

Quadra Island Economic Diversification Plan: Community Voices and Priorities

Project Lead

Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce

- ① The Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce leads the Quadra Island Economic Diversification Plan initiative and is the project lead and owner. The Chamber represents local businesses and community organizations, advocates for a healthy local economy, and convenes partners around shared priorities for Quadra Island.

Funding and Supporting Partners



Province of British Columbia – Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP)

The Province of British Columbia, through the REDIP – Economic Capacity stream, provides core funding for the Quadra Island Economic Diversification Project, enabling community engagement, research, and planning that reflect local needs and priorities.



Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET)

Island Coastal Economic Trust supports locally driven economic development initiatives across Vancouver Island and the coastal region. ICET funding helps translate community-identified priorities on Quadra Island into concrete strategies and projects that strengthen the local economy and quality of life.



Quadra Island Foundation

The Quadra Island Foundation is a community foundation dedicated to strengthening Quadra's social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being. Its support for this project reflects a commitment to long-term community resilience and locally informed decision-making.



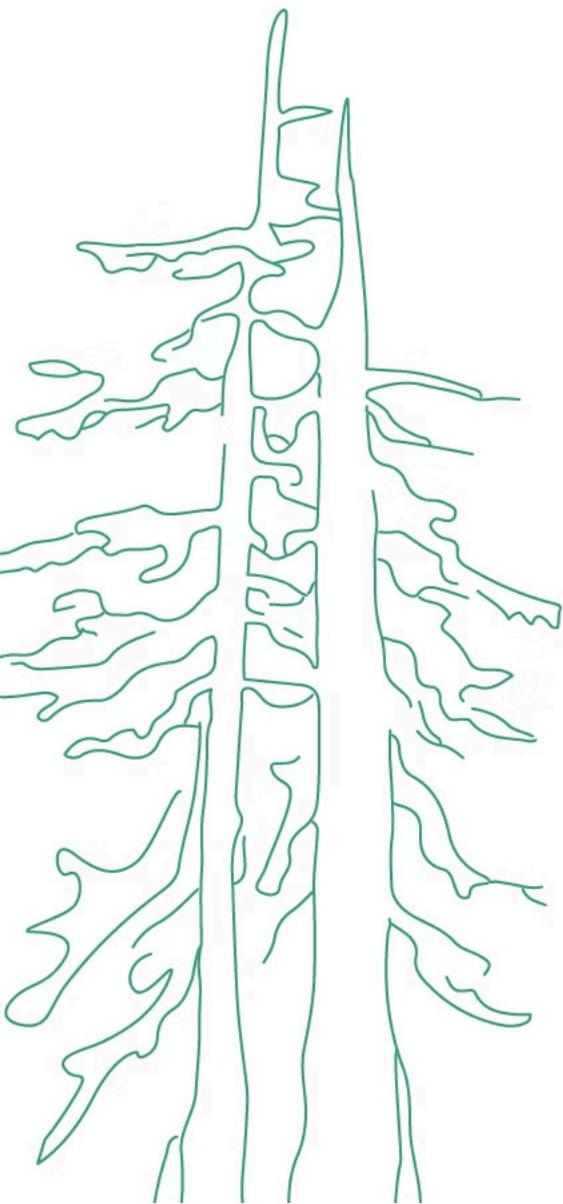
Community and Governance Partner

We Wai Kai Nation

The Quadra Island Economic Diversification Project is carried out with deep respect for the We Wai Kai Nation. We Wai Kai Nation's leadership in community and economic development, and their ongoing stewardship of these lands and waters, are central to this work. This project seeks to align with and support We Wai Kai Nation priorities and to help build stronger relationships over time.

Land Acknowledgement

The Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce gratefully acknowledges the We Wai Kai Nation that have been caring for the lands we operate on since time immemorial. We recognize that reconciliation is an ongoing process, and we are committed to advancing reconciliation in our work and are committed to the calls to action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as well as the implementation of the BC Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.



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Executive Summary

Quadra Island is a small island community facing a set of interrelated pressures that shape daily life and economic opportunity. Housing affordability, access to healthcare and care services, transportation reliability, climate-related risks, and growing volunteer fatigue affect residents, organizations, and local businesses. At the same time, Quadra Island benefits from strong social ties, a deep connection to land and water, and a high level of local skill, creativity, and initiative.

