

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

## łichuuł: Hitacu-Macoah

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC ʔichuul: Hitacu-Macoah program between May 1<sup>st</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The program area of coverage (Figure 1) is located on the west coast of Vancouver Island specifically the ʔahuuli (traditional territories) of the Yuuluʔilʔath Government-Ucluelet First Nation and Toquaht Nation.

Wildlife activity has been steady throughout the season across the whole region. However, with a small number of reports being communicated to the 24/7 Provincial Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line, it is hard to accurately describe the human-wildlife conflicts across the area. Reports of black bear interactions have more than doubled from 2019, however, this may indicate the communities' increased willingness to report wildlife conflicts.

For the first year of the program, the WildSafeBC ʔichuul: Hitacu-Macoah Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activity intending to prevent conflict with wildlife in the community. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. Here are some of the highlights of the season:

- Over 250 people reached through door hangers and garbage tagging.
- A reach of over 4,500 through the WildSafeBC Hitacu-Macoah Facebook page.
- Five new electric fences were installed and subsidized through the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) program funding.
- Six new signs were made for the community to inform the public of the use of electric fences and the importance of not stopping on the side of the road to observe wildlife.
- Creation of three new informative short videos about latching community bins, the "BARE" campground program and electric fencing.
- Over 150 people have been reached through five community events and WildSafeBC presentations.
- Four articles about WildSafeBC programs and wildlife were printed in one local newspaper and a local newsletter.

Thank you to the generous support and continuous collaboration of the Yuuluʔilʔath Government-Ucluelet First Nation, the Toquaht Nation, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation. Some key challenges this season have been the hesitance of residents to call the RAPP line to report wildlife to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and also difficulties in regards to waste management services in remote communities.

Goals for 2021 would include continuing to build relationships with the local residents by providing more outreach events and presentations, working with campground operators to help them achieve a "BARE" campground operation and continue supporting the transition to different methods of waste management to ensure the best outcome for both residents and wildlife. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help "keep wildlife wild and the community safe".

