

2023

CLAYOQUOT SOUND BIOSPHERE REGION'S

VitalSigns®



clayoquot
BIOSPHERE TRUST

From our Executive Director

I am pleased to present our 2023 Vital Signs report. This report provides a snapshot of local communities and ecosystems in numbers, pictures, and stories. It brings together data from a variety of sources to describe the health of the region in its broadest sense, encompassing education, housing, youth, the environment, economy, and more. The report helps us gauge where the region stands in achieving sustainability in all its forms: cultural, social, economic, and environmental.

Having a comprehensive picture of where we are today will help us get to where we want to be as communities and a region. But presenting the information is just the first step—it's how we use it that really matters. We hope the report will inspire you to become a more informed, active citizen. It also provides a tool that will help decision makers at all levels make sound and strategic choices in their work. Please share the report with your friends, family, colleagues, community groups, and decision-makers at all levels.

With encouragement from the Vital Signs advisory committee and as a part of our commitment to equity and learning, this year we have included a new section on Truth and Reconciliation. These pages highlight some of the region's significant efforts towards reconciliation, but also notes hard truths around inequity, injustice, and intergenerational trauma.

As ever, we are guided as an organization and in this report, by the principle of *hishuk ish ts'awalk*, everything is one. We believe that thriving communities and thriving ecosystems go hand in hand. We encourage you to find a way, however small, to make a difference, so that together we are building a better future.

Rebecca Hurwitz
Executive Director
Clayoquot Biosphere Trust

In the spirit of truth, healing, and reconciliation, we acknowledge the territories of hiškwii?ath (Hesquiaht First Nation), Saahuus?ath (Ahousaht), λa?uukwi?ath (Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations), Yuutu?it?ath Government (Ucluelet First Nation), and tuk^waa?ath (Toquaht Nation).

From the Vital Signs Research Team

Creating the Vital Signs reports is a team effort that goes far beyond the names listed below. We would like to thank the many individuals and organizations who contributed their knowledge, experience, advice, and data so that we could bring you the 2023 Vital Signs. Thank you also to the advisory committee who convened to evaluate past reports and shared their ideas for priority areas to research and highlight. Although we were not able to incorporate all the ideas brought forward by this group—often because of a lack of available data—we have noted the areas of concern for future research.

This document is the fifth Vital Signs report from the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT). As such, it provides an opportunity to look back over 10 years to see how, or if, metrics have changed. Housing, for instance, was identified as a significant challenge in our 2012 report and the situation has only worsened. The impacts of COVID-19, recent road closures, and the region's reliance on tourism also ripple throughout the report, as do the inequities within the region. But compiling the report has also demonstrated how we care about our children and the environment, and how so many people and organizations are doing what they can to improve the health of the region and its people, however they define "health." As they demonstrate with their commitment to community, together we are stronger.

Janessa Dornstauder
Erika Goldt
Adrienne Mason
Janessa McCarthy-Frank
Faye Missar
Marianne Paquette
Colin Robinson

About Vital Signs

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

About the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust

The CBT is both a biosphere region and a community foundation. As the only organization in Canada that encompasses both of these internationally recognized mandates, we see the opportunities and challenges in the region through a unique lens. The CBT is one of 1,800 community foundations worldwide implementing and monitoring the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework that sets targets for reducing poverty, ending hunger, ensuring quality education, and restoring ecosystem services. We also uphold the mission and mandate of the Man and the Biosphere Programme as one of 738 designated UNESCO biosphere reserves. At our core, we build assets, capacity, and trust within the region to strengthen the development of all citizens, communities, and the ecosystems on which we all depend.

The Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region

The Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region, referred to as “the region” or the “west coast” in this report, includes Hot Springs Cove, Ahousaht, Opitsaht, Tofino, Esowista, Ty-Histanis, Ucluelet, Hitacu, Macoah, and Area C of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD-Area C). The CBT operates within the territories of five Nuu-chah-nulth nations: hiškʷiiʔaḥ (Hesquiaht First Nation), ʒaaḥuusʔaḥ (Ahousaht), ʒaʔuukʷiʔaḥ (Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations), Yuutuʔitʔaḥ Government (Ucluelet First Nation), and tukʷaaʔaḥ (Toquaht Nation).

Explore Vital Signs data online

The Clayoquot Biosphere Data Hub centralizes Vital Signs regional indicators and provides you with a place to explore data gathered since 2011.



Marcie Callewaert John

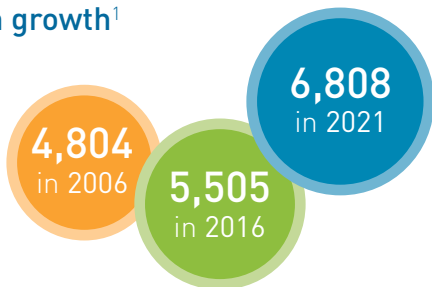
Data sources

This report compiles existing data from a variety of local, provincial, and national sources, including the 2021 Census Profile from Statistics Canada. Wherever possible, the report utilizes information specific to the regional scale, but, given our small population, this is not always possible. When that is the case, we rely on community specific data. You can find a detailed list of sources beginning on page 26.

Youth are one of the core priorities of the CBT, so, as we have done since the first Vital Signs in 2012, we give them a strong voice in this report. One hundred and sixty-nine high-school aged youth completed the survey at either Maaqtusiis Secondary School or Ucluelet Secondary School. Note that while this captures some sense of the youth in our communities, the data only reflects the opinions of students who responded and who are still in school.

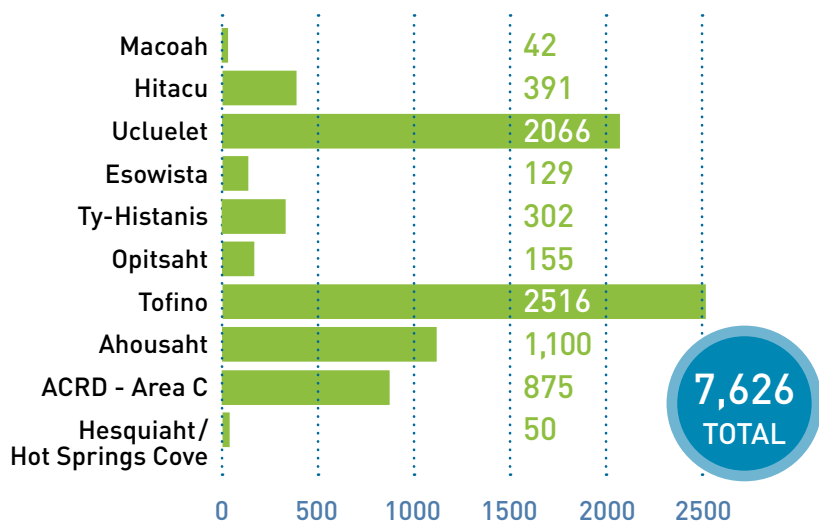
The region at a glance

Population growth¹

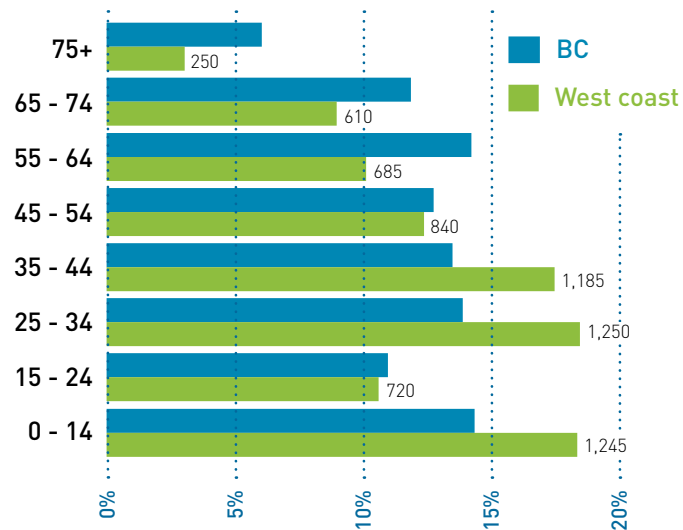


Population of west coast communities²

West coast communities often have a higher number of residents than that recorded in the Statistics Canada census. Communities have shared their population data to give us a more accurate calculation of the regional population as of 2023.



Population by age group³



Median age³

The west coast has a young population with a median* age of 39, compared to 43 in BC, and 48 on Vancouver Island.



