



For Immediate Release

**Tourism Businesses on Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Sunshine Coast
to receive support through
*'Vancouver Island Coastal Tourism Resiliency Program'***

Nanaimo, B.C., April 6, 2020 – Tourism Vancouver Island is committed to supporting the survival of nearly 3,500 tourism businesses on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the Sunshine Coast affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through the launch of the Vancouver Island Coastal Tourism Resiliency Program.

Beginning this week, the Vancouver Island Coastal Tourism Resiliency Program provides Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Sunshine Coast tourism businesses (including Indigenous tourism businesses) with meaningful, hands-on guidance and support to navigate the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to work towards long-term resiliency.

The Vancouver Island Coastal Tourism Resiliency Program includes two components:

- i. Tourism businesses will be paired with a Business Resiliency Specialist who, through a needs assessment consultation by phone, will facilitate customized support for each business that includes navigating available relief measures, resource links, answers to frequently asked questions and free appointments with program experts in finance, human resources, legal services and more. Program specialists will provide client care to each business through their entire journey to recovery.
- ii. A digital resource hub (www.victrp.ca), including regular webinars, information bulletins and additional resources.

To register for the program, tourism businesses on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the Sunshine Coast can visit the Vancouver Island Coastal Tourism Resiliency Program website at www.victrp.ca or call the program Help Line at 1-855-722-9036.

The program will begin with an introductory webinar on Thursday, April 9, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. PST and participants can sign-up on the website.

The Vancouver Island Coastal Tourism Resiliency Program is funded in partnership with Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and delivered in part with assistance from the Sunshine Coast Tourism Association.

“This collaborative, business-focused and versatile response will assist regional tourism businesses to adapt and recover from the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic,” says Anthony Everett, Tourism Vancouver Island President & CEO.

JP Obbagy of Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours says, “This business-to-business program is exactly what Indigenous tourism businesses need right now so the communities can continue to contribute culturally and economically to Vancouver Island and the surrounding regions.”

“Communities across Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the Sunshine Coast rely on the visitor economy and this program will give our tourism businesses the fighting chance they need,” says Paul Kamon, Executive Director of the Sunshine Coast Tourism Association.

“Tourism Vancouver Island has heard the needs of its stakeholders and is responding quickly with leadership and action,” says Ian MacPhee, Chair, Board of Directors, Tourism Vancouver Island. “This program will help to ensure tourism businesses have access to the tools and aid programs to remain solvent and transition towards economic recovery.”

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About Tourism Vancouver Island

As one of five regional not-for-profit destination management and stewardship organizations within the province, Tourism Vancouver Island’s mission is to support Vancouver Island’s evolution into a globally preferred travel and getaway destination. Governed by a volunteer board of directors and partner of Destination BC, Tourism Vancouver Island is gratefully supported financially through the BC government by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture. The association represents tourism stakeholders throughout the region, including Vancouver Island, Victoria and the Gulf Islands, as well as a stretch of mainland coast between Moses and Bute inlets.