

Seabird Island Band Becomes First Indigenous Community Recipient of Rick Hansen Foundation B.C. Accessibility Grants Program

RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants Program provides accessibility training, improvements and ratings

October 5, 2023, Stó:lō traditional territory / Agassiz, B.C. – The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) is pleased to celebrate [Seabird Island Band](#) as the first Indigenous community recipient of the RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants Program, highlighting their commitment to improving accessibility. Developed to support communities across the province to improve accessibility for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, the program provides complimentary RHF Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) ratings for three sites per community, up to \$82,500 in funding for accessibility improvements at those sites, and accessibility training.

With more than 926,000 people in British Columbia having a disability, Seabird Island Band will be able to identify and remove barriers in their community, allowing more residents to equitably access their spaces. They are one of nine communities in B.C. to-date to receive such funding, and the first Indigenous community, thanks to generous support from the Government of British Columbia.

“We are honoured to be able to work alongside Seabird Island Band to help improve accessibility in their community.,” said Brad McCannell, VP Access and Inclusion, Rick Hansen Foundation. “Recent statistics from Indigenous Disability Canada / British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) reports that members of the Indigenous population of Canada experience a disability rate much higher than that of the general population, at approximately 30% to 35%. Accessibility improvements will benefit people of all ages and abilities in the community including friends and loved ones. Everyone has a right to real, meaningful access.”

[Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ \(RHFAC\)](#) is a rating and recognition program that measures the meaningful accessibility of a site based on the holistic user experience of people with varying disabilities affecting their mobility, vision, and hearing. Some of these features include accessible entranceways, vehicle access, emergency systems, accessible washrooms, and wayfinding signage.

By participating in the RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants program, the Seabird Island Band will receive:

- An RHFAC rating for three sites to identify key areas of improvements;
- Up to \$82,500 (total) in accessibility improvement funds to be allocated for upgrades to the three rated sites;

- A post-accessibility improvement RHFAC rating to showcase enhanced access;
- RHF Accessibility Certification plaques for each site that achieves certification;
- Accessibility Awareness Training to foster a positive culture of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and
- Complimentary [RHFAC Training](#) tuition grants for three eligible participants. This training will be offered through Vancouver Community College and will teach participants how to use RHFAC methodology to rate existing buildings and pre-construction drawings on their level of meaningful access.

Adds McCannell, “Through accessibility training, the community will have the opportunity to continue their accessibility journey by ensuring future buildings and renovations are completed using an accessibility lens that yields measurable results through common language in common methodology.”

In March of this year, eight municipal recipients were announced as recipients of the accessibility grants across British Columbia.

Learn more about the RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants Program [here](#).

-30-

About the Rick Hansen Foundation

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) was established in 1988, following the completion of Rick Hansen’s Man In Motion World Tour. For over 35 years, RHF has worked to raise awareness, change attitudes, and remove barriers for people with disabilities. Visit www.rickhansen.com to learn more.

About Seabird Island Band

Sq’éwqel (Seabird Island Band) is in the Upper Fraser Valley, three kilometers northeast of Agassiz, British Columbia. Seabird Island Band is a multi-faceted First Nations Band that includes government, business services, and non-profit services.

The Seabird Island Band has always had a simple but profound purpose: to walk together with our people and with our partner Bands, confronting the social and economic challenges that First Nations people face. We strive to improve the health and well-being of our Band Members, starting at birth and lasting throughout life, by enhancing health, education, and economic opportunities for First Nations people to create thriving First Nations families and communities.

The Seabird Island Band’s journey is ongoing. By managing the administration of our land, resources, programs, and policies as our ancestors once did, we will build a stronger, healthier community and empower future generations.

RHF Media Contact:

Cynnamon Schreinert, Hartley PR

Cynnamon@hartleypr.com

604-802-2733