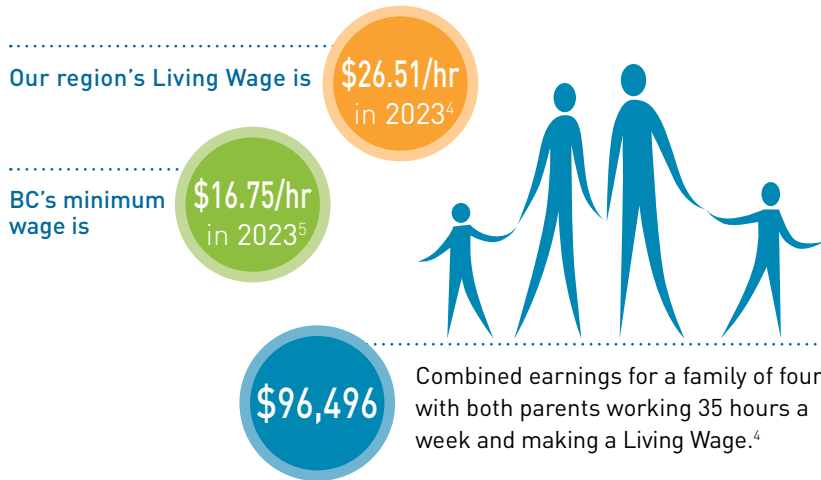
NOTE: *The median is the midpoint in a range. This means that half of the west coast population is younger than 39 and half is older.

Proportion of residents that identify as Indigenous⁵



A living wage is the income a family of four requires to maintain a decent standard of living and satisfy all of their basic needs. Working families that earn less than a living wage may face tough choices, such as deciding between paying rent or purchasing healthy food.

Learn more at: clayoquotbiosphere.org/research/living-wage



37% of residents in our region earn less than minimum wage, compared to **40%** in 2011.⁶

51% of residents in our region earned less than our Living Wage in 2021.⁴

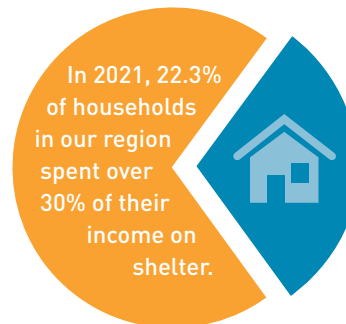
Income inequity

On the west coast, median income per person varies between communities and ranges from **\$22,400** to **\$42,800**.³

The median income for BC is **\$40,800**.

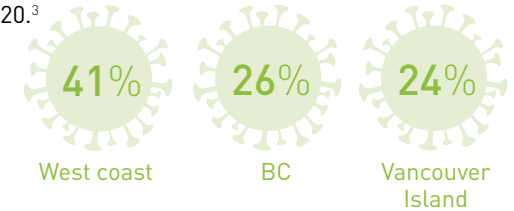
Household spending on housing⁹

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing, rent should not exceed 30% of income.



Note: Figure includes Tofino, Ucluelet, and Area-C only

Residents receiving COVID-19 benefits and recovery assistance in 2020.³



Children and seniors living in poverty⁷

In 2021, **11.3%** of seniors (over 65) and **19.5%** of youth (under 18) on the west coast were living in poverty compared to **14%** (seniors) and **11%** (youth) in BC.

Poverty rates vary widely in the region, and, depending on the community, are **7 to 17%** for seniors, and **9 to 40%** for youth.

Cost of food⁸

A comparison of 10 healthy food items showed that food prices are **21% more expensive** on the west coast than in Port Alberni.



Transportation inequality¹⁰



Return costs by boat or car to the closest grocery store in 2023

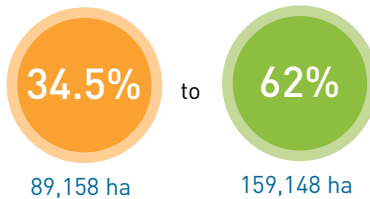
- Esowista • \$18.50
- Opitsaht • \$14
- Ahousaht • \$60
- Macoah • \$40
- Hot Springs Cove • \$150

– Stewardship and restoration

Stewardship means “taking care of.” Nuuchahnulth nations have been stewarding these lands and waters since time immemorial. Since colonization, biodiversity has been lost at an alarming rate. Restoration is the targeted effort that rebuilds the land to support biodiversity.

Protected core area within Clayoquot Sound has increased¹¹

All UNESCO biosphere regions have a core protected area, which could include national and/or provincial parks for example. Since the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere was created in 2000, its core protected area has increased from



mainly due to the completion of watershed management plans. Global targets for biodiversity conservation aim for 30% of lands and waters to be protected by 2030.

Learn more about local research

Over the past two years, West Coast NEST (Nature. Education. Sustainability. Transformation) has created a series of videos in which west coast youth interview science and conservation researchers.

Check out the series at:



Redd Fish Restoration Society and Chad Chomlack

Indigenous protected and conserved areas

Nuuchahnulth nations have been stewarding the land since time immemorial and are leading the way in modern protection of their ha̱uutii [traditional territories] in order to safeguard cultural resources, maintain and enhance their traditional ways of life, steward biological diversity and natural environments, and support their community’s economic and social well-being.

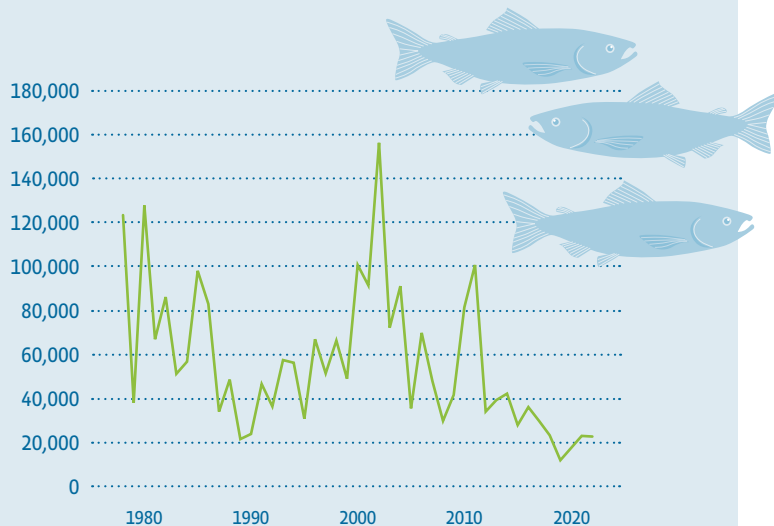
Examples include:

- The Ahousaht H̱awiih [hereditary chiefs] worked collaboratively with their chief and council and community to develop a **Land Use Vision** which was released in July 2022.¹²
- The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations have declared their ha̱uutii, including four tribal parks, as an **Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area**.¹³
- The **Indigenous-led Westcoast Stewardship Corridor** is a collaborative project that links areas of cultural and ecological significance across Vancouver Island with a particular focus on prioritizing natural climate solutions. The initiative began in 2020 with a gathering in Hitacu, hosted by the Yuuʔuʔit̓at̓h Government.¹⁴

Number of salmon returning

The warmest eight years globally have all been since 2015, with 2016, 2019, and 2020 being the top three.¹⁵ Rising air temperatures affect water levels in rivers, which experience a drastic decline in summer and more frequent flooding and erosion in winter. This impacts salmon habitat and spurs the need for restoration efforts.

The warming climate, together with increased fishing, increased exposure to predation, marine contaminants, diseases, and invasive species, are driving down the number of salmon returning to rivers in Clayoquot Sound.¹⁶



In an effort to restore salmon habitat and support salmon recovery, local organizations gather twice a year at the Clayoquot Sound Salmon Roundtable to develop a collaborative stewardship approach.



Sander Jain

Habitat restoration

The results from a recent study analyzing air photos from 1937 to 2019 at Hitsyaq̓̓is (Tranquil River) show that salmon habitat is degraded due to historical harvesting operations in the watershed and that critical habitats for the freshwater life history of salmon have still not recovered fully.

[Check out the details of this study by scanning the QR code.](#)

Many watersheds across the west coast are in a similar state and are in need of restoration work.

Redd Fish Restoration Society helps restore local watersheds. They combine short-term strategies, such as in-stream or off-channel habitat restoration, with longer-term strategies, such as riparian restoration, slope stabilization, and road deactivation, in order to holistically accelerate processes that form and sustain salmon habitats. Each restoration project has been identified as a priority by First Nations partners.¹⁷



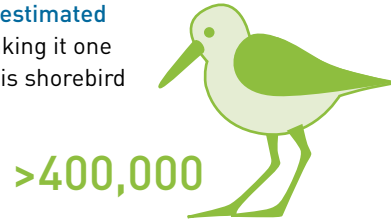
Environment

– Long-term monitoring

Long-term monitoring is essential for informing conservation efforts, detecting early warnings of biodiversity loss, understanding climate changes, combating shifting baselines, and making informed decisions in the face of complex environmental challenges.

