✓ Support Metchosin’s ambition to develop waterfront access and creekside trails
- ✓ Support efforts underway to strengthen Sooke’s downtown core
- ✓ Support Metchosin’s ambition to further develop its arts and cultural sector
- ✓ Support Pacheedaht First Nation’s ambition to provide an enhanced tourism offering that focuses on cultural storytelling, Indigenous experiences and an online booking platform that improves the consumer journey.

²³ Helgesen, M.I. (Ed.) (1983). Footprints. Pioneer Families of the Metchosin District. Southern Vancouver Island (1851-1900). Metchosin School Museum Society.



Connect the Corridor

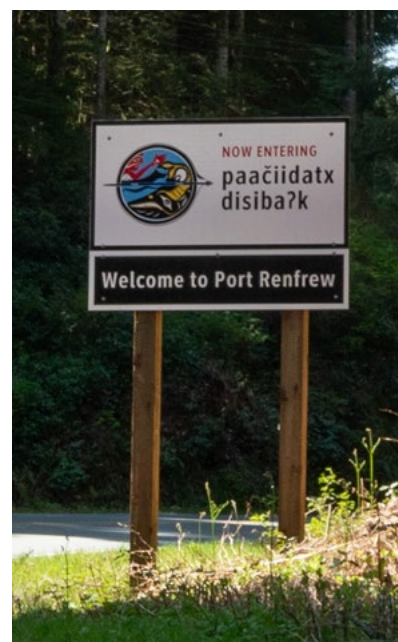
Connectivity in a destination is crucial to its tourism development and can significantly affect visitors' experiences and behaviours. Both physical connections (roads, paths, trails, and signage systems) and digital networks (integrated platforms and apps) are needed to bring coherence to the region. One of the key elements of the plan is to develop a slow travel network by enabling more interchanges for travellers to switch from one mode to another. This is designed to build in pleasurable travel as part of the experience, by interacting with communities along the way and moving from land to water as opposed to simply getting from one place to another. The plan aims to support the many initiatives underway and planned to improve the infrastructure of movement and promote 'active travel' so that the region builds a great network of slow travel.

Improved accessibility to basic infrastructure and tourism amenities is essential in meeting the needs and requirements of all visitors to the destination. This does not only equate to providing access for those with disabilities, but it also addresses the importance of creating universally designed environments to support people with physical needs, an increasingly ageing population and those who have difficulty with mobility or access to information.

Investments in signage and wayfinding should be integrated and coordinated, so that there is consistency and visual reinforcement as the traveller moves through the area, utilizing maps and apps, as well as physical signage and digital content.

Actions to deliver on this objective:

- ✓ Support efforts to enhance the walkability of communities and improve pedestrian safety along highways by providing sidewalks, connecting routes to attractions and amenities, and where feasible, pathways to the ocean
- ✓ Work with relevant partners to develop a connected trail system which links places of arrival within communities to parks, destinations, and regional trails
- ✓ Support the ambition to connect the two major trail systems in the region – the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail
- ✓ Explore the potential to develop a dedicated bike lane along the West Coast Highway to support cycle tourism between Sooke and Port Renfrew
- ✓ Support the development of dedicated cycle routes to connect to amenity areas and the trail network
- ✓ Work with relevant partners to promote the provision of public transit, a dedicated shuttle service or dedicated tourist transport to key attractions and facilities across the region
- ✓ Investigate the scope to expand the West Coast Connector service
- ✓ Explore the scope to develop a water taxi service
- ✓ Explore the scope to develop heli-ports and sea plane terminals at Sooke and Port Renfrew



- ✓ Work with partners, relevant agencies, and Indigenous leaders to promote a creative, coordinated, and cohesive approach to signage and wayfinding which responds to the cultural significance of the area, whilst educating visitors about the Indigenous history, identity, and place names of the areas through which they travel
- ✓ Revisit the work already undertaken and explore in conjunction with CRD and Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), the further potential of the Pacific Marine Circle Route
- ✓ Explore the scope to partner and develop a business relationship with DGV to leverage its regional efforts in marketing, travel trade, and advocacy for transportation access to and from Greater Victoria