This Economic Diversification Plan brings together evidence from a community-wide survey, two community workshops held in June and October 2025, and selected interviews with key knowledge holders. Rather than advancing a growth-driven agenda, the Plan reflects the conditions that community members identified as necessary for economic diversification. Across all engagement activities, participants emphasized that economic diversification on Quadra Island is not about expansion for its own sake. It is about balance, continuity, and care: supporting livelihoods that fit island life, strengthening year-round economic stability, and ensuring that economic activity does not undermine environmental health, social wellbeing, or community cohesion.

Several shared themes emerged. Housing is the most significant constraint on economic resilience, affecting workers, families, seniors, service providers, and local businesses. The local economy is small-scale, diverse, and highly seasonal, with many residents relying on a mix of self-employment, trades, care work, arts and culture, tourism, and off-island employment. Community values are notably consistent, with environmental stewardship, quality of life, trust, collaboration, inclusion, and respect for Indigenous peoples ranked among the highest priorities. Indigenous perspectives shared through direct participation emphasize interconnection, stewardship, and long-term responsibility to place. The concept of *awinak'ola*, meaning “being one with the land, the air, the sea, and the spirit realm as well” (in Kwakwala language; Jason Wilson, Director of Economic Development, We Wai Kai Nation) underscores the importance of economic choices that operate within ecological limits and existing governance relationships.

Based on this evidence, the Plan identifies five high-level strategic directions:

01

Secure homes, care, and core services as the foundation of a resilient economy.

02

Build a local, diverse, and year-round economy.

03

Advance Indigenous leadership, relationships, and shared stewardship.

04

Strengthen community connections, spaces, and care infrastructure.

05

Build capacity, coordination, and practical support.

- ⓘ This Economic Diversification Plan is not a regulatory document, a tourism master plan, or a statement of Indigenous consent. It serves as a community-informed reference point to support dialogue, coordination, and future decision-making in ways that reflect Quadra Island's values, capacities, and responsibilities to place.

1.

Introduction and Purpose of the Plan

This Economic Diversification Plan was developed to support a clearer, shared approach to strengthening Quadra Island's long-term economic resilience. It responds to a practical reality: on a small island, livelihoods, services, housing, environmental conditions, and community capacity are inseparable. Economic choices on Quadra Island therefore tend to shape not only jobs and business activity, but also everyday systems that influence who can live here, how people access care and services, and what kinds of change the community can absorb without losing what matters most.



Photo credit: Sharon Yon

- The purpose of the Plan is to provide a community-informed framework for thinking about economic diversification in this context. Rather than promoting growth or prescribing specific outcomes, it seeks to clarify priorities, constraints, and shared directions that can guide future decisions, partnerships, and investments in ways that are consistent with island realities and community values. The Plan draws on community input gathered through a survey, two community workshops held in June and October 2025, and selected interviews with key knowledge holders. The intent is not to advance a single economic pathway, but to offer a grounded reference point that supports coherence and coordination over time.
- Indigenous perspectives shared through direct participation emphasize that economic decisions are inseparable from stewardship responsibilities and long-term care for place. From the We Wai Kai Nation's perspective, this interconnection is expressed through the concept of awinak'ola, which frames land, air, sea, people, and spirit as one living system. This worldview is treated here as a substantive lens for understanding why ecological limits, governance relationships, and responsibility to territory are central to economic thinking on Quadra Island.
- Local capacity is also central to the Plan. Quadra Island's economy and social life rely heavily on volunteer effort, informal leadership, and community organizations that are strong but often stretched. Sustaining that capacity, and avoiding continued reliance on the same small group of people, emerged as a practical condition shaping what is possible across many areas of community life. This Plan focuses on economic diversification in a broad sense, including livelihoods, services, care systems, and locally rooted economic activity. It is intended to complement, rather than replace, existing and future planning efforts led by local organizations, regional authorities, and the We Wai Kai Nation. It does not function as a sector-specific strategy or regulatory document, but as a shared foundation that other planning, funding, and partnership work can build upon.
- **The sections that follow move from context and evidence to shared strategic directions and time-horizon priorities, offering a coherent basis for future choices while remaining grounded in Quadra Island's values, limits, and relationships.**