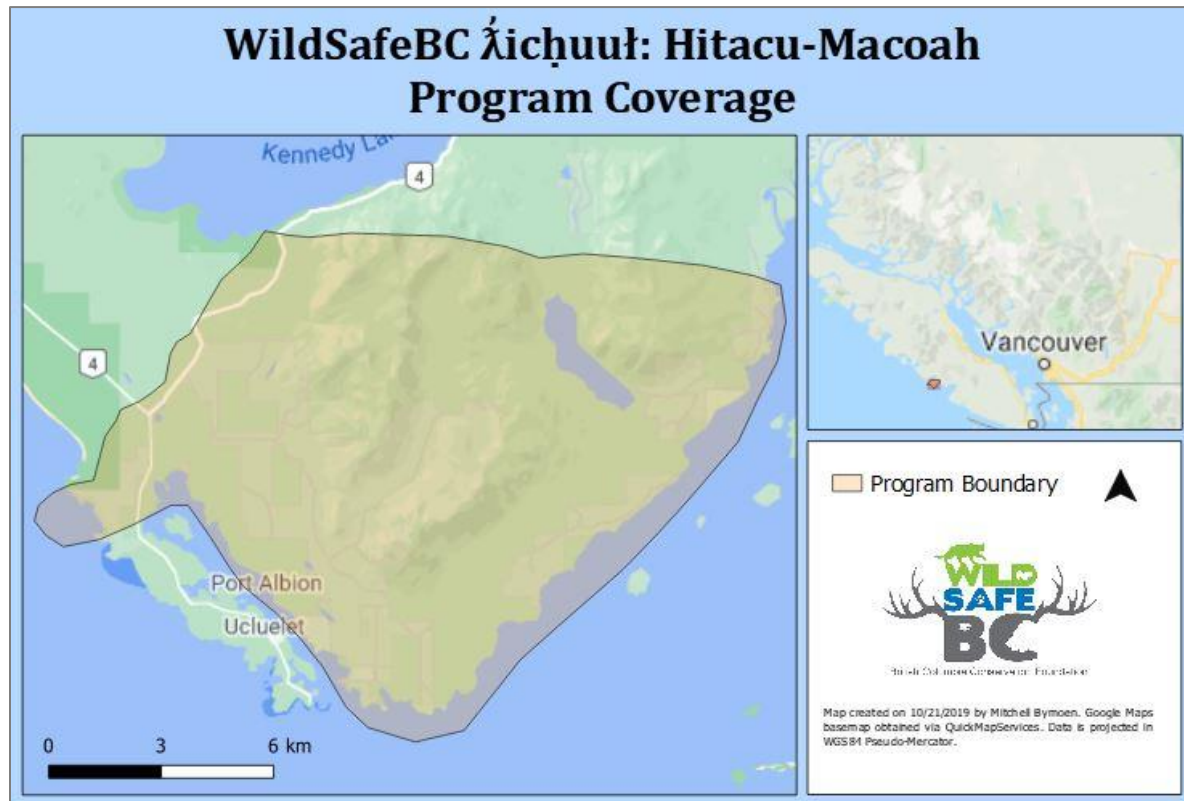


Figure 1. WildSafeBC łichuul: Hitacu-Macoah program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Photo taken on the BC Goes Wild event weekend. From left to right: Marianne Paquette, WildSafeBC ʕichuuł: Hitacu-Macoah Community Coordinator, Carl Sieber, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve Interpreter and Bob Hansen WildSafeBC Pacific Rim Coordinator. Photo Credit: Leah Austin.



## Highlights from the 2020 Season

### Program Introduction

The Nuu-chah-nulth word Łichuuł (pronounced thlit-sho-lth) in the program's name translates to "white rock" and is the name of the place that represents the territorial boundary between the Toquaht and Yuułułił?ath ɥahuuli (traditional territories). This is a way to illustrate the collaboration from both Nations that have made this program possible.

With the generous support of many partners, the WildSafeBC Łichuuł: Hitacu-Macoah program was able to operate for the first year. It has been important for the WCC to build relationships with local organizations, businesses and residents in the communities. Thanks to funding from the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, WildSafeBC Pacific Rim Community Coordinator Bob Hansen has provided invaluable mentorship for the program throughout the season.

### Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) on the WildSafeBC website. This data is updated daily and this report for the Łichuuł: Hitacu-Macoah program includes data from January 1, 2016, to October 31, 2020 (Figure 2). There is a hesitance from local community members to report wildlife to the COS. Through conversations with residents and notifications coming from social media posts, it is clear that the number of reports is disproportionately low and does not reflect the number of wildlife conflicts in the communities. The WCC has been working on building messaging to reinforce the importance of calling the COS to enable them to act before the animal has become food-conditioned and human-habituated.

All the calls made to the RAPP line this year have been for black bears (Figure 2) and all reports were made in July. There have been seven black bear reports during this period which is almost twice as high as the four-year average of four black bear reports per year. This increase may indicate an increase in conflict or more likely, an increased willingness to report conflicts to the COS. Wolf and cougar activity have not been reported to the COS through the RAPP line this year, however, the WCC is aware of wolf and cougar activity in the area based on social media and conversations with residents. It is important to note that the coyote sightings of 2018 (Figure 2) are most likely a misidentification of the animal since there is no record of coyotes on Vancouver Island. A smaller wolf or even a wandering dog could have created confusion especially for someone that might be visiting from an area where coyote activity might be more prominent. For the first year, outdoor freezers have been the most reported attractant followed by garbage and other sources.

One food-conditioned black bear has been destroyed as a result of increasing conflict with people. Unfortunately, five more black bears have died as a result of a vehicle collision this season.

