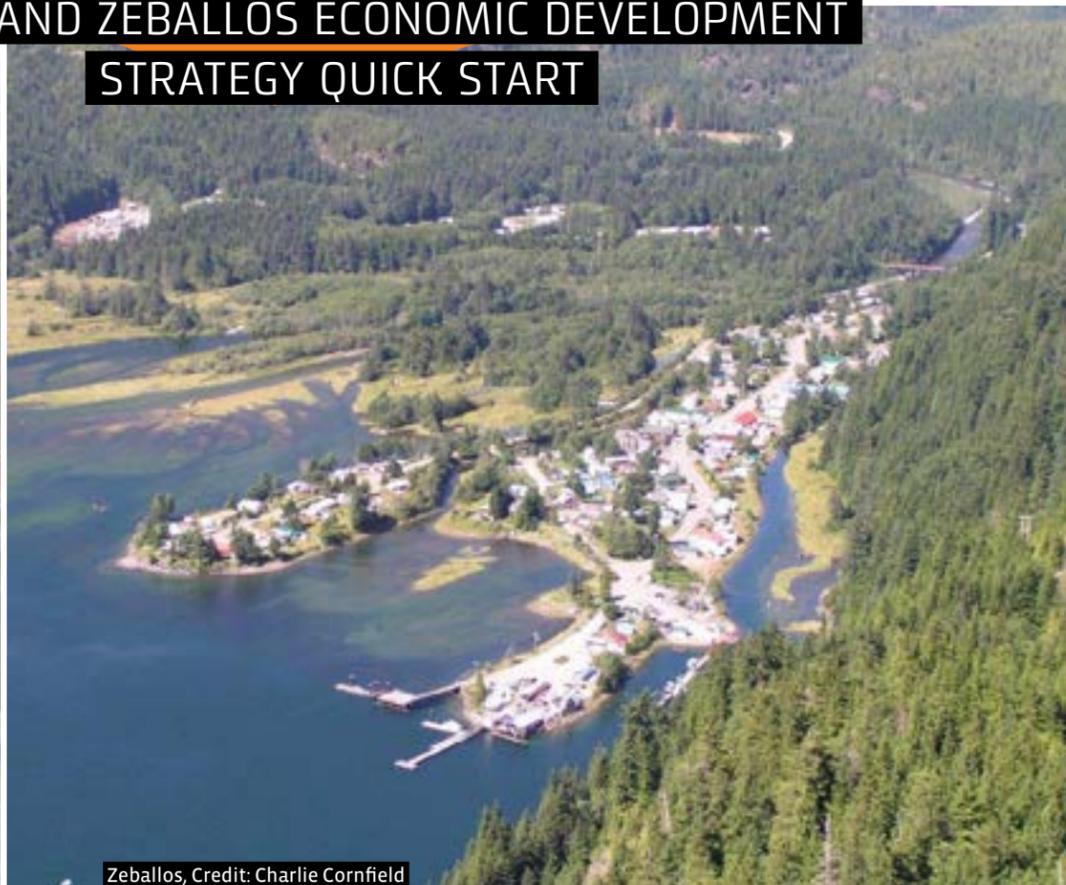


Tahsis, Credit: Cynthia Calder



PROJECT PROFILE

TAHSIS AND ZEBALLOS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY QUICK START



Zeballos, Credit: Charlie Cornfield

COMMUNITY UNITY TRAIL: JOINING FORCES FOR CHANGE

THROUGH RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

and joint planning, four remote communities on Northern Vancouver Island are demonstrating how to overcome challenges, attract visitors, and further develop their local economy.

The Villages of Tahsis and Zeballos, together with the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, Ehattesaht First Nation and other regional stakeholders are embracing true partnership to explore opportunities for a collaborative approach to economic diversification.



THERE ARE MORE THAN 125,000 ATV AND SXS RIDERS IN BC, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 495,000 ATV/SXS'S ESTIMATED TO BE WITHIN A ONE DAY DRIVE OF THE PROVINCE

With funding support from ICET, the Villages of Tahsis and Zeballos recently completed economic development strategies which identified community-based, rural, and First Nations tourism options, detailing priorities for attracting new visitors to the region and driving economic growth.

“Our communities have been engaged in discussion about what we could do to stimulate economic growth, capitalizing on the natural attributes of the region,” explained Jude Schooner, Mayor of Tahsis. “Market research indicated that there is a new and growing opportunity for tourism based on ATV riders, so that’s where we’re focusing our efforts.”

As the crow flies, the communities of Tahsis and Zeballos are only about 20 kms apart. But given the rugged nature of the land and sea, a drive from one Village to the other is more than 4 hours each way.

“The idea of a trail or road between the communities has been a wish for years,” Schooner explained.

Zeballos Mayor Donn Cox echoed her thoughts. “There are miles and miles of deactivated logging roads criss-crossing the region, and we realized that we have a great opportunity to showcase the region and its history by creating a great trail for ATVs.”

A big part of that history is the area’s rich First Nations heritage. The trail can be used as an opportunity to educate visitors about the First Nations in the area, with interpretive signage, trail names and maps reflecting that heritage.

With further support from the Quick Start module of ICET’s EDRP program, the working group is now taking the next steps by developing the business case for an ATV/ multi-use trail between Tahsis and Zeballos and through traditional First Nations territory. Recognizing the partnerships built through this process, the route is being called the Community Unity Trail.

“Part of our economic development research and planning focused on new markets and new opportunities that aren’t already being tapped into,” Schooner said. “For example, there’s already a good sport fishing component to the economy but it tends to be very busy for a short period of time, so we wanted to find a niche market with a longer ‘season’, and ATV trails fit the bill.”

The communities have been working with multiple stakeholder groups, including ATVBC – the Quad Riders ATV Association of BC – who are very supportive of the project.

“There are more than 125,000 ATV and SXS riders in BC, with an additional 495,000 ATV/SxS’s estimated to be within a one day drive of the Province. They contribute millions to the economy through product and service purchases from fuel, to food, accommodation and more,” said Kim Smith, General Manager of ATVBC. “A project like this will open up a whole new part of the Island to our riders.”

For Mayors Schooner and Cox and the Mowachaht/ Muchalaht and Ehattesaht First Nations, the Community Unity Trail project is about community sustainability, economic development and diversification, and even survival of the region.

Schooner and Cox agree, “This will be a game changer for all of us.”