The Pacific Marine Circle Route which incorporates Highway 14, traces the coastline from Victoria through Sooke and Port Renfrew, continuing on to Cowichan Lake and the Cowichan Valley, and looping back down the Trans-Canada Highway via Duncan and the Malahat to Victoria



Enrich the Experience



Think what could be done to make the corridor from Sooke to Port Renfrew a tourism cultural cycling corridor with the rich history of the area, the extraordinary artistic talent of the community and its quite glorious and envied environmental settings.”²⁴

A key consideration for the plan is to increase the visibility of the rich layer of varied and authentic experiences which the destination currently offers and give visitors even more reasons to explore the area, stay longer and enjoy the destination all year round. Areas of opportunity for experience development highlighted during the engagement process included a focus on:

- ▶ **Outdoor activities** with an emphasis on promoting universal accessibility, managing access to and enhancing the amenity value of existing parks, trails and beaches and developing nature-based experiences in the off-season to provide fall, winter, and spring draws
- ▶ **Arts, culture, and creativity** with an emphasis on sharing cultural experiences that are unique to this region; developing cultural spaces that enable arts and cultural activities to be nurtured, showcased, and celebrated; integrating creative expression with nature and curating a program of arts-based tours, trails, and events
- ▶ **Great food** with an emphasis on food and drink experiences which have the potential to connect visitors to all the places and cultures within this destination in a very special way. Key features of this will be facilitating encounters with farmers markets, artisan growers and producers through farm and food trails and tours, encouraging the development of “farm to table” and “boat to bowl” culinary experiences as well as food and beer festivals and events.



As each season goes by, we’ve noticed more of our guests are travelling to Port Renfrew to immerse themselves in the natural environment that our area offers. Despite the recent decline in recreational fishing activity and the discontinuance of the popular Tall Tree Music Festival, our booking activity remains constant, with summers usually close to a sell-out and the shoulder seasons each year becoming longer. By some visitors’ judgements, the best time to visit old-growth rainforests is when it is raining, making the Q4 and Q1 of each year quite acceptable for a visit to Port Renfrew. Our guest books are full of comments of how people enjoyed their hikes to Avatar Grove, Big Lonely Doug, or the Red Creek Fir.”²⁴



Adrena LINE, Zipline Adventure Park, Sooke

²⁴ Hockenull, O. (2019) Sooke Area: Cycling, Cultural, Tourism Corridor. Available at https://www.acturgently.org/climate_solutions. (Accessed 12 February 2024).

²⁵ Dan Hager, owner of Handsome Dan’s Cottage Rentals, quoted in Morton, C., et al. (2021) Economic Valuation of Old Growth Forests on Vancouver Island: Pilot Study; Phase 2 – Port Renfrew Pilot. ESSA Technologies Ltd. for the Ancient Forest Alliance. Vancouver, B.C.

Actions to deliver on this objective:

Outdoor Activities

- ✓ Focus on maintaining or enhancing key destinations such as trails and beaches
- ✓ Explore ways to steward responsible trail use through strategic partnerships
- ✓ Improve the accessibility of the trail system
- ✓ Partner with relevant stakeholders to enhance the trail experience through interpretive and cultural signage
- ✓ Identify opportunities to connect the growing network of community walkways and hiking trails with federal, provincial, and regional trail systems to provide linkages with the West Coast Trail, Breakwater Trail, the Kludahk Trail, the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail and the Galloping Goose Trail
- ✓ Explore the potential for improvements to Botanical Beach with BC Parks
- ✓ Explore the potential for new 'big tree' viewing areas in the San Juan River valley
- ✓ Work with BC Parks to ensure high maintenance standard of BC Parks trails and trailheads: Juan de Fuca Trail (Botanical Beach entrance), Sombrio Beach trailhead, China Beach trailhead, Juan de Fuca Trail (China Beach entrance), China Beach Campground, Second Beach trailhead
- ✓ In collaboration with Pacheedaht First Nation, work with CRD to ensure proper maintenance and promotion of Jordan River Regional Campground and identify enhancements to better support surfers in wintertime
- ✓ Work with Recreation Sites and Trails BC, Pacheedaht First Nation, and others to explore potential for future rehabilitation of Avatar Grove
- ✓ Work with Pacheedaht First Nation to explore ways of supporting, enhancing or promoting the important space that is Pacheedaht Beach, and identify areas where potential partnerships might be welcomed
- ✓ Explore the scope to access more trails for mountain biking in Port Renfrew
- ✓ Work with CRD to progress a pedestrian crossing over the Sooke River, a concept plan for which was developed in 2012
- ✓ Work with relevant partners to progress a range of improvements for Whiffin Spit to include consideration of promoting safe access for walkers accessing the site from the town centre, environmental protection measures, an interpretive sign kiosk with a map, a communal place for plaques, picnic tables, dog management, improvements to the space at the end of the spit to accommodate gathering and reflect the cultural and natural uniqueness of this location