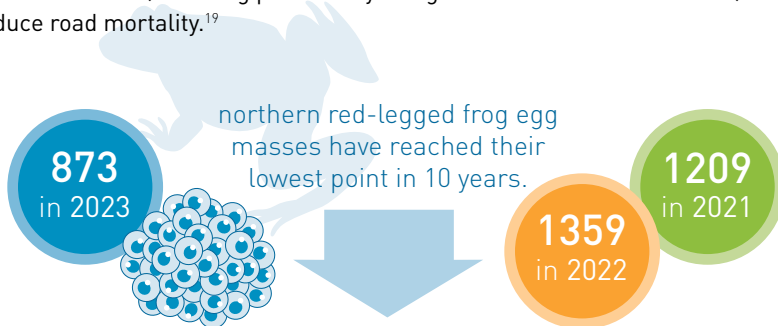
Shorebird habitats

The **Tofino Wah-nah-jus Hilth-hoo-is Mudflats** Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site supports significant numbers of migrating shorebirds. Surveys from 2019–2021 by the Raincoast Education Society show that this site consistently hosts **>400,000 western sandpipers** per year, which is **>10% of the estimated global population** per year on average, making it one of the most important stopover sites for this shorebird in North America.¹⁸



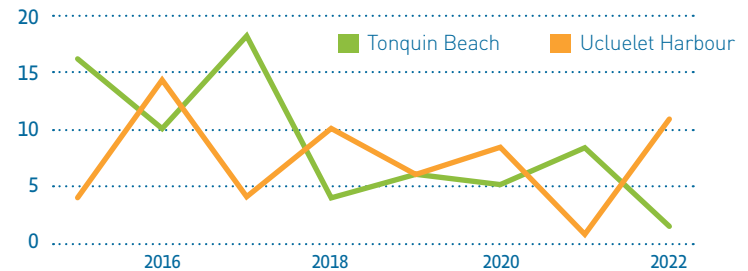
Amphibian monitoring

Amphibians live on both land and water and are indicator species sensitive to pollution, climate change, habitat loss, and road mortality. **Egg mass counts** help determine the overall health of a species. Annual counts of northern red-legged frog egg masses at Swan Lake have fluctuated over the past 10 years and reached the lowest point in 2023. Logging, road and trail construction, and summer drought have all contributed to the loss of their habitat. Efforts to counter these losses include four purpose-built amphibian underpasses and over 450 metres of wildlife fencing that connect amphibians to their habitats (including provincially designated Wildlife Habitat Areas) and reduce road mortality.¹⁹



Sea star wasting syndrome

% of sea stars showing evidence of wasting disease at Tonquin Beach and Ucluelet Harbour sites, (2015-2022)






Sea star wasting disease can rapidly progress to fragmentation of limbs, disintegration, and, in many cases, death. The cause of wasting disease is still being deliberated, however scientists are certain that it is exacerbated by warming ocean temperatures. Since 2015, Strawberry Isle Marine Research Society has partnered with dedicated organizations to regularly survey the region's sea star communities. Their collective research supports a North America-wide monitoring effort led by Multi-Agency Rocky Intertidal Network.²⁰

Human-wildlife interactions²¹

Removing all human food attractants and keeping dogs leashed helps prevent negative human-wildlife interactions. Reported sightings to the WildSafeBC community coordinators and the BC Conservation Officer Service often fluctuate with the availability of attractants, and tend to increase when animals have access to human food and garbage.

Reported wildlife sightings

	2022	2021	2020
BEAR 	281	325	51
COUGAR 	6	12	13
WOLF 	11	6	17

Human-caused black bear mortalities

2014-18 (cumulative)	19	19	
2019	13	13	
2020	10	12	
2021	13	13	
2022	2	13	
	Motor-vehicles	euthanized*	total

Note: *Bears habituated by garbage, food, or other human attractants are euthanized by conservation officers.

Water quality monitoring

Based on research by University of Washington Tacoma, the marine heat wave in 2019 resulted in a lower total abundance of phytoplankton in Tofino Inlet than in previous years. This change represents a shift in the base of the food web.

The harmful alga, *Alexandrium* spp., which produces saxitoxins that may lead to Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP), has been found in Tofino Inlet in all sampling years.²²



Shellfish closures

A shellfish closure occurs if the sampled water meets the threshold for fecal coliforms (sanitary closure) or harmful bacteria, viruses, and marine biotoxins (biotoxin closure). Many areas are closed permanently due to a lack of monitoring rather than a confirmed presence of toxins.

Since 2023, the Nuu-chah-nulth Youth Warrior Family have established two clam gardens and are planning to create, monitor, and manage more throughout their territory. Restoration of some of the historical gardens is not possible because of industrial activity and sewage effluent.²³

Attractants drawing bears into conflict

	Garbage	*Other	Compost	Residential - fruit trees/berries	Livestock
2019	38	12	6		78
2020	8	11	2		1
2021	130	30	8	6	12
2022	60	101	10	1	8

Note: *sheds, vehicles, outdoor freezers, barbecues, grease bins, recycling.

Infrastructure and Sustainability

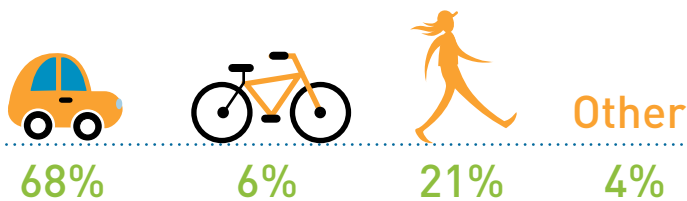


Rebecca Hurwitz

Number of electric vehicle charging stations on the west coast.²⁴



Main mode of commuting for the employed labour force on the west coast aged 15 years and over.¹



1 out of 5 youth missed work or a sports activity because they did not have a way to get there or home. This is up from

26%
in 2023

19%
in 2018

1 out of 4 youth missed school because they did not have transportation. This is up from

21%
in 2023

14%
in 2018²⁵

Transportation inequality

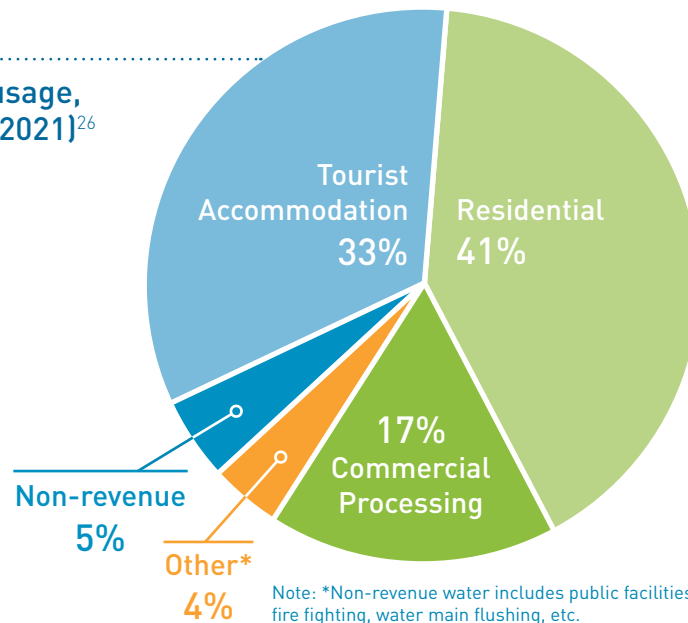
The region's communities are rural. Some people must travel outside their communities by boat or car for everyday needs, such as buying groceries, seeing a doctor, or for employment.¹⁰



Return costs to the closest grocery store in 2023

- Esowista • \$18.50
- Opitsaht • \$14
- Ahousaht • \$60
- Macoah • \$40
- Hot Springs Cove • \$150

Water usage, Tofino (2021)²⁶



Marine debris recycling infrastructure

Thanks to the innovative recycling techniques of the nonprofit Ocean Legacy, Surfrider Pacific Rim has been able to **recycle approximately 80% of marine debris** removed from shorelines since 2017. In 2019, the ACRD partnered with Ocean Legacy to create end of life solutions for equipment from local aquaculture businesses. Since that time, over **120 tonnes** of rope and netting has been diverted from the West Coast Landfill.²⁷

Since 2016, volunteers from Surfrider Pacific Rim spent a total of **200 days** cleaning the shoreline and removed **93,000 kilograms of debris**. Their recent campaigns—Ban the Bag, Cut the Cutlery, Forget the Foam, Hold On To Your Butt—have resulted in local victories for ocean health. Since 2018, bylaws in the Districts of Tofino and Ucluelet have led to the ban of single-use items, including plastic bags, straws, polystyrene (foam) takeaway containers, plastic and bioplastic utensils, including chopsticks and stir sticks.

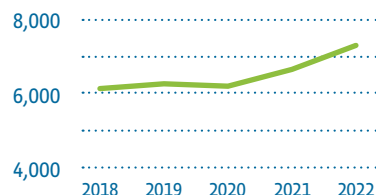
As of 2023, through beach clean-ups and a network of 92 cigarette disposal canisters across the region, Surfrider Pacific Rim has collected 1.4 million butts—one of the most common and pervasive sources of marine pollution—which have been recycled through TerraCycle’s free butt recycling program.²⁸



Mirae Campbell

West Coast Landfill Waste Tonnage 2018–2021

Waste at the West Coast Landfill has increased 20.4% since 2018. 50% of the solid waste disposed of in the West Coast Landfill is collected from the commercial sector, which include resorts, hotels, restaurants, retail and other businesses.²⁹



In 2022, a three-bin—organics, recycling, and garbage—system for waste disposal was implemented*. In the first six months of the program, residents **diverted 30.4% of curbside waste** from the landfill, largely through the diversion of more than 130 tonnes of organic waste.³⁰

*All communities except Opiosat, Ahousaht, and Hot Springs Cove.