Values-Based Approach to Economic Diversification

From the earliest stages of engagement, participants emphasized that economic diversification on Quadra Island must be guided by more than economic indicators alone. Diversification was consistently framed as a means of sustaining quality of life, respecting environmental limits, supporting care across the life course, maintaining the island's small-scale and relational character, and fostering respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

In response, this Plan adopts a values-based approach to economic diversification. It draws on four interrelated dimensions of wellbeing (i.e., economic, socio-cultural, psychological, and environmental) that were used throughout the community workshops and interviews to organize discussion and identify priorities. These dimensions are not treated as separate categories, but as interconnected aspects of everyday life on a small island, and they inform the analysis and strategic directions that follow.



2.

Quadra Island Context: People, Place, and Economy



Quadra Island is located off the east coast of Vancouver Island, within the traditional territory of the We Wai Kai Nation. Its island geography and ecological systems shape daily life in fundamental ways, influencing access to services and employment, patterns of settlement, and relationships among people, land, and water. Quadra Island functions as a living community where people work, care for one another, and steward sensitive environments while pursuing economic activity.

People and Community Life

Quadra Island is widely recognized for its strong social fabric. Community workshops and interviews highlighted a culture of volunteerism, informal mutual support, and deep personal relationships. Many community services, cultural events, and everyday support systems rely heavily on unpaid or minimally paid labour. While this model contributes to community resilience, it also places sustained demands on a relatively small group of people.

Demographic patterns reflect those seen in many small coastal and island communities in British Columbia. Participants described an aging population, challenges for young families seeking to remain on the island, and limited options for youth employment and training. Housing availability and childcare access further influence who is able to live and work on Quadra Island over the long term.

At the same time, Quadra Island continues to attract people drawn by its pace of life, sense of community, and proximity to nature. The result is a dynamic social environment shaped by both long-term residents with deep local knowledge and newer residents bringing different skills, expectations, and economic needs.

Relationship to Land, Water, and Environment

Forests, shorelines, waterways, and marine ecosystems are central to community identity, wellbeing, and economic activity on Quadra Island. Across engagement activities, residents described land and water not simply as assets, but as integral to everyday life and collective responsibility.

Awareness of climate-related risks is increasing. Participants noted concerns related to wildfire risk, drought and water security, power outages, and the vulnerability of ferry-dependent infrastructure during extreme weather events. These conditions influence how residents think about housing, energy systems, transportation, and local food systems, and shape everyday decisions by households and businesses.

Economic Structure and Livelihoods

Quadra Island's economy is small-scale and diverse, reflecting its island context. Rather than being dominated by a single sector, economic activity includes a mix of small businesses, self-employment, trades, service providers, care work, arts and cultural production, seasonal tourism, and off-island employment. Resource-based activities, including forestry and marine-related work, remain part of the island's history and present economy. However, residents described these sectors as increasingly shaped by external regulatory, corporate, and market forces, and less able to provide broad-based economic stability on their own.

The bigger picture for me is really that there will be balance. And by that, I mean we have more opportunities of different types of employment, not just counting on tourism, logging, and fishing.

Tourism contributes to the local economy, particularly during peak seasons. Community perspectives on tourism were mixed, reflecting both its economic role and the pressures it places on housing, transportation, infrastructure, and volunteer capacity. Discussions emphasized the importance of tourism that aligns with local values and fits within the island's social and environmental context. Local food production, arts and culture, trades, health and care services, and community-based organizations were consistently identified as integral to everyday economic life. These activities are closely connected to social wellbeing and quality of life rather than functioning solely as market sectors.

Infrastructure, Services, and Connectivity



Quadra Island is ferry-dependent for access to regional services, healthcare, education, and supply chains. Disruptions to ferry service, particularly those related to weather conditions or mechanical issues, can affect residents' ability to access medical care, move goods, and maintain business operations. Healthcare access relies on a combination of on-island services and off-island facilities in Campbell River and beyond. Aging demographics, limited local services, and the reliance on informal caregiving shape community wellbeing and workforce stability.