Arts, Culture and Creativity

- ✓ Develop a long-term plan for creating a cultural district in Sooke, to include the development of an Arts and Performance Centre
- ✓ Explore the scope to create an art space within Ed McGregor Park
- ✓ Explore the scope to develop experiences that integrate art and nature and music in nature
- ✓ Work with relevant partners to profile Sooke as an arts destination in fall and winter
- ✓ Support Metchosin's ambition to develop its arts and cultural sector
- ✓ Create a family-friendly event in Port Renfrew

Great Food

- ✓ Create a Food Tourism Partnership Plan
- ✓ Create a database of existing products, producers, destinations, services, partners, and current offers
- ✓ Map out existing offerings – both agri-foods and seafood - across the region
- ✓ Identify potential partners associated with successful product offerings who might support the development of food tourism
- ✓ Collect or identify research on partnership strategies across Vancouver Island which have been successful in delivering food tourism experiences
- ✓ Explore the potential for summer markets in Port Renfrew
- ✓ Explore partnerships with the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) and Destination Greater Victoria to expand the Flavour Trails agritourism program to Metchosin



Food serves to connect us with the land, our heritage, and the people around us. It is a diverse and dynamic channel for sharing stories, forming relationships, and building communities. By combining local food and drink with travel, food tourism offers both local people and tourists alike an authentic taste of place while contributing to a sustainable world economy."



Bilston Creek Farm, Metchosin



Elevate Visitor Servicing

In providing a location 'in place' where visitors can access timely, accurate and impartial visitor information and advice, visitor centres play a key role in **orientating** visitors new to the destination. When greeted by trusted, knowledgeable and passionate ambassadors, great first impressions are made, visitors can be encouraged to stay longer, do more, go further, and delve deeper into the promise a destination holds.

Visitor centres, along local and regional tourism associations, play a critical role in **promoting** local businesses, events, and community services to visitors. The information shared and the skillful sales and advice provided in person and online can have a positive impact on the overall visitor experience and unlock visitor spending, facilitating a flow-on effect through increased visitor expenditure and stay duration.

Visitor centres, in conjunction with local and regional tourism associations, can also play an important role in **managing** the destination - promoting sustainability, supporting visitor management, influencing tourist behaviours, and collecting visitors' data along with information on their needs, expectations, and destination visit experience. It is this ability to influence decisions that makes the people side of visitor servicing so important. Acting as gateways and central information points, visitor centres, along with local tourism associations on the ground, can help manage tourism flows to more popular locations by proposing itineraries and experiences that are more respectful of the values of particular sites or improving the interaction with local communities through more responsible behaviours.

The recently developed **Port Renfrew Visitor Centre**, which operates seasonally from May to October, Monday to Thursday, offers free Wi-Fi, washrooms, visitor services, and phone access. Given the patchy nature of network coverage in the area, free WIFI hotspots have been provided at a number of locations throughout the immediate area. While staffing is an

ongoing challenge, Visitor Centre Ambassadors provide a resource for local tourism operators, respond to visitor queries across all channels of communication, distribute promotional material, and, importantly, gather visitor insights and maintain records of visitor numbers.