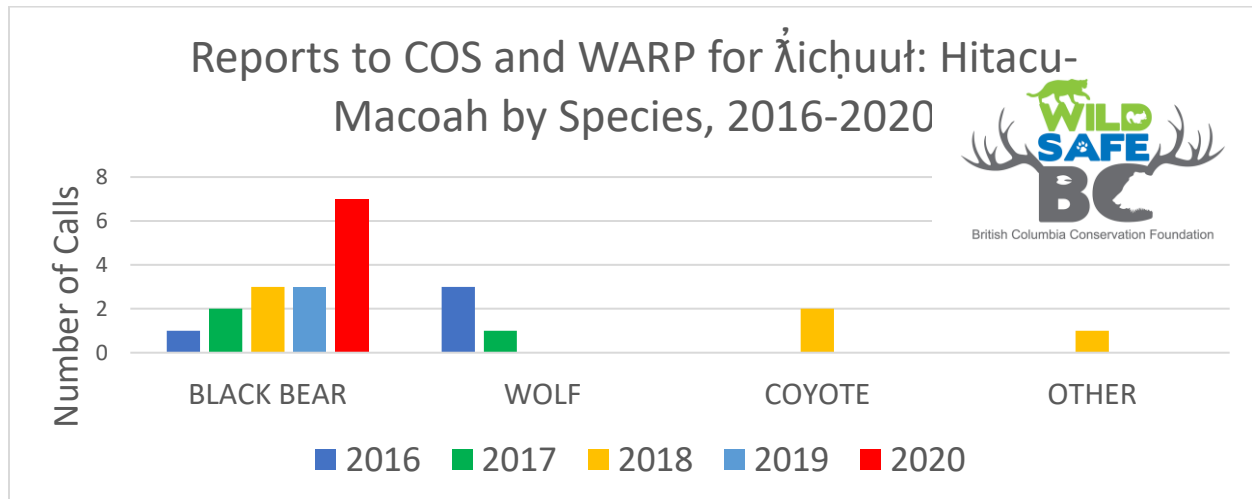


Figure 2. Year-over-year reports to the COS and WARP regarding all wildlife from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

## WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation

All of the activities performed this season followed safety guidelines provided by the Province, WorkSafeBC and/or the BC Conservation Foundation's Safety Coordinator. The WCCs were required to provide safety plans if they were organizing events where people would congregate. Wherever possible, in-person activities were replaced with video conferencing. WildSafeBC adapted and modified requirements as the Province moved from Phase 1 to Phase 3. The WCCs worked closely with their local communities to ensure that all local requirements and restrictions were respected.

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a bear spray presentation to the youth Warrior program (Figure 3) and worked with the Pacific Rim WCC who gave a wildlife awareness and safety presentation during the same event. The activity took place outdoors with ten participants who through the program funding were able to each receive their own bear spray, holsters and transport canister. With a large number of their activities taking place outdoors, including their recent project of building a trail through the forest in an area where wildlife sightings are very common, carrying bear spray is a necessary tool for their daily activities in the region.

Table 1. Community group that received a WildSafe bear spray presentation in 2020.

Community Group	Presentation	Number of participants
Warrior Program	Bear Spray demonstration	10



Figure 3. Bear spray demonstration to the youth Warrior program in Hitacu.

## Display Booths

With a total of four different events (Table 2), the WCC was able to reach 150 people in the local communities. The Salmon Beach event was held soon after a black bear was destroyed in the area (Figure 3, left). The goal was to engage and provide solutions to residents that might have experienced conflict in the past or wanted to prevent future issues.

The event in Hitacu (Figure 3, right) provided the opportunity for participants to practice discharging bear spray while using an inert spray and discuss any wildlife activity they have experienced so far in the season. The Ucluelet and Tofino booth was part of the BC Goes Wild event where many partners joined in to educate the public about wildlife coexistence.

Table 2. WildSafeBC display booths in 2020 in the community by date and number of participants.

When	Where	Number of participants
<b>August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020</b>	Salmon Beach Boat Launch	31
<b>August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020</b>	Hitacu, Cix <sup>w</sup> atin Center	8
<b>September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020</b>	Ucluelet Community Center	8
<b>September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020</b>	Tofino Al Fresco Area	103





Figure 4. (Left) WCC at the Salmon Beach boat launch and (right) WCC at the Cixʷatin Center in Hitacu.

## BC Goes Wild

BC Goes Wild (BCGW) is a campaign to celebrate wildlife in BC and it occurs in September which is typically the month when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC. The BCGW event was a great opportunity to engage people and celebrate the local wildlife. With events and activities taking place over three days, the participation of nine different partners and the collaboration for the event with the WCC Pacific Rim, it was possible to reach over 100 people.

Two display booth days took place during the BCGW weekend and it was a great opportunity to talk about wildlife with visitors and locals alike (Figures 4 and 5). A virtual scavenger hunt was also held in both Tofino and Ucluelet. The virtual scavenger hunt was a way to include all the partners that could not join the booths days to share their message, but also include everyone who wanted to partake in the festivities of the weekend but did not necessarily want to get in contact with people because of COVID-19 or any other reasons.



Figure 5. BC Goes Wild booth in Tofino with Carl Sieber, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve Interpreter.

On Facebook, the scavenger hunt map and the BC Goes Wild schedule both reached over 200 people. This gives us an idea of the number of individuals that might have participated in the

scavenger hunt during the weekend. Three winners who submitted the pictures of their scavenger hunt were awarded a great prize consisting of WildSafeBC branded items and generous donations from the Pacific Rim National Park gift shop.

The BC Goes Wild event has been an opportunity to reach out to many local organizations and come together to bring forward educational messages about wildlife. Collaborations for the BCGW event included:

- Pacific Rim National Park Reserve
- Tofino Community Food Initiative
- Wild Pacific Trail Society
- Yuuluʔilʔath Government-Ucluelet First Nation
- Surfrider Pacific Rim
- Ucluelet Campground
- Ucluelet Aquarium
- The association of wetlands stewards for Barkley and Clayoquot Sounds
- Rhino Coffee House

## Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education was modified this year to consist of leaving door hangers; the WCC did not knock on doors as would be typically done. The Hitacu neighbourhood was prioritized for this activity due to the high level of wildlife activity and a total of 100 people were reached. This door-to-door education would not have been possible without the help of James, a local volunteer that generously donated his time to help the WCC (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. Door hanger distribution in Hitacu with local volunteer James Walton.**



The second door-to-door activity took place in Macoah and 15 people were reached. Dennis Hetu, the Administrator of Lands, Public Works and Resources for the Toquaht Nation government spent his valuable time assisting the WCC with this activity while also providing useful insight on wildlife interactions within the community. Lastly, in Salmon Beach, the WCC teamed up with Bob Hansen, WCC Pacific Rim, to perform a door-to-door activity where 130 residents were reached (Figure 7).



**Figure 7. WCC performing a door-to-door activity in Salmon Beach and the map of the area covered by both the WCC and Bob Hansen, WCC Pacific Rim.**

Garbage tagging activity was only conducted in a small portion of the Łichuuł: Hitacu-Macoah program coverage area since most communities do not receive weekly garbage collection and have community bins to be used by residents instead of curbside pickup. The area covered for garbage tagging included the neighbourhoods of Millstream, Port Albion, Willowbrae Road, Thornton Road and some residential and commercial areas along the Pacific Rim Highway in electoral area C.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. During four outings, a total of five bins were tagged and only one was a repeat offender. On the fourth and final outing, there were no bins left out early. This demonstrates the effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Hitacu-Macoah Facebook page gained 28 likes and 38 followers from May to November. With over 40 posts from the WCC, the page reached more than 4,500 people. Being a new program this year, the Facebook page is slowly growing and gaining attention in the local communities.

The WWC also took part in a [phone interview with the Westerly](#) to inform residents about the new WildSafeBC program. This was a great opportunity to inform residents of this new initiative and the added benefits of being able to collaborate with the Pacific Rim program that has been active in the community for several years.

Additionally, the WCC submitted three articles to the Umacuk newsletter about black bears and the new WildSafeBC program in the community (Figure 8):

[Umacuk - June 2020](#)

[Umacuk - July 2020](#)

[Umacuk - September 2020](#)



Figure 8. Two of the three articles that the WCC wrote for the Umacuk Newsletter.

## Collaborations

The many collaborations throughout the season have been a great way to increase the visibility of the program.

### Regional Coexistence Network- lisaak Sin Hay Tiic?mis

The WCC had the opportunity to participate in the lisaak Sin Hay Tiic?mis - Regional Coexistence Network meeting which is a network that has been formed to address human-wildlife conflict in the area.

### Tofino Community Food Initiative (TCFI)

Another great collaboration has been with the TCFI to look into the possibility of having a fruit gleaning program in the region and also think of ways that WildSafeBC would be able to support the initiative (Figure 9). This is still a work in progress, however, there are some promising foundations set for 2021.





Figure 9. Helène (left) from TCFI meeting with the WCC Łichuuł: Hitacu-Macoah and the Pacific Rim WCC (right) at the Wickanninish school garden.

## Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD)

The ACRD has provided subsidy funds that allowed residents and businesses alike to have 50% of the cost of their electric fence covered, making it more affordable to keep wildlife out. With the subsidy in place, five new electric fences have been installed in the community. Three were used to secure food cache buildings for the Wya Campground. One was to prevent black bears from entering the Junction Community Garden which has been a hotspot in the past since it contains highly attractive bear foods like fruit and berries. The last electric fence was used to secure a resident's compost bins and fruit trees (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Georgina decided to keep her composting bins and fruit trees safe by installing an electric fence in her backyard.

Additionally, meeting and discussing possible waste management options with the ACRD Manager of Operations has been key to have insight into the possibilities available in the different communities. Garbage being a high conflict item, waste management facilities that are safe for wildlife and convenient for residents can be a challenge to implement. However, with

the ACRD continued support, there are also promising changes and opportunities for this long-term project.

## **Youth Warrior Program**

Collaborating with the youth Warriors program has been an incredible opportunity for the WCC to connect with youth in the community, but also has been a way to connect with people from all fields of expertise. Thank you to Ricardo Manmohan, who has made these connections possible and has generously included the WCC for a trip to the Yuułʔiłʔath First Nation traditional territory of Effingham Inlet. This was a great way to start the conversation about possibilities for WildSafeBC to collaborate on future projects with the youth Warrior program in the next few years.

Other collaborations throughout the season include the Conservation Officer Service, the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, Margo Supplies and many others that have made all the initiatives possible.

## **WildSafeBC “BARE” Campsite Program**

The WildSafeBC “BARE” Campsite Program is a new initiative in 2020. Through the program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife.

The WCC connected with campground operators to offer support to enable them to become a “BARE” campground or continue assisting them in their efforts to protect wildlife and the surrounding communities. Additionally, the WCC worked with the Ucluelet Campground to showcase their amazing “BARE” campground initiative (Figure 11). A [short video](#) was created to show their sustained efforts towards the program. The video has now been used for training purposes and has been shared on social media to invite other campgrounds to reach out and make the changes with support from WildSafeBC.



**Figure 11. Marie & Damien, Ucluelet Campground managers that have implemented the “BARE” campground program and through their continuous efforts have kept wildlife wild and the community safe.**

## Special Initiatives

### **Bear Hazard Assessment**

To have a better understanding of the wildlife in the area, the hotspots and ways to further prevent conflict, the WCC has started working on a Bear Hazard Assessment (BHA) for the community. This will enable the WCC to gather information from residents that will better inform future initiatives led by the program.

### **Signage**

There have been six new signs created for the community (Figure 12). Of these, three focus their messaging on informing campers of the purpose of the electric fences around the food caches of the Wya Campground. One bigger sign has been made for the Junction Community Garden electric fence that acts as both an interpretative sign about the area, the local wildlife but also the uses and benefits of the electric fencing.



The last sign was made to address the issue of people stopping on the road to view and photograph wildlife which has been a recurring problem in the past. This behaviour often leads to human-habituation for the animals, can increase the potential for human injury and can contribute to roadside accidents. With two signs visible from each side of the road, the hope is that the number of people stopping will decrease in the years to come. Signage is only one part of the equation, the WCC is hoping to be able to increase awareness of these topics through more educational campaigns.