Municipalities plan for climate change adaptation

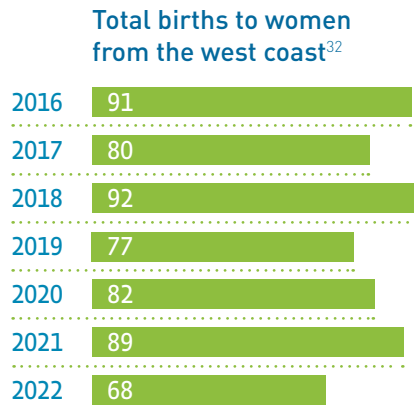
In 2019, the District of Ucluelet adopted its first Climate Action Plan, which set ambitious 2050 targets of 100% renewable energy and 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This was followed by a climate change adaptation plan in 2021 that identified current and future climate impacts to the community.

In 2021, the District of Tofino adopted new Official Community Plan that includes climate change resiliency as a foundational guiding principle. The OCP also contains objectives and policies specific to greenhouse gas emissions and solid waste reductions, supporting local food systems, and climate resilience. A 2022 report outlined 27 recommended resilience actions to address the highest climate risks over the short-, medium-, and long-term.³¹

Health is much more than simply the absence of illness, injury, and disease. Health also involves the social, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of individuals, families, and communities. This is why health starts where we live, work, learn, love, and play.

Maternal health

Women and families on the west coast must leave the region to give birth. This can incur high financial costs and cause significant stress to women as they are separated from their social support networks. Women and their families travel to various places on Vancouver Island, including the Comox Valley, Port Alberni, and Nanaimo, or even as far as the Lower Mainland, to give birth.

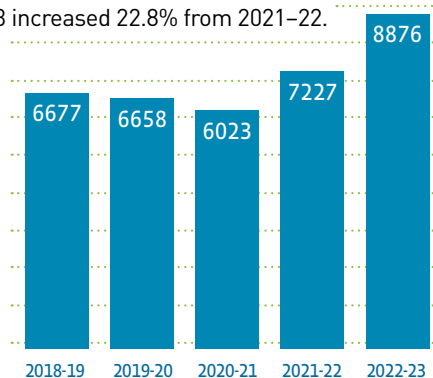


Emergency room admissions³³

Emergency room use is high on the west coast, especially during the summer months due to the influx of visitors and seasonal workers.

Emergency department admissions

in 2022–23 increased 22.8% from 2021–22.



The region's six doctors also cover the emergency room and can be pulled away from their clinics to attend emergencies.



Regional priorities

Top Regional Health Priorities from Coming Together Forum (2022)³⁴

- Child and youth health services and supports.
- Transportation system that connects communities.
- Funding and infrastructure for health services.
- Access to primary care.
- Housing.
- Manageable caseloads for health care workers.

Top Health Priorities from Long Beach Collaborative Services Committee (2023)³⁵

- Mental health and substance use.
- Access to primary care.
- Long term care.
- Hospital services.
- Maternity care.
- Indigenous traditional healers.

NOTE: *The committee includes representatives from Island Health, the First Nations Health Authority, the General Practice Services Committee, local First Nations and municipal governments, and the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

Primary care is a person's first point of care with the health system, such as an appointment with a physician. Physician coverage in the region varies between communities.³⁵

Ahousaht	2 days/week
Tofino	5 days/week
Ty-Histanis	1 day/week
Ucluelet	3 days/week
Hitacu	1 day/week
Macoah	1 day/month

Note: 1 day = 1 doctor, so when 2 physicians are available on the same day this counts as 2 days. This data is as of September 2023.

Substance use

Mental health and substance use remains a top health concern in the region, with alcohol topping the list of substances of concern. Alcohol is an issue in all west coast communities, however, it is more dire in some communities, particularly those affected by colonialism, racism, the residential school experience, and intergenerational trauma.

According to Ahousaht Hereditary Chief Hasheukumiss (Richard George), alcohol use and bootlegging in Ahousaht is “a serious pandemic and a state of emergency ... [where] an estimated 300 to 500 bottles of vodka go every week [and are] sold for prices ranging from \$60 on average up to \$200 at times.” He states that more than 80% of recent deaths in the community have been related to alcohol.³⁶

Inclusion and accessibility

Gender neutral washrooms³⁷

A 2023 survey of restaurants* by the Coastal Queer Alliance found that gender neutral washrooms were available in:

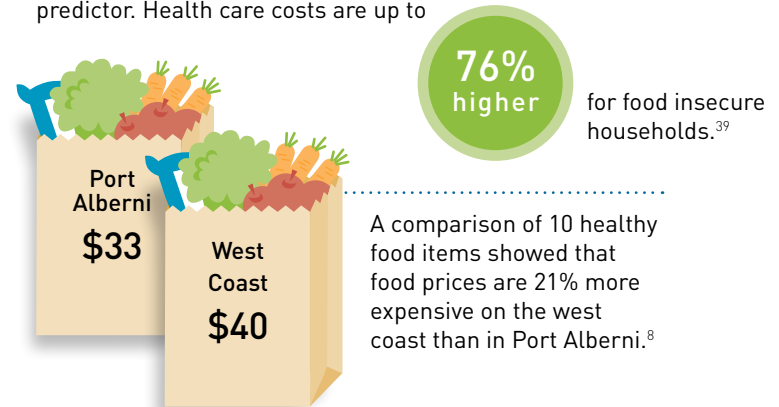


[Note: *Restaurants that served food/drink intended for seated service only.]

The CBT's future Biosphere Centre—a gathering place for communities of the region that will offer teaching, education, research, and meeting spaces—has a comprehensive plan for **accessibility and inclusion**. The design includes all-gender washrooms, a hearing loop, an Elder's room, braille tactile signage, and more.³⁸

Access to healthy food

Household food insecurity affects peoples' physical, social, and mental health, and overall well-being. Many economic, social, environmental, and geographic factors impact food security, but income is the strongest predictor. Health care costs are up to



The Food Bank on the Edge, located in Ucluelet, serves an average of 145 registered clients per month. This does not include “drop in” users who may only access the food bank from time to time. Up to 30% of clients are ages 0 to 18.⁴⁰



Average monthly cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four in 2022⁴¹



The Coastal Queer Alliance provides resources on accessing queer-specific healthcare.



“Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.”

– Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada⁴²

Residential and Indian Day Schools⁴³

Throughout the 1900s there were several church-run, government-funded schools for Indigenous children in the region. During their years of operation, residential schools housed thousands of children from along the coast. Day school students remained in their communities and went home to their families in the evenings. Attendance at these schools was enforced, and many children experienced physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harm. These institutions are now widely recognized as being tools of assimilation that resulted in intergenerational trauma.

Residential schools



Christie

– Meares Island and Tofino
1900-1983
Catholic

• Ahousaht
• 1904-1940
• Presbyterian/
• United Church

Day schools



Hitacu

1894-1966*
Presbyterian/United Church

Note: *There were periodic closures during these years.

• Ahousaht
• 1940-1985
• United Church,
• Presbyterian,
• Roman Catholic

• Opitsaht
• 1957-1971
• Roman Catholic

To redress the impact of residential schools and to advance reconciliation in Canada, in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made 94 calls to action.

You can review the calls to action here:



Pole raising in remembrance⁴⁴

On July 1, 2022, the first totem pole in decades was raised in Opitsaht. The pole was carved by Joe Martin and is called Hinaaqsuuq^wa in honour of one of Martin's relatives, a “truth-speaking orator.” Pre-colonization, Opitsaht was a thriving village of more than 200 homes, many with adjacent totem poles, that was destroyed in 1792 when American trader Captain Robert Gray set fire to the village. The skulls on the pole represent recent and historical pandemics that Nuu-chah-nulth people endured, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and children who never returned home from residential schools.



TJ Watt

Nuu-chah-nulth place names⁴⁵

An essential part of reconciliation is cultural and language revitalization which includes recognizing and using Nuu-chah-nulth place names. In Ucluelet, the first two of 54 proposed bilingual street signs were installed at the intersection of k^wak^wał t^ašii (Otter St.) and y^učkw^aniim t^ašii

(Peninsula Rd.) in 2023. Other recent language restitution initiatives include a new welcome map at the Pacific Rim Visitors Centre that clearly acknowledges the Nuu-chah-nulth communities and place names of the region; the ʔapsčiiik t^ašii multi-use path in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve; the renaming of Maquinna Provincial Provincial Marine Park (or Hot Springs) as Nišmâqin, which Ahousaht operates; and the čumaata (Mt. Ozzard) mountain bike trails.



Melissa Boucha

Working towards community safety and justice⁴⁶

Violence against Indigenous people is one of the long-lasting effects of colonization. There are cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the region, as well as police shootings of Nuu-chah-nulth people. In 2021, the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations developed a community safety initiative “to reaffirm and uplift systems of Indigenous care.”

This community-led initiative created a community safety and justice committee and a community safety plan, and hired a community safety and justice manager. The project also advanced relationships with the RCMP, probation officers, and the judge and crown prosecutors. The project aims to support and empower Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations members who have been victims or perpetrators of violence and crimes, and to support their healing/accountability.

