



## **Malahat Nation and Ditidaht First Nation newest recipients of the Rick Hansen Foundation B.C. Accessibility Grants Program**

**Both Indigenous Nations from Vancouver Island set to receive accessibility training, ratings and improvements**

**November 9, 2023: Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam) First Nation / Richmond, BC** — As part of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) is pleased to announce two additional Indigenous communities are recipients of the RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants Program. [Malahat Nation](#) and [Ditidaht First Nation](#) on Vancouver Island join [Seabird Island Band](#) as recipients of the RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants Program, highlighting a strong commitment to improving accessibility.

Thanks to generous support from the Government of British Columbia, and developed to support communities across the province 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.

“We are honoured to be able to work alongside Malahat Nation and Ditidaht First Nation to help improve accessibility in their communities,” said Brad McCannell, VP Access and Inclusion, Rick Hansen Foundation. “Statistics from the Indigenous Disability Canada / British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, or as more commonly known, [IDC/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 these communities including friends and loved ones. Everyone has a right to real, meaningful access.”

By participating in the RHF B.C. Accessibility Grants program, the Malahat Nation and Ditidaht First Nation 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.

For Malahat Nation the three buildings have already been selected to utilize the funds include the Community Cultural Centre, the Multipurpose Building and Administrative Building.

“Malahat Nation wants to ensure all our community members, from children to Elders, can safely access community services, and having inclusive administrative buildings that prioritizes accessibility is an important part in ensuring this. The RHF Accessibility Grant will support Malahat Nation in understanding how we can improve access to our community buildings to better serve our community.” – Chief Gordon Harry, Malahat Nation

The Ditidaht First Nation will utilize the grant program to provide accessibility updates to the Community Hall, Community Services Health Clinic and Asabuus Daycare.

“First off, I’d like to thank the Rick Hansen Foundation, and everyone involved in this program for reaching out and giving us this opportunity to participate in this program. Accessibility issues are often overlooked, and I think this is the perfect opportunity to gain as much knowledge as possible to help improve accessibility in our community. We look forward to taking the necessary steps to improve access in our community buildings.” - Chris Barker, Ditidaht First Nation

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. Some of these features include accessible entranceways, vehicle access, emergency systems, accessible washrooms, and wayfinding signage. With more than 926,000 people in British Columbia having a disability, it’s critical we identify and remove barriers across the province to allow more residents and their friends and loved ones to equitably access spaces.

Adds McCannell, “through accessibility training, these communities will have the opportunity to continue their accessibility journey by ensuring future buildings and renovations are completed using an accessibility lens.”

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

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### **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](http://www.rickhansen.com) to learn more.

## **About Malahat Nation**

Malahat Nation provides administrative and community services to its membership. Malahat's vision is that we are a unified community; our distinct cultural values are celebrated and live on forever; and our languages, traditions and teachings from our ancestors are valued and passed down over the generations. We are committed to the wellbeing of all our people and the sustainability of our lands and resources. Together as one, we support and respect each other and embrace a bright future with member focused services, empowered leadership, and great potential.

## **About Ditidaht First Nation**

Ditidaht (meaning "people along the way" or "people along the coast") is a Nuu-chah-nulth nation residing on the west coast of Vancouver Island. At present, the main permanently occupied Ditidaht village is situated in Malachan, a settlement that lies at the head of Nitinat Lake. As of October 2021, the federal government counts 775 registered members of the Ditidaht First Nation.

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