Since 1981 the **Sooke Region Museum** has hosted the region's official **Visitor Centre** which is one of 132 community-owned Visitor Centres throughout British Columbia that make up DBC's Visitor Services Network Program. which is administered by Destination BC.



Sooke Region Museum and Visitor Centre

Actions to deliver on this objective:

- ✓ Explore the feasibility of elevating the profile of the visitor centre in Sooke to increase its visibility and presence
- ✓ Work with other tourism centres to:
 - share information
 - undertake cross promotion
 - partner with DGV to develop a presence at Victoria cruise ship terminal
 - explore the potential for digital billboard advertising
- ✓ Host a concierge event for the region
- ✓ Extend the provision of Wi-Fi hotspots
- ✓ Consider the introduction of information kiosks



Accommodate the Visitor

Accommodation is a fundamental aspect of the visitor economy that cannot be overlooked. It influences customer satisfaction, revenue generation, and the overall appeal of a destination. As travellers continue to seek memorable and comfortable experiences, the importance of accommodation remains paramount. It is not merely a place to stay; it is an integral part of the journey, shaping the memories and impressions that guests carry with them. It was generally felt throughout the engagement process that there is a region-wide shortage of hotels and that there needs to be a broader variety of options for visitors.

Actions to deliver on this objective:

- ✓ Develop a prospectus for exemplar, alternative, low carbon accommodation development at candidate sites and test the market appetite for interest in providing same
- ✓ Assess the feasibility of developing a new town centre hotel in Sooke
- ✓ Explore the scope to provide hostel accommodation and, where appropriate, tree houses



From Port Renfrew, we follow the Chief up a steep gravel road to Soule Creek Lodge, which the nation purchased in 2019 with revenues from forestry. Perched on the Juan de Fuca ridge, with panoramic views of Olympic Peninsula, the Coast Mountains and the Juan de Fuca Strait, the lodge and its 160-hectare grounds, which include gardens and a hot tub, offer accommodation in seven yurts, a cabin and four suites in the main building. The cabin and some of the yurts overlook the San Juan inlet, where gray whales sometimes rub their bellies on stones.”²⁶



Port San Juan,
Port Renfrew

26 <https://thenarwhal.ca/pacheedaht-fairy-creek-bc-logging/>

06 | GEARING UP

A key challenge for the tourism plan is finding the right mechanisms for supporting the delivery of its recommended actions. Several **key themes** emerged as part of our conversations on plan implementation, destination development and destination management:



Collaborate to Align

Working collaboratively and in partnership to deliver on the ambition for tourism along the Juan de Fuca corridor is essential. Partnerships are not about conformity, but about **complementarity**. As was evident throughout the engagement process, each partner brought something unique and valuable to the table, whether it was expertise, resources, network, or perspective all of which provided opportunities for others to learn.

Building on the relationships established during the plan preparation phase it will be important, heading into the delivery and implementation phase, to continue to think regionally, nurture new relationships, be as inclusive as possible, involve the right partners with the needed expertise or authority at the right time, and continue to be flexible. Focused **communication**, as a key to building trust and rapport will be prioritized as will listening to partners' needs, concerns, and ideas so that together **mutually beneficial solutions** can be found to the many challenges and opportunities growing this region's visitor economy will generate.



Manage the Destination



It's not just about the visitors, not just about the heads in beds. Connecting with the residents, embracing them into destination development and also listening to them and letting them shape what tourism means in the destination, is the way of the future.”²⁷

The new landscape of **regenerative tourism**, with its focus on a ‘community first’ approach, is now challenging the visitor economy to deliver on several interrelated areas of well-being – social, ecological, cultural, and economic – simultaneously. In response, new models of destination governance, that focus beyond traditional management and marketing, enabling Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to flourish within this new landscape are beginning to emerge.²⁸

Tourism Vancouver Island, announced in April 2022 that it was dropping its traditional tourism marketing business model of more than 60 years to operate as a non-profit social enterprise — a business designed to invest all its revenue back into social goals. Rebranded as “4VI” to reflect its four key pillars of social responsibility -community, businesses, culture, and environment - this social enterprise is endeavouring to realize how travel can truly be a **‘force for good’** on Vancouver Island ‘forever’.

