



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Coast Communities Thank Accommodation Providers for Staying Closed Over May Long Weekend and Visitors for Their Understanding

PACIFIC RIM, B.C. – As the Province of BC continues to restrict non-essential travel, West Coast First Nations, municipalities and community leaders are reaching out to thank local businesses for remaining closed over the upcoming May long weekend, and recognizing the patience and understanding of all those who have postponed trips to the area. COVID-19 continues to pose a risk to small, rural communities, and while the West Coast is not yet open and ready to welcome visitors, the region is preparing for the time when they can safely do so, as documented in BC's Restart Plan.

Although most businesses across the region have closed since early April and have subsequently endured significant hardship, accommodation providers, retail stores, tour operators and restaurants are coming together to share best practices, ideas and plans for a safe and measured approach to reopening in line with provincial guidelines.

On May 6, 2020, the Province laid out a plan for certain services and amenities to begin to gradually reopen, however, the guidance against non-essential travel remains in place. As businesses start to implement measures to safely resume operations when the time is right, the West Coast is reminding those who may be tempted to visit that:

- Pacific Rim National Park Reserve is closed until at least May 31st.
- First Nations communities are completely locked down to visitors until further notice.
- Accommodation providers, tour operators, restaurants and surf rental businesses are working to ensure that plans are in place for a safe reopening, and look forward to welcoming visitors again in the future as conditions allow.

Quotes:

“In a normal year, May long weekend is a big deal for our local businesses. They’re all taking a hit to make sure it’s safe for visitors and residents in the long run. It’s been great to see our communities stepping up like this and getting ready together; I think we’re learning a lot about what it really means to be from small towns”, said District of Ucluelet Mayor Mayco Noël.

“Ahousesht territory, beaches, trails and waters remain closed to visitors. Ahousesht supports the closure of Tofino’s business and parks in the region, and requests that tourists please continue to stay home for now. Respectfully, we’re asking you to obey our plea,” said Chief Councilor Greg Louie, Ahousesht First Nation.

“Our Nation has completely closed to visitors and, on a personal level, our citizens have been taking social distancing really seriously to support our most vulnerable members”, said Elmer Frank, Tla-o-qui-aht First

Nation Emergency Operations Centre Chairperson.

“We have so many elders and multi-generational families, it means a lot to us to know that the region respects our needs right now,” said Saya Masso, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation Tribal Administrator.

“This has been a very difficult time, but we’ve seen how individual actions and business decisions have made a real difference in flattening the curve. Everyone is making sacrifices to keep people safe. In Tofino and across British Columbia, some people are working harder than ever, while others have made very hard decisions to temporarily close businesses.” said Josie Osborne, Mayor of Tofino. “We’re incredibly grateful for the care and concern shown by visitors to Tofino who have postponed their trips, and we are so looking forward to welcoming you back soon.”

Resources:

- Explore the Pacific Rim, plan a trip for later, and share memories at: [#YourTofino](#), [#MyUcluelet](#) and [#ParksMemories](#)
- Find ways to support your favorite West Coast businesses online through [Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce](#) / [Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce](#).
- See local beaches from afar on SurfCam - <https://surfcam.ca>

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