

Credit: Accessible Wilderness Society



# PROJECT PROFILE

## ACCESSIBLE TOURISM



Roberts Lake Accessible Dock  
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Sechelt Grove Trail



Haywire Bay Outdoor Learning Centre

## TRAILS AND TOURISM AMENITIES:

## ACCESSIBILITY FOR EVERY BODY

**VANCOUVER ISLAND** and the Sunshine Coast is home to some of the most rugged, spectacular, and appealing natural places in the world, and ICET has invested millions in tourism amenities which attract new visitors and enhance quality of life.

Trails, visitor attractions, docks and more have been part of the suite of projects supported by ICET and many proponents have recognized that including accessibility as a feature will greatly expand the reach and appeal of their project.

To ensure that the region's beauty and outdoor activities can be enjoyed by all visitors, including those with mobility, hearing or visual impairments, ICET works pro-actively with proponents to ensure accessibility is a consideration wherever possible.

In Powell River, the Haywire Bay Outdoor Learning Centre is BC's first fully accessible wilderness park area, featuring a 13km barrier-free trail.

Part of the Sunshine Coast Trail series of ICET-funded projects, the barrier-free trail is complemented by the Outdoor Learning Centre which includes accessible washrooms with showers, accessible cabins, and more. Operated by School District 47, the facility serves the region with an ideal venue for classes, outdoor education, retreats, and other group gatherings.

...IT DOESN'T TAKE ANYTHING MORE THAN AN OPEN-MIND AND A BROADER PERSPECTIVE WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGNING FEATURES THAT ARE BARRIER-FREE.

"Approximately 15% of the population has some sort of challenge with accessibility, and for us, that's a huge opportunity to create infrastructure that meets the needs of every body, and everybody," said Dan Bauer, President of the Accessible Wilderness Society. "People in wheelchairs, people with vision impairments, the elderly - even parents with children in strollers - travel and want to be able to enjoy the wilderness, and it's a great market to tap into."

Further along the Sunshine Coast in Sechelt, the ayat-tsut or "take it easy" trail, was designed by the Sechelt Groves Society to be wheelchair accessible: wide, with a hard compacted surface, and a gentle grade. The trail winds through new forest and into the Ancient Grove, with trees as old as 750 years. Since completion the trail has experienced a notable rise in the number of seniors and trail-goers with mobility issues, spurring the construction of another new accessible trail in the area.

Bauer's group is helping to educate and lead the charge for inclusive design in all parts of society, particularly wilderness areas.

On the North Island, the Campbell River Fish and Wildlife Association completed a project with ICET support that created an accessible access point to a local favourite fishing spot: Roberts Lake. The project includes a fully-accessible trail that leads to a wheelchair-accessible fishing dock.

"The Roberts Lake trail and accessible fishing pier has become a great asset for the community, said Duncan MacTavish of Recreation Sites and Trails BC. "It is being very well used by community members of all abilities."

That 'open-to-everyone' approach is exactly what Bauer has in mind when he talks about accessibility.

"When a group is building new outdoor infrastructure, it doesn't take anything more than an open-mind and a broader perspective when it comes to designing features that are barrier-free," he explained. "It's just good business sense to make sure your amenities are available to as many people as possible!"

Another of the signature projects funded with ICET support - the 60-meter high Elk Falls Suspension Bridge, features an accessible trail and wheelchair-accessible viewing area.

The project is gaining world-wide media attention, and because the proponents included accessibility for 'every body' in the design, it can reach a broader range of visitor markets and community user groups than if the project had been built without accessibility in mind.