Digital connectivity supports remote work, online businesses, education, and service coordination. While connectivity enables new economic opportunities, residents also described ongoing challenges related to access, reliability, and affordability. Physical infrastructure, including energy systems, water supply, septic capacity, and roads, forms the backbone of daily life. These systems also influence housing availability and the scale and type of economic activity that can be supported.



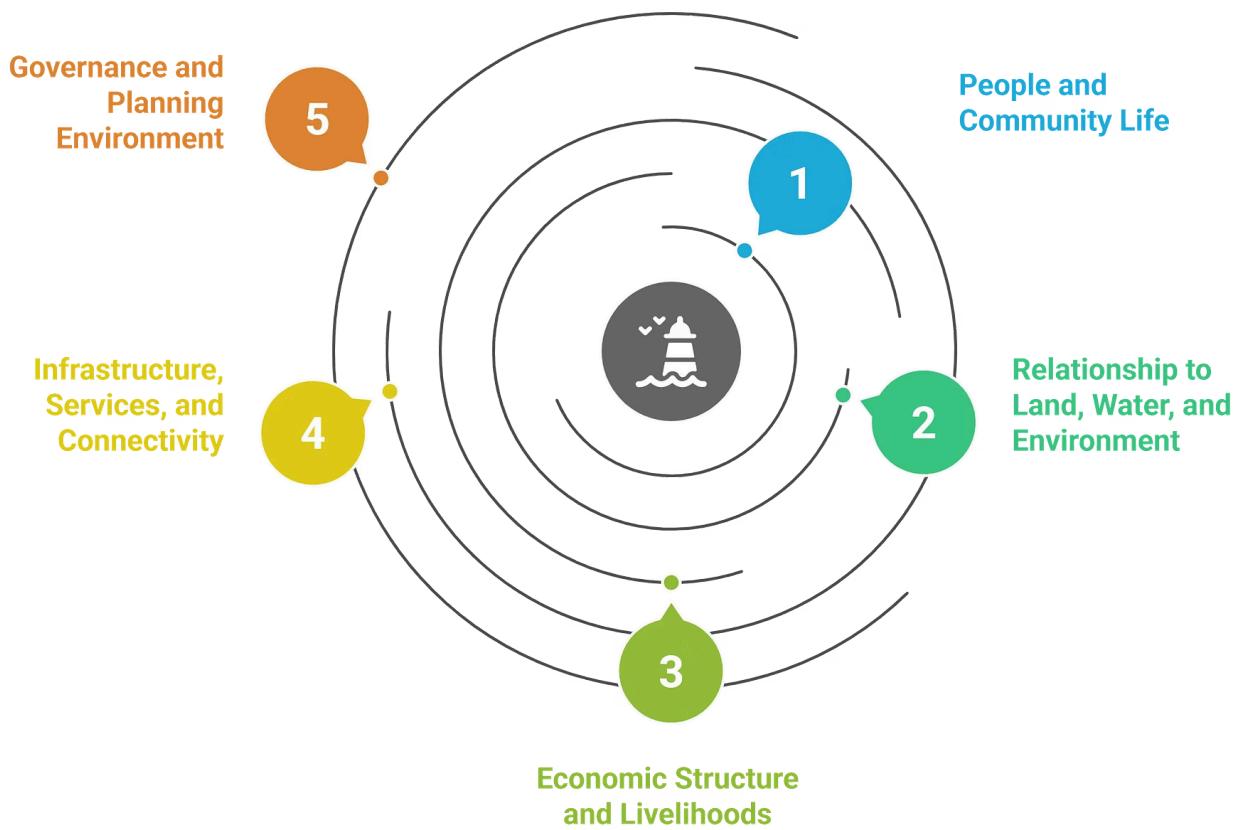
Quadra Island operates within a layered governance environment that includes the Wei Wai Kai Nation, the Strathcona Regional District, provincial agencies, and numerous local non-profit and volunteer-driven organizations. This governance context shapes how economic and land-use decisions are made and how responsibilities are distributed.