Youth-led reconciliation projects⁴⁷



September 30th marks both the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (a federal statutory day of commemoration) and Orange Shirt Day (a grassroots Indigenous-led commemorative day) in Canada. This day honours the survivors of the residential school experience and those who lost their lives, as well as their children and families.

In 2022, Ucluelet Secondary School and the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust partnered on a youth project on truth and reconciliation. Students met with residential school survivors, researched the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action, and designed and printed orange shirts.

Learn more about the project here:



Historical and modern treaties⁴⁸

From first contact until 1854, the British crown acquired certainty to land from First Nations through treaties in what is now known as British Columbia. There were no historical treaties signed with the First Nations in Barkley and Clayoquot Sounds and the land remained unceded. Today, the Toquaht Nation and Yuułu?it?ath Government are signatories to the Maa-nulth Agreement, a modern treaty signed in 2011 between British Columbia, Canada, and five First Nations.

Becoming allies⁴⁹

Programs such as the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations' Tribal Parks Allies provide a way for businesses and individuals to support the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Park Guardians and community programs, and to acknowledge the long stewardship of the land on which people live and visit. The voluntary certification system gathers one percent of revenues from businesses that operate within, or benefit from, Tla-o-qui-aht territory. The program was launched in 2018 and now has 120 participating businesses.

The Ahousaht Stewardship Fund provides a way for businesses and visitors to the Ahousaht traditional territory to acknowledge and support the nations' long stewardship of the land and water. The voluntary ecosystem services fee supports the work of the Ahousaht Stewardship Guardians and is used for building and maintaining trails and other infrastructure, as well as ongoing monitoring and restoration.

Reconciliation for Japanese-Canadians

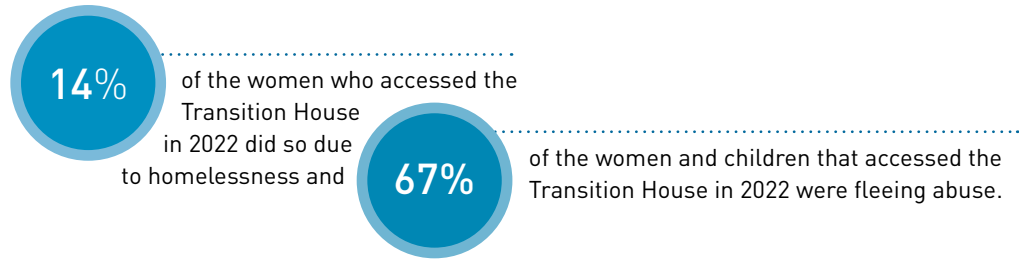
During the Second World War, Canadians of Japanese descent, including several hundred residents of Ucluelet and Tofino, were uprooted from the coast. Men were sent to work camps, and women, the young, and elderly, were relocated in internment camps in the interior of British Columbia and beyond. Valued members of local communities lost their homes, boats, and other possessions; very few families returned.

In 2019, the District of Tofino made a formal apology for a motion made in 1947 to “exclude Orientals” from the community. The motion to exclude the return of Japanese-Canadian residents was not passed, but a formal apology had never been made.⁵⁰

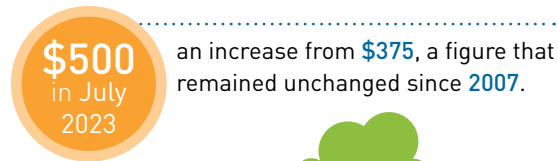
In 2022, descendants, family, and friends of Japanese-Canadian residents who were interned, as well as members of First Nations and European settler communities gathered to reminisce, exchange stories, and “examine the nature of shared community,” as an ongoing act of reconciliation.⁵¹

Housing for women fleeing violence and abuse⁵²

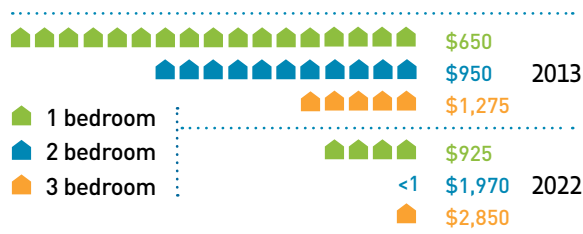
Westcoast Transition House is an emergency shelter run by the Westcoast Community Resources Society serving women and children fleeing violence and abuse.



Maximum shelter allowance for a single person on social assistance⁵³



Average number of available rental units per month in Ucluelet and Tofino⁵⁴



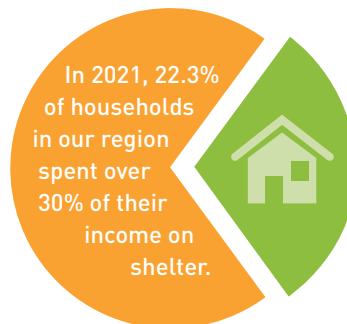
Residential units not occupied as a primary residence⁵⁵



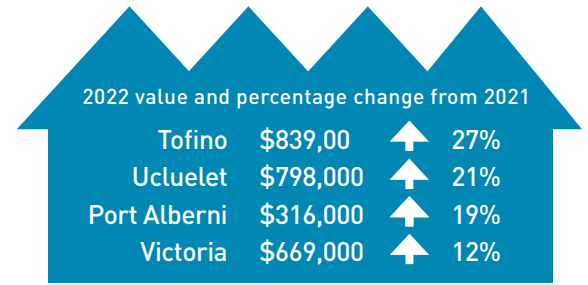
Note: These are dwellings that are unoccupied, or occupied temporarily by a person with primary residence elsewhere in Canada or abroad.

Household spending on housing⁹

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing, rent should not exceed 30% of income.

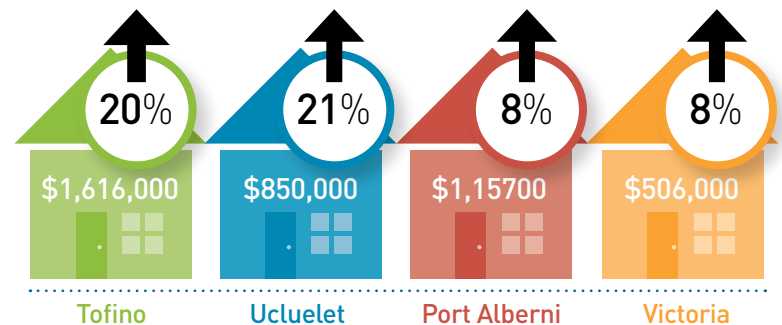


Note: Figure includes Tofino, Ucluelet, and Area-C only



Median assessed value of strata residential 2022⁵⁶

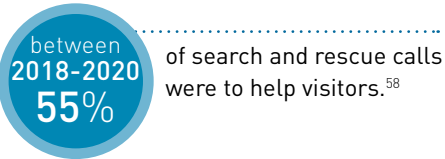
Percentage change from 2022 to 2023.



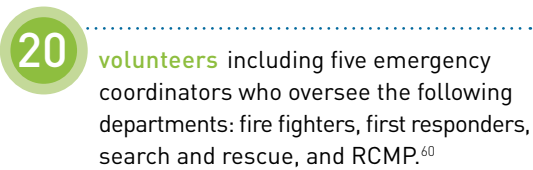
Median assessed value of single family home, 2023⁵⁷

Volunteer public safety organizations, such as fire departments and search and rescue teams, play a significant role in the safety of visitors. Challenges around housing and cost of living can affect an individual's ability to volunteer.

As of 2023, West Coast Inland Search and Rescue has **29 volunteers**.



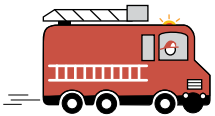
The **Ahousaht Emergency Response Team** has over



Number of volunteer firefighters (2023)⁵⁹

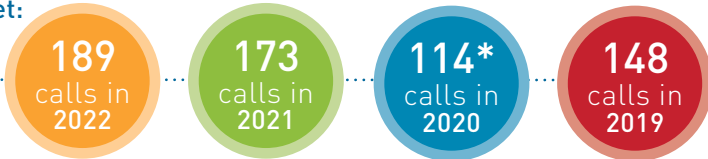


Fire department call volume

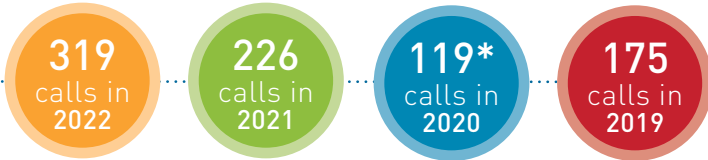


Note that fire departments also respond to calls unrelated to fire, smoke, or alarms. The majority of call outs are as first responders and motor vehicle incidents.⁶¹

Ucluelet:



Tofino:



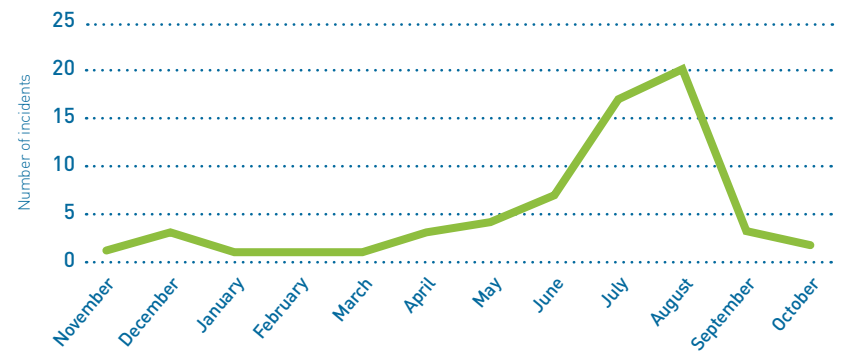
*Note: In 2020, the provincial government restricted the number of medical calls that all fire departments attended due to COVID-19. This is reflected in the reduced call volume.