Contemporary organisations, regardless of their vision, mission and objectives, are continually challenged to rethink their way of working in order to achieve sustainable structures, deliver value for their members, remain relevant and thrive. Shared forms of leadership, such as **distributed leadership**, where leadership is

viewed as a property of the collective, not the individual, and where value is placed on the interactions of multiple individuals with different areas of expertise, different perspectives, and different skill sets are gaining wider acceptance.²⁹

DMOs are uniquely positioned between government and businesses to facilitate such interactions and enable these regional and local conversations to happen. Recognizing the inclusive and collaborative nature of the leadership process and acknowledging that varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few, DMOs are ideally placed to embrace a model of leadership that is network centric, and become a legitimate, trusted part of the conversation on the future of tourism for the communities they represent.

The role of DMOs, especially those providing a full range of services, has evolved beyond marketing, and providing visitor services. Today, they play a crucial role in destination stewardship and leadership.

Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) exemplifies this shift. Beyond attracting visitors and telling Greater Victoria's story to the world, DGV is committed to ensuring the tourism sector reflects local community values and creates shared community benefits. Central to its mission is a focus on sustainability. This commitment is evident in initiatives such as partnering to create the IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism Conference, becoming one of North America's first carbon neutral DMOs,

27 Group NAO (2023) White Paper on DMOcracy. Group NAO, Copenhagen

28 British Columbia. Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. (2023) Conversations on the Future of Tourism in B.C., Report on What We Heard

29 Naumova, N., et al. (2021) Distributed Leadership in DMOs: A Review of the Literature and Directions for Future Research, Tourism Planning & Development, 18 (3), pp. 398-414. doi: 10.1080/21568316.2020.1798688

and achieving Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria. These efforts have not gone unnoticed; in 2023, DGV was honoured with the inaugural Destination Organization Award for Global Impact by Destinations International, recognizing its innovative approaches to fostering sustainable tourism and community well-being.

A Model for Destination Stewardship

A critical first step in realizing the area's tourism potential will be to **build the capacity** of key players in the local visitor economy to evolve into a working destination management group. This is already underway with the revitalization of SRTA, whose members are making great strides, particularly in the areas of advocating for a sustainable approach to the development of tourism and progressing tourism specific climate action goals.³⁰ Looking ahead, key components of a new model might include consideration of:

Relationship Building

- ✓ Promote a more inclusive, participatory representative, and networked approach to destination development and management
- ✓ Establish the reach of the network
- ✓ Identify relevant points of contact across the network and within partner organizations who share common goals
- ✓ Facilitate a joined-up approach to leading and decision making in meeting strategic objectives held in common
- ✓ Leverage the success of partners active in promoting the reputation of the region to global audiences
- ✓ Partner with Destination Greater Victoria and leverage DGV's regional efforts which include marketing, travel trade, and transportation access to and from Greater Victoria

Participatory Planning

- ✓ Drive the agenda for developing tourism along the Juan de Fuca corridor, as documented in this plan, forward
- ✓ Build on and refine the areas of focus for tourism in order to create and enhance regional cohesion
- ✓ Act as a forum for setting common objectives and prioritizing key areas of intervention
- ✓ Provide a mechanism for collective action
- ✓ Articulate roles, responsibilities, and relationships.

Informed Advocacy

- ✓ Promote the value of tourism across each area of well-being
- ✓ Gather metrics that matter
- ✓ Implement research on resident sentiment towards tourism
- ✓ Develop a program to monitor and proactively respond to local sentiments towards visitors.

Emerging Futures

- ✓ Enable community voices to share their stories
- ✓ Provide a 'rural room' or 'urban space' or 'open door' where people can go to understand, debate, get involved, explore, unlock, and connect on the shift towards a shared vision of better tourism and thriving communities
- ✓ Showcase experiments and good practice in helping the visitor economy to transition to those futures where both people and planet can thrive.