Figure 12. Left to right: signage displayed at the Junction Community Garden, the Wya Campground Food caches and on the side of the road.

## Community bins

Working with the WCC for the Pacific Rim, it was possible to install and repair over 15 clasps on the community bins of Hitacu and Salmon beach (Figure 13). These clasps are necessary to securely lock the bins to ensure that wildlife cannot have access to the content of the bins and become food-conditioned.



Figure 13. WCC Pacific Rim replacing a broken clasp in Hitacu.



As part of the same initiative, new decals were created with the intent to inform residents of the importance of keeping the community bins well latched. The WCC created new artwork (Figure 14) and also put together a [short video](#) to promote the same message through social media channels. The video reached over 800 people and generated over 160 interactions on Facebook.



Figure 14. WCC adding new decals to community bins in Hitacu.

## Challenges and Opportunities

This year, a big challenge that has touched all of us has been COVID-19. Most communities were completely closed to non-residents for parts, or all, of the season. This limited access to the area and large gatherings were not possible. With the use of online platforms, it was possible to meet remotely and keep the conversation going on key initiatives.

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, there remained hours left at the end of November to allow further work on the BHA. In addition, the program was successful in receiving additional funding through the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust - Emergency Community Support Funding. This will allow the WCC to continue work over the winter on the BHA and other projects currently in progress. An addendum to this report will be provided in the spring to summarize the additional work completed.

In 2021, the WCC recommends the following activities to continue the Program's mission to reduce conflict with wildlife through collaboration, education and community solutions:

- Connect with youth and continue to host display booths and connect with residents through local newsletters and social media.
- Work with local campground operators and support them in becoming "BARE" campgrounds.
- Complete the BHA and use it to inform a local Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan
- Support better solid waste management strategies in the region to reduce access by wildlife.

- Explore further collaborations between WildSafeBC and the Nuuchahnulth Warriors.
- Offer more workshops on bear spray and electric fencing where appropriate.
- Grow the volunteer network and develop more opportunities for youth engagement.
- Consult with elders and other knowledge holders to continue incorporating local language into program messaging.

## Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC ʔichuul: Hitacu-Macoah would not have been possible without the generous funding from the Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ Government-Ucluelet First Nation, the Toquaht Nation, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

A special thank you to the BCCF staff, the WildSafeBC Pacific Rim, Bob Hansen, Jonquil Crosby, Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ Lands and Resources Manager and Marina Rayner, Toquaht Lands and Resources Manager, for their ongoing support and advice.

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- Daryl Keeble & Jay Millar, Lands and Resources Officers
- Dennis Hetu, Toquaht Nation Program Administrator
- Tori Pollins, Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ Lands and Ressources Administrative Assistant
- Georgina Valk, Tofino Urban Farm Co
- Marie & Damien, Ucluelet Campground Managers
- James Walton, local volunteer
- Hélène Descoteaux & Leah Austin, Tofino Community Food Initiative
- Ricardo Manmohan, Pacific Rim Leadership – Youth Warrior Program
- Carl Sieber, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve Interpreter
- Jeff & Conrad, Margo Supplies
- Richard Mundy, Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ elder
- David Johnsen, Director of Lands, Public Works and Resources
- Jenny Brunn, ACRD Manager of Operations
- Jonathan Cross, Wya Campground Manager
- Spencer Touchie, UFN Assets Manager
- Barbara Beasley, Association of Wetland Stewards for Clayoquot and Barkley Sounds
- Todd Windle, PRNPR Co-Existence Specialist
- Tanya Nestoruk, Wild Pacific Trail Society Naturalist
- Terry, Salmon Beach Resident
- Laura Loucks and Rebecca Hurwitz, Clayoquot Biosphere Trust
- Jordan Hawkswell, Ucluelet Aquarium
- Lilly Woodbury, Surfrider Pacific Rim