



U'MISTA CULTURAL SOCIETY  
ALERT BAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

# TOURISM PLANNING INITIATIVE FOR CLAYOQUOT AND BARKLEY SOUND

Ahp-cii-uk Community Society

AtBC Forum

Thursday May 19<sup>th</sup> 2011



Clayoquot Forest Communities



ecotrust  
canada



FORTIS BC



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# Cultural Tourism Development

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U'mista Cultural Tourism Manager

Alert Bay

[www.umista.ca](http://www.umista.ca)

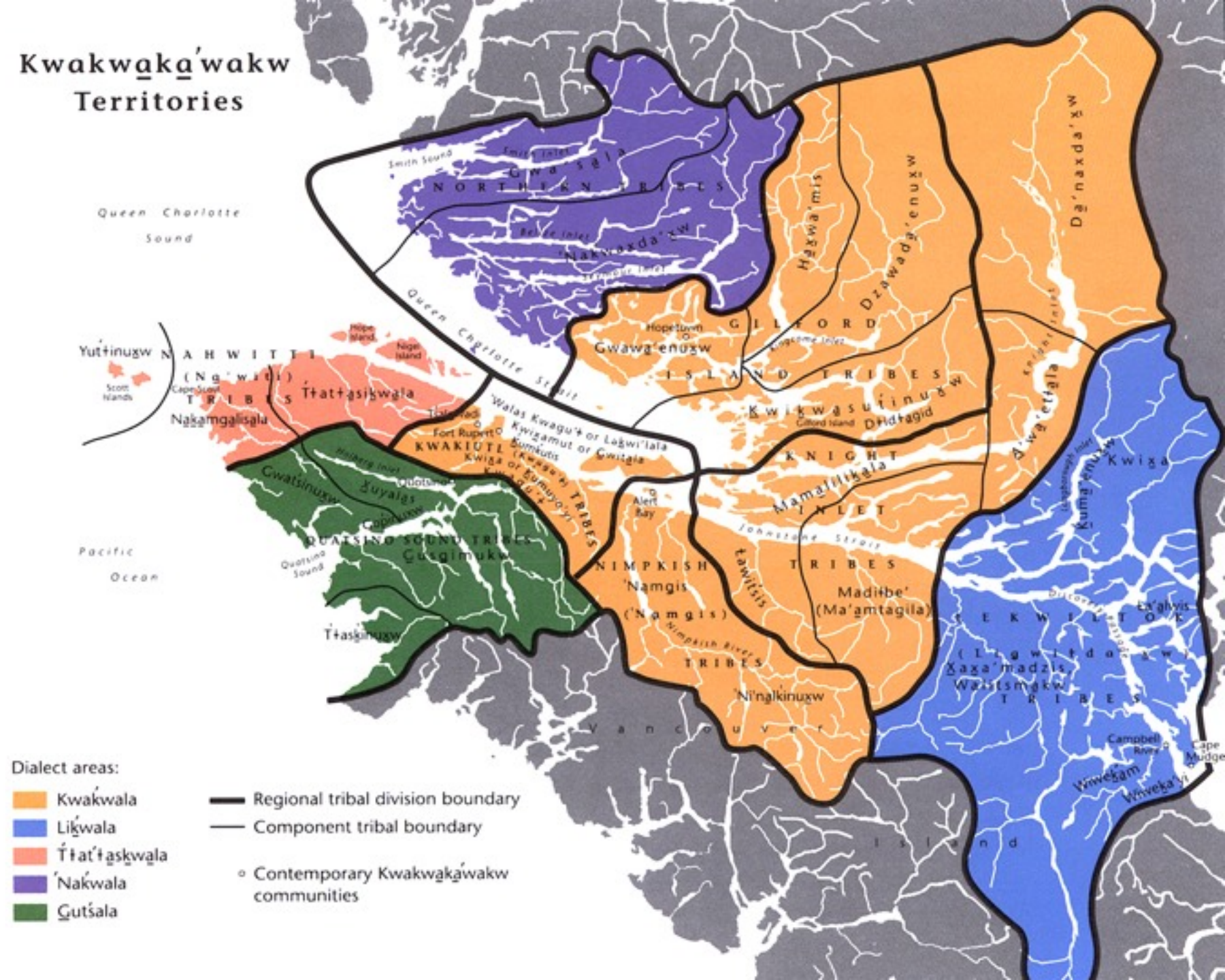


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Kwakwa ka 'wakw, Kwak'wala speaking people, who live in different places on NE Vancouver Island and mainland we have 18 language groups with distinct dialects



# Kwakwaka'wakw Territories





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- ◆ Alert Bay is situated on Cormorant Island, three miles long and a half mile wide island located about three kilometres off the northeast coast of Vancouver Island.