Prioritize Investment

Public investment by all levels of government through a range of funding mechanisms plays a vital role when it comes to enhancing places, celebrating their special attributes, assets, and associations, making natural and cultural resources accessible and improving the quality of life for people locally. Well-managed, public investment can act as a catalyst to bring forward private investment. Private investment is essential if tourism is to contribute to economic development, and destinations are continually searching out more creative and collaborative ways of sourcing the capital needed to develop the sector.

DMO's rely on the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) which is designed to support tourism marketing, programs, and projects. With the evolving roles of DMOs, they are now often involved in organizing infrastructure projects and other destination management activities and alternative funding sources or greater flexibility in the use of funds are needed.



Next Steps



One can point to the existence of a broad movement, evident in the literature, towards the idea that tourism should focus on improving the quality of life for those residing in destinations. To achieve this, local communities must be repositioned at the centre of tourism architecture, giving them an active role in planning processes. This, in turn, represents an opportunity to unleash and utilize the wealth of ideas and knowledge, often underutilized, that this almost always silent multitude possesses.³¹

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, there was an overwhelming willingness for ongoing participation and collaboration to bring this plan to life. In addition, the District of Sooke is an invaluable champion of this initiative and is keen to progress the realization of this ambition for tourism in conjunction with the partners who have been involved to date across and beyond the region.

There is also a recognition that, unlike other destinations which are further ahead in their tourism journey, this region does not have its own, dedicated DMO. An immediate challenge is one of exploring how best to develop a mechanism locally which will continue to provide a forum for advancing the ideas and initiatives detailed in this plan. It will be important to consider developing a distinctively West Coast driven DMO model, ideally to include Pacheedaht, Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht First Nations amongst other participants. What is clear is that, in looking ahead, it will be critically important to ensure that a strong and **representative governance** model is developed - one that will inspire the confidence and support of the communities all along the Juan de Fuca corridor.

31 Vargas-Sánchez, A. (2023) Tourism Governance And The Role Of Local Communities

The **Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership** (SGITP) is the community destination management organization (CDMO) for the Southern Gulf Islands region, which includes Galiano, Mayne, Pender, Saturna, and Salt Spring Islands. It is an independent, non-profit society managed by an elected tourism sector board of directors and supported by professional tourism management staff. It is guided by an approved BC Societies Act constitution and bylaws and an annual board approved business plan and budget. The partnership works diligently to encourage more seasonally balanced visitation that supports the economic activity and diversity of island businesses. At the same time, it promotes visitation that leaves a net positive benefit on island communities, both socially and environmentally, to support residents' quality of life and island values.

Immediate next steps to support the implementation of this plan will include:

- ✓ Initiate the process of applying to the Municipal and Regional District Tax program in order to avail of this potential funding stream to support the development of the area's visitor economy.
- ✓ Prepare an application to Destination Canada's Tourism Corridor Strategy Program to secure funding to stimulate investment opportunities along the Juan de Fuca Corridor, nurture Indigenous engagement, consolidate emerging cross-community connections and establish trans-national alliances in order to sustainably grow the region's visitor economy.

The **primary goal** of the Tourism Corridor Strategy Program³² is:

▶ **to contribute to a more resilient tourism industry through accelerated destination development of multiple corridors across Canada. We will achieve this through comprehensive strategic planning that stimulates investment and contributes to the wealth and wellbeing for the people of Canada. Destination Canada's approach to corridor development places an emphasis on accelerating collaboration amongst varying stakeholders within the corridor and, especially between provinces and territories, to strengthen capacity and leadership.**

³² <https://www.destinationcanada.com/en/tourism-corridor-strategy-program>



At its core, regeneration involves bringing people together around what they care about and could care about in their place, and then putting that care into action.”³³



Considering what the world is facing with the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, regenerative tourism is the only solution moving forward, once you see through that lens, you know there can't be any other way.”³⁴

³³ Destination Canada. (2023) A Regenerative Approach to Tourism in Canada

³⁴ Wynne Lockhart, J. (2022) “What is regenerative tourism? Beyond the buzzword”. The New Zealand Herald.