Participants described both the strengths and challenges of this landscape. Strong local leadership and civic engagement coexist with limited capacity, overlapping mandates, and regulatory complexity, all of which influence how projects and initiatives move forward.

- ① This Economic Diversification Plan is situated within that governance reality. It seeks to support shared understanding and coordination across multiple actors while respecting the distinct roles, authorities, and decision-making processes that exist.

The Interconnectedness of Quadra Island Life



3.

Project Origins and Framing

This Economic Diversification Plan emerged from a shared recognition among community organizations, partners, and leaders that Quadra Island is experiencing a convergence of pressures affecting everyday life and long-term resilience. Rather than responding to a single crisis, the project was initiated in response to many smaller, cumulative signals indicating that existing systems related to housing, services, livelihoods, and environmental stewardship were under increasing strain. The intent from the outset was to create a structured, community-informed foundation for thinking about economic diversification in ways that reflect island realities. The focus was not on identifying quick fixes or promoting sector-specific growth, but on understanding conditions, constraints, and areas of alignment that could support more coherent and realistic economic choices over time.



Provincial funding programs focused on rural economic resilience and community capacity made it possible to move beyond informal conversations toward a coordinated engagement process. The Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce acted as a local convenor and administrative partner, working alongside community organizations, the We Wai Kai Nation, and external research support. While funding supported the process, priorities and directions were shaped by what emerged through community engagement rather than by funder-defined outcomes. This framing underpins the sections that follow, which draw on community input to describe context, identify shared priorities, and outline strategic directions grounded in Quadra Island's values, capacities, and responsibilities to place.

Why Economic Diversification, and Why Now

Community conversations reflected a widespread understanding that Quadra's economy has become increasingly fragile. Residents described reliance on a limited number of seasonal income sources, dependence on off-island employment and services, and growing vulnerability to external shocks such as market volatility, and climate-related events.

A lot of different trades, a lot of different skills, a lot of different services, and together...we're stronger from the sum of our parts.

At the same time, traditional economic sectors such as forestry and marine-based industries were described as important but uncertain, shaped by factors largely beyond local control. Tourism remains part of the island's livelihood mix, but residents consistently expressed concern that unchecked tourism growth could worsen housing pressures, strain infrastructure, and undermine the very qualities that draw people to Quadra.

Within this context, economic diversification was understood not as a push for growth, but as a way to:



Reduce over-reliance on a small number of income sources or seasons;



Strengthen year-round livelihoods that are compatible with island life;



Support services, care systems, and community infrastructure;



Improve resilience to economic and environmental disruption.

- ⓘ The timing of this work reflects both urgency and readiness: urgency because pressures are already affecting quality of life, and readiness because the community has strong organizational networks and a history of mobilizing around shared challenges.

Role of Funding and Partner Organizations

This project was supported through provincial funding programs focused on rural economic resilience and community capacity. These resources made it possible to move beyond informal conversations to a structured, evidence-based process involving a large community survey, in-depth interviews, and facilitated community workshops.

The Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce acted as a local convenor and administrative partner, working alongside the We Wai Kai Nation, community organizations, and external research support. Funding programs required a focus on economic diversification and community capacity-building rather than narrow sector promotion. This alignment helped shape the Plan's emphasis on foundational conditions—housing, services, infrastructure, environment, and relationships—rather than on sector-specific growth targets alone.

Importantly, funders supported the process but did not define the outcomes. The priorities presented in this document are those that emerged from the community engagement itself.

How This Plan Defines “Economic Diversification”

From the beginning, participants resisted a narrow definition of economic diversification as simply attracting new industries or increasing gross economic activity. Instead, through interviews and community workshops, diversification came to be understood as:

- Strengthening the mix of livelihoods people rely on, including trades, care work, local food, arts and culture, services, and small business;
- Ensuring that economic activity contributes to quality of life, rather than eroding it;
- Recognizing the centrality of care, volunteer work, and social infrastructure to the functioning of the local economy;
- Supporting year-round stability rather than seasonal peaks and troughs;
- Aligning economic decisions with environmental limits and stewardship responsibilities;
- Respecting Indigenous