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- ◆ *The mandate of the U'mista Cultural Society is to ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Kwakwaka'wakw*





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# Society History

- ◆ Founded in 1974
- ◆ Initiate return of potlatch regalia which was seized by government during an earlier period of cultural repression
- ◆ Provided name, U'mista  
'return of something important'
- ◆ Sparked trend toward repatriation of First Nation cultural artefacts
- ◆ Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1980 – a physical facility and human resources infrastructure was celebrated and has successfully operated for over three decades



















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- ◆ In 1999 cultural tourism training was provided by U'mista
- ◆ Following FN cultural protocol, students led a community survey including both councils
- ◆ Community did not clearly define the importance of “tourism”



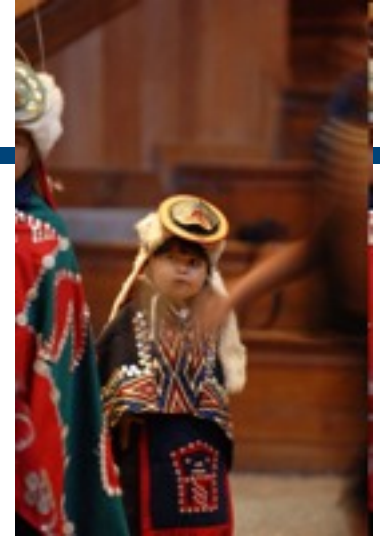
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- Students then hosted an event and asked “how could local people benefit from tourism”?
- Feedback from community led to first steps towards taking control of local tourism activities
- Students researched importance of regional tourism associations



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- ◆ U'mista now operates a modern museum and cultural education facility.
- ◆ Operations include the museum, an extensive art gallery and gift shop, group tours, and presentations by dance troupes.
- ◆ The facility hosts international scholars, and supports researchers in a







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# Control through Partnerships

- ◆ Signed the **Alert Bay Accord**
- ◆ ‘Namgis FN and Village of Alert Bay agreed to consult and coordinate their efforts in areas of mutual interest for economic development in Alert Bay



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Developed and operates the 'Wi'la'mola Program

Business arm of the U'mista Cultural Society, a non-profit organization with the mandate to represent the cultural values and property of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation (KFN)

The program respectfully explores opportunities to use Kwakwaka'wakw culture to create employment, business development and economic benefits for the community



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## Objectives:

- To revitalize the economy of Alert Bay
- To organize, promote and obtain community support as well as provincial and Federal Government assistance for the priorities and initiatives proposed under the accord
- To preserve and enhance the unique environment, heritage and other qualities of Alert bay that are important to the community.



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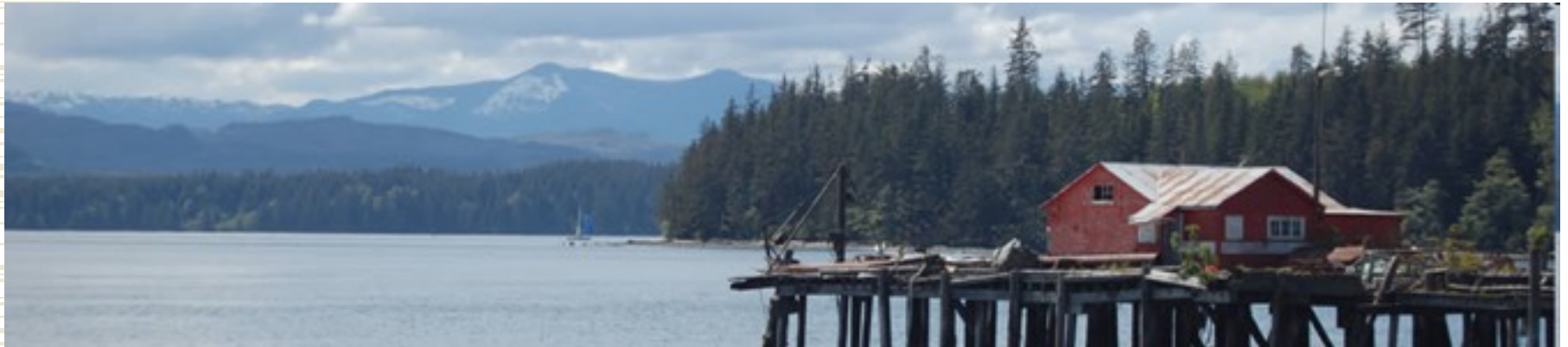
## Industry Partners:

Mother Ship Adventures

Linblad Expeditions

Nimmo Bay Resorts

McKay Whalewatching









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# Leadership and Community Support

- ◆ Leadership must publicly state their support for tourism
- ◆ Tourism champions must continue to inform the community about tourism benefits
- ◆ Remember the importance of cultural protection





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# Lessons Learned

- ◆ Culture comes first
- ◆ People are generally respectful of and interested in our culture
- ◆ Communicate with community (newsletters, person-person, etc.)
- ◆ concerned inquires are seen as opportunities to inform and educate
- ◆ Be prepared to live with cynics and view as opportunity to educate
- ◆ Develop relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal tourism partners to build economic stability
- ◆ Informing visitors of First Nations protocols to encourage respect
- ◆ Decision making takes time – be patient
- ◆ Continue to seek ways to strengthen an emerging industry



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# Get Involved-participate

## **Tourism association membership:**

Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC)

Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI)

Vancouver Island North Tourism (VINT)

## **Museum association membership:**

BC Museums Association

Canadian Museums Association



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# Sustainability and Succession

- ◆ How to take it to the next level?
- ◆ How to work with decision makers, (local and other) to develop a strategic plan for sustainable cultural tourism
- ◆ How do we encourage our people to participate?





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**U'mista Cultural Tour Guide**  
**Island and Marine Tour Guide**  
**WorldHost Trainer**  
**FirstHost Trainer**  
**AtBC Trailblazer Trainer**



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# Gilakas'la

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