Visitor safety

Visitor safety incidents in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve peak in summer. In 2022, there were **63 incidents** in the Long Beach Unit of the park:



Visitor Safety Incidents, Long Beach Unit, 2022⁶²



15%

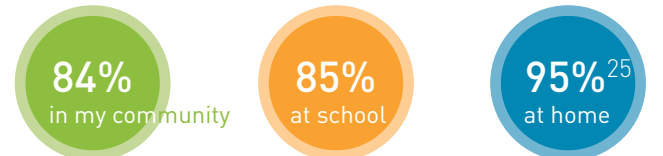
of youth surveyed hitchhike from time to time.



26%

This is down from in 2018.²⁵

In a 2023 survey, youth said I feel safe ...



The west coast region is one of the youngest communities in Canada. Youth input into programs and services is vital to build a happy and healthy community for everyone.

Youth Vital Signs focuses primarily on residents ages 13 to 19. The CBT's youth survey is conducted every two years at the secondary schools in Ucluelet and Ahousaht and all information is drawn from the survey unless otherwise noted. In 2023, 169 students, or about 55% of enrolled students completed the survey.²⁵

Happiness and belonging




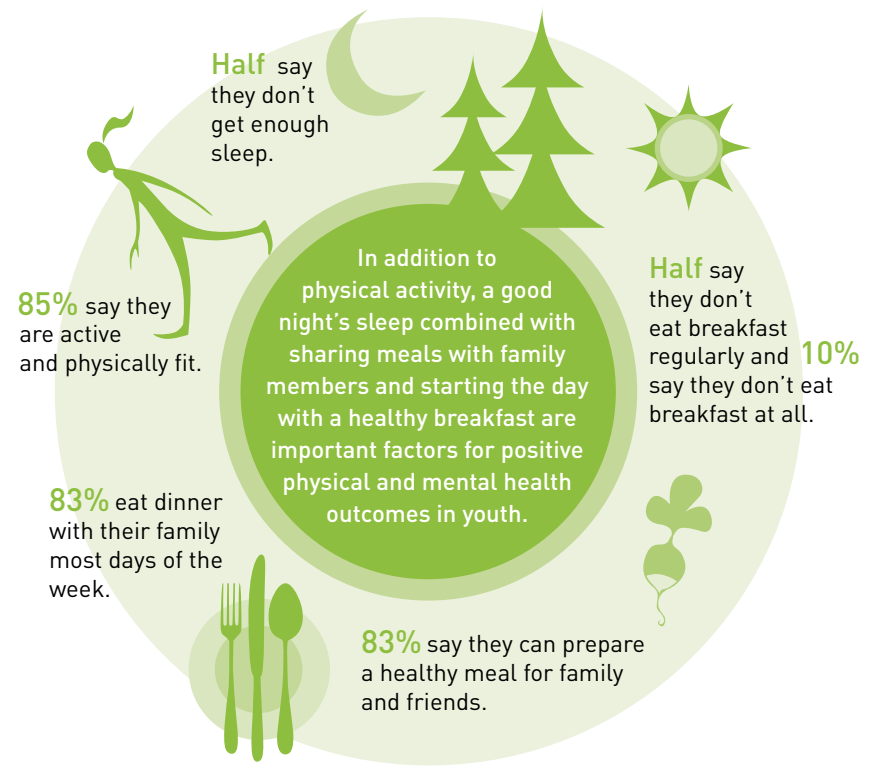
	2023	2018
I belong in my community	76%	65%
I have people in my life who care about me	97%	95%
I am a happy person	83%	74%

Health

While youth generally report a high rate of physical well-being by eating healthy, exercising, and having support from their friends, family, and community, they are increasingly reporting more stress on their mental health.

On a weekly basis I feel...

	2023	2018	2016
Depressed or in despair	35%	20%	12%
Anxious or really worried	58%	21%	14%
Stressed	66%	36%	32%

Youth and work

65%

of youth have a job, with 1/3 working just in the summer and 2/3 working year round.

85%
in 2023

said it wasn't hard to find a job, compared to

71%
in 2018



Sam Rose Phillips



When asked what they liked about living on the coast, youth overwhelmingly said nature and the environment, as well as living in a small community.

When asked what they do not like, they said not enough activities and opportunities, and the remoteness and isolation of communities.

Arts, culture, and recreation

24%

of youth participated in a cultural activity or event in the past month.

Activities students wish were available on the west coast:

1

Sports, especially football, volleyball, and an ice rink.

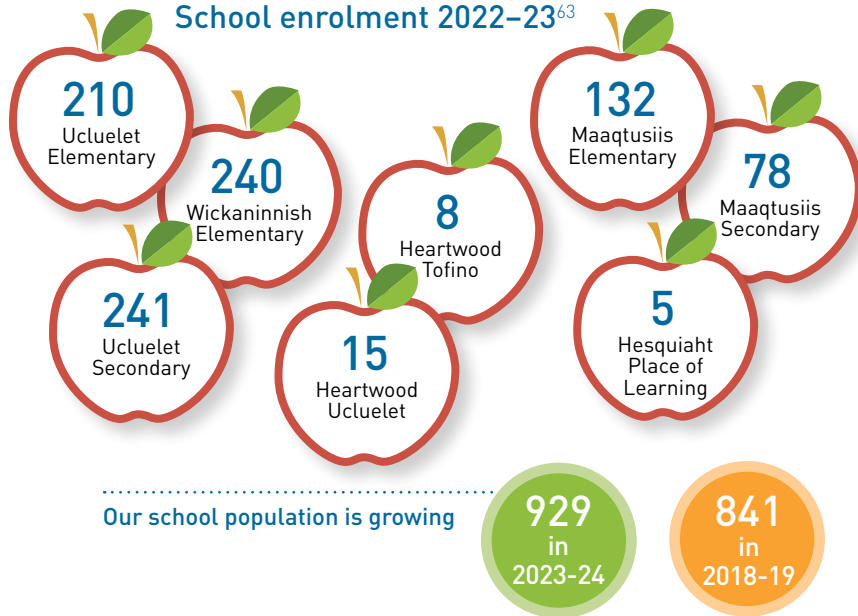
2

Music, dance, and theatre.

3

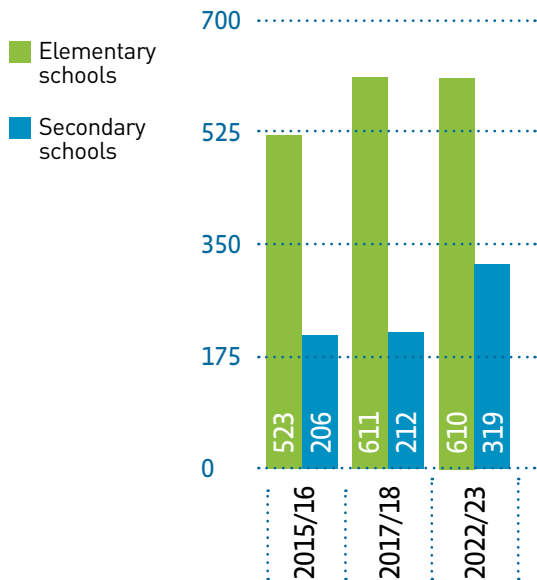
Technology, such as computers, coding, robotics.

School enrolment 2022-23⁶³

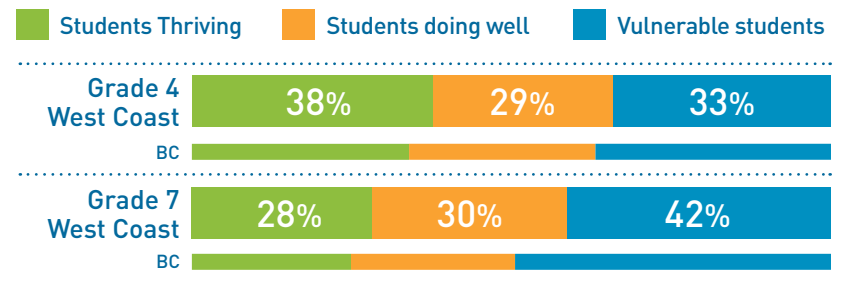


Our school population is growing

Number of students enrolled in the region⁶³



The **Middle Years Development Index** looks at the well-being of Grade 4 and 7 students across many indicators of health, including connectedness, social and emotional development, and experiences during and after school. Overall well-being of children during these years establishes a student's lifelong identity and sets the stage for adolescence and adulthood. On the west coast, students are thriving at a similar level to others in BC. West coast students who were thriving during COVID-19 continued to do so, although the number of vulnerable students increased.⁶⁴



Overall, the index shows that west coast children are on par with BC children for having high levels of positive assets in their lives, including resiliency over COVID-19 from 2020 to 2023. The greatest challenge is **nutrition and sleep** for all ages.

Children reporting positive assets in their lives

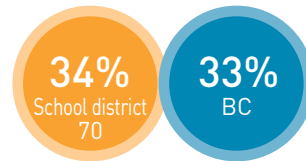
	West Coast				BC			
	GRADE 4		GRADE 7		GRADE 4		GRADE 7	
	2020	2023	2020	2023	2020	2023	2020	2023
Adult relationships	83%	82%	82%	81%	82%	72%	72%	70%
Out of school activities	95%	80%	84%	81%	85%	82%	82%	87%
Nutrition and sleep	73%	63%	38%	58%	63%	58%	58%	56%
Peer relationships	98%	85%	74%	82%	80%	79%	79%	76%

The **Early Years Development Index** looks at how children in kindergarten could be vulnerable in their physical health, well-being, emotional maturity, and communication skills.⁶⁵

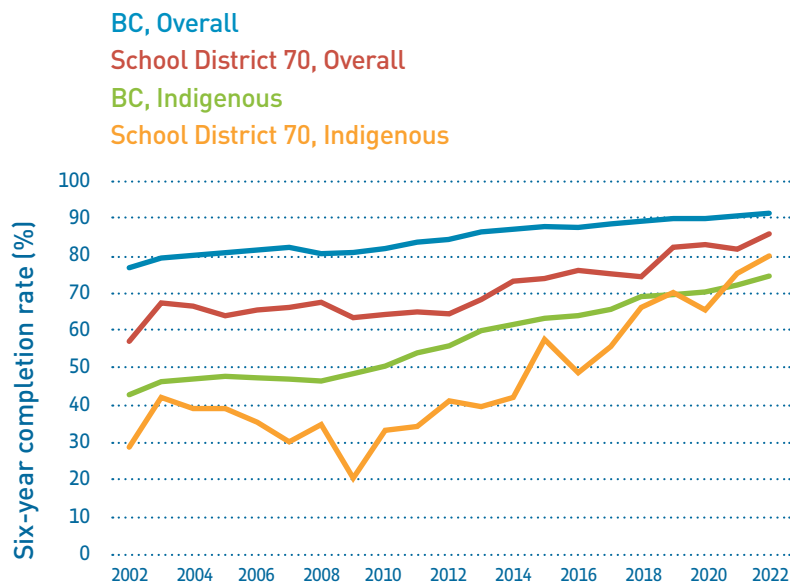
In the last wave of data from 2019–2022,



children showed vulnerability in one or more of these areas compared to



Six-year completion rates show how many students graduate from grade 12 within six year of starting grade 8. This information is available for School District 70, which includes Ucluelet Secondary School. Students who drop out or move to other school districts are not captured.⁶⁶



Mark McKeough

Average annual cost of university tuition for a full-time student in an arts and humanities undergraduate program.⁶⁷



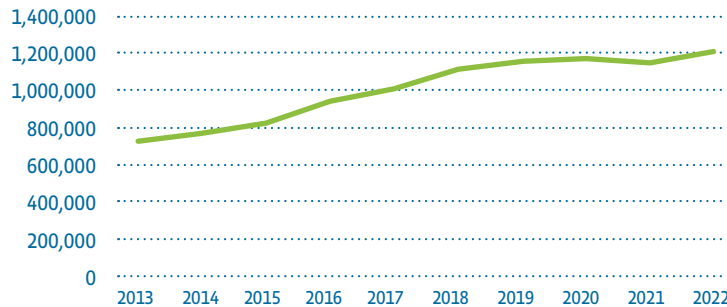
	2017/18	2022/23
Royal Roads University	\$7,285	\$9,089
University of Victoria	\$5,368	\$6,045
Vancouver Island University	\$4,261	\$4,798

Tourism is a major driver in our region's economy. About 32% of our region's workers are employed in accommodation, food services, and retail trade.⁶⁸

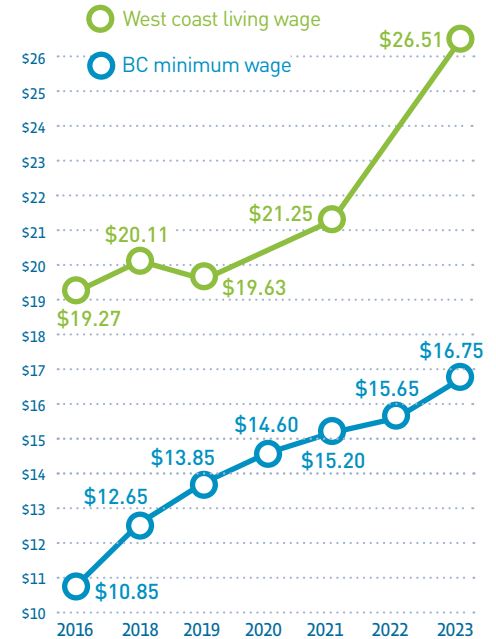


Visitation to Pacific Rim National Park Reserve continues to grow. In 2021–22 there were over 1.2 million visitors to the Long Beach unit of the park.⁶²

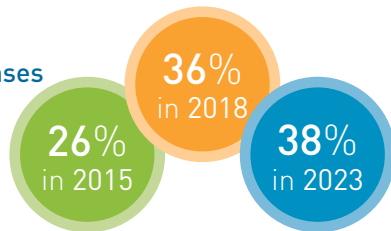
Pacific Rim National Park Reserve – Visitors to Long Beach



A **living wage** is the income a family of four requires to maintain a decent standard of living and satisfy all of their basic needs. Working families that earn less than a living wage may face tough choices, such as deciding between paying rent or purchasing healthy food. Skilled workers (e.g., managers, trades, teachers, healthcare workers, etc.) are more likely to earn above the living wage while those employed in tourism, retail trade, and food services are more likely to earn below the living wage.^{4&5}

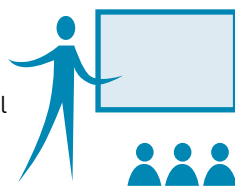


% of business licenses for accommodation services (Tofino and Ucluelet combined)⁶⁹



There are over **682** short-term rentals listed on **AirBnB** in the region.⁷⁰

In 2023, **17 youth** participated in **Youth Career Exploration workshops** to learn about the local careers in environmental science and ecotourism.⁷¹

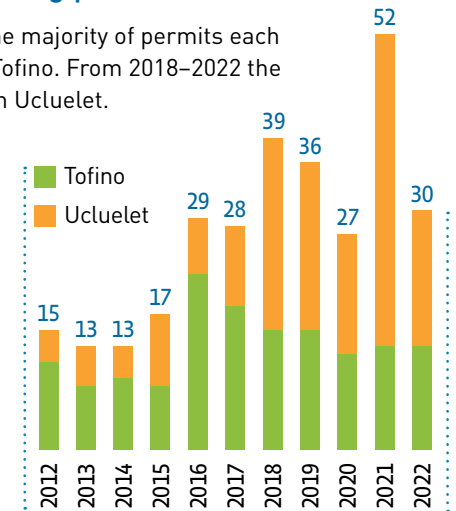


Residential building permits*⁶⁹

From 2012 to 2017 the majority of permits each year were issued in Tofino. From 2018–2022 the majority are issued in Ucluelet.



The 17-day closure of Highway 4 in June 2023 due to a wildfire resulted in an estimated **\$44-million loss** of revenue to west coast businesses, predominantly those in Ucluelet and Tofino.⁷²



(Note: *Tofino and Ucluelet combined.)

Arts and Culture • qačalmaquk uhiš q^waaʔakqin tiičmis – those who make beautiful things and how we live.

Central dialect

Arts and culture is an essential components of vibrant, inclusive, and healthy communities as these activities help people better understand their individual and collective identities and create opportunities to build relationships through shared experiences.⁷³

Youth and the Arts²⁵



of youth surveyed in our region participated in an arts-related activity within the past month.

Activities included going to a concert or movie, playing a musical instrument, doing a hobby or craft, creating art, or taking a music lesson.



Mark McKeough

In 2022, the CBT's **Neighborhood Small Grants** program funded **14 culture grants** that supported grassroots community-building initiatives. Projects included a traditional clam harvest in Ahousaht territory, a button blanket workshop, and a winter pride dance.⁷⁴

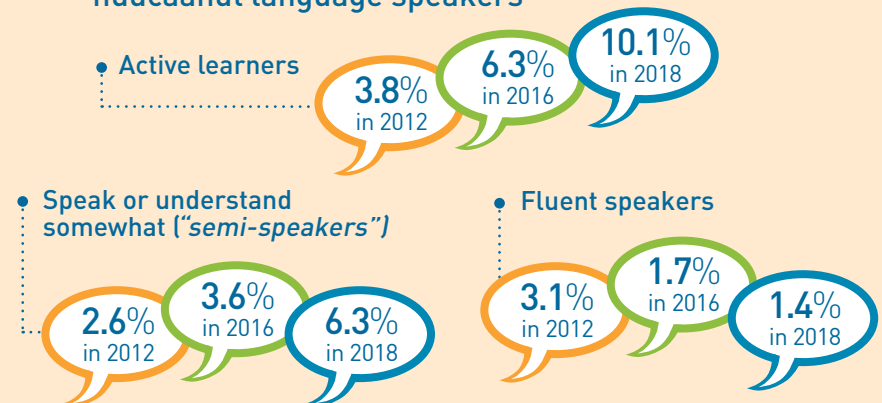
The CBT's **nuučaañut (Nuu-chah-nulth) Language Fund** supports Nuu-chah-nulth language revitalization within the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region by providing funding to language leaders from the five First Nations in the region.⁷⁵

Language and culture

nuučaañut (Nuu-chah-nulth) means “all along the mountains and sea” and comprises 14 First Nations along the west coast of Vancouver Island. nuučaañut is part of the Wakashan language family and has at least three distinct dialects, two of which—the Barkley Dialect and the Central Dialect—are spoken by the First Nations in the region.

Language is one of the most tangible symbols of culture and group identity, and while the number of fluent nuučaañut speakers is declining, there is a growing interest in learning the language.⁷⁶

nuučaañut language speakers*



*Note: Data is for all nuučaañut nations, not just in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere region.

Since starting in 2021, Coastal Queer Alliance has hosted

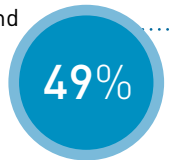


to support 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the region. Their work has included hosting regular Queer Surf events, art markets, and the creation of regionally specific healthcare resources.⁷⁷

In a 2023 youth survey,



of youth feel as if they belong in their community and

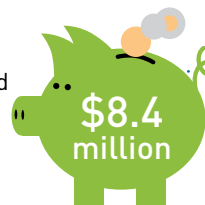


feel that they have a say in how their community is run.²⁵

Leadership Vancouver Island (LVI) is a community focussed, grassroots leadership development program that helps grow local leaders, provide local educational opportunities, and nurture cross-community and cross-cultural connections. Since 2014, there have been 94 LVI graduates.⁷⁸

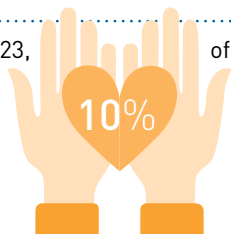


registered charities were active on the west coast. Overall, they had 99 part-time employees and 44 full-time employees and contributed nearly



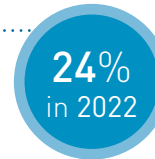
\$8.4 million in annual expenditures to the west coast economy.⁷⁹

In 2023,

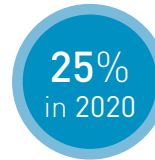


of youth surveyed reported that they had volunteered in the past month.²⁵

Voter turnout for the municipal elections, 2022⁸⁰



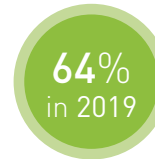
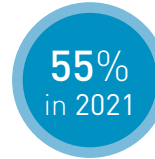
Voter turnout for the provincial election, 2020⁸¹



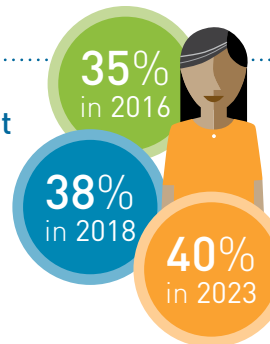
compared to



Voter turnout for the federal election, 2021⁸²



Women in government positions⁸³

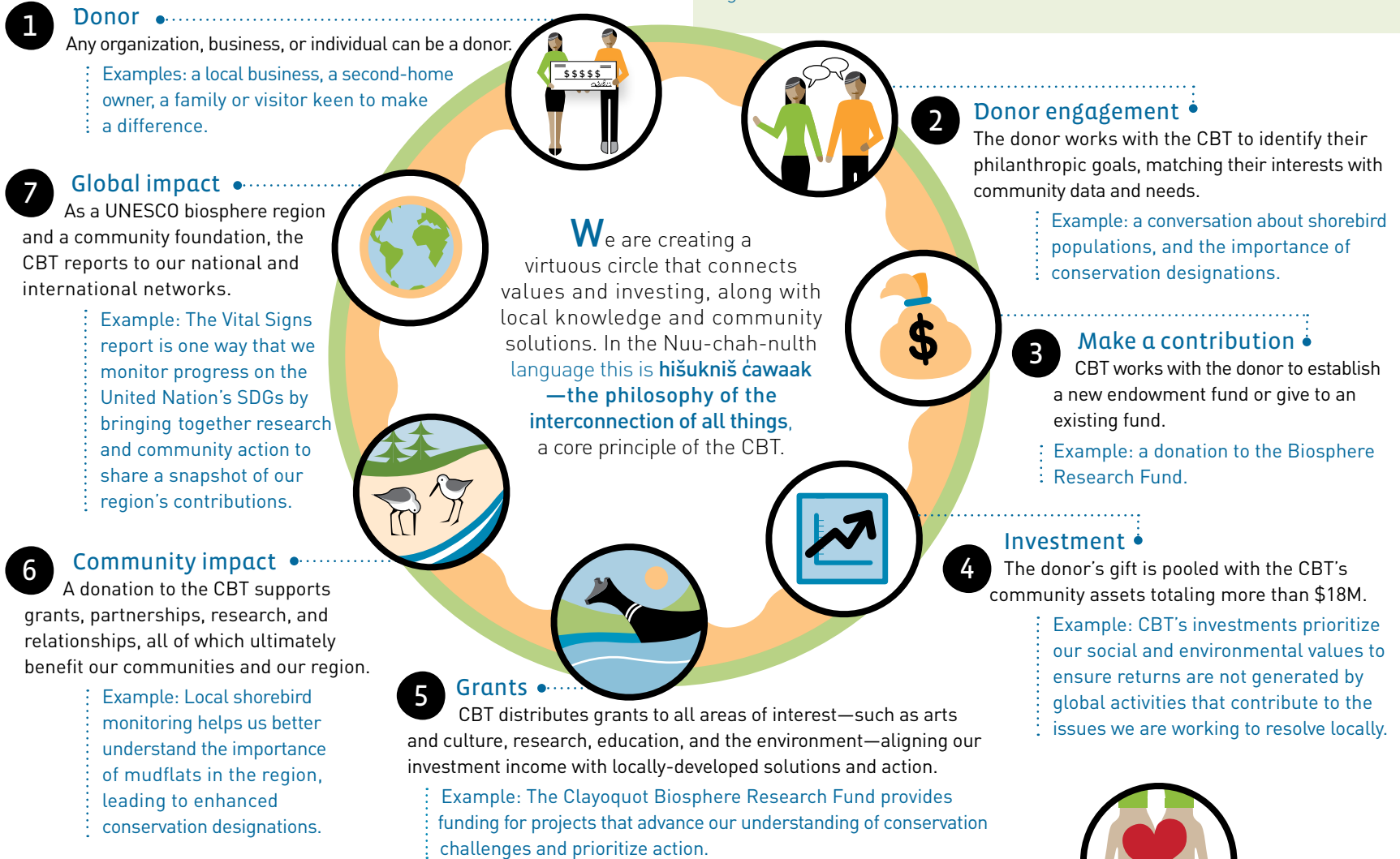


In 2023, women make up more than one-third of the seats in public office in the west coast region.

The CBT's Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSGs) program provides funding for small projects that help make our neighbourhoods and communities better. Since 2018, the CBT has funded 224 NSGs totalling close to \$88,370.⁸⁴

How do Vital Signs indicators turn into meaningful action?

As a UNESCO biosphere region and a community foundation working to achieve the UN's sustainable development goals, we use community funds to bring together people and resources, creating local solutions that make global contributions. **Here's how it works:**



A Gift in Your Will

Leaving a legacy through your estate plan is a powerful way to support the future health and vitality of the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region. Your gift will profoundly impact communities and ecosystems and is a vision for a better tomorrow. A gift of securities can be an alternative way to give, with considerable benefits to the donor and this region. We've been helping people leave legacies and provide gifts that make a difference since 2000.



For more information, please contact our executive director, **Rebecca Hurwitz** at 250.725.2219.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF CANADA
all for community.

Acknowledgements

Vital Signs is possible thanks to the help and support of many individuals and community organizations. We would like to thank the following for their contributions to this year's Vital Signs report.

Vital Signs Advisory Committee

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The Vital Signs project team:

Adrienne Mason, project management and editing
Janessa Dornstauder, Erika Goldt, Faye Missar & Colin Robinson, research and data collection
Marianne Paquette, photo sourcing
Jason Sam, Erika Goldt, Janessa McCarthy-Frank, Brooke Wood, youth survey
Marion Syme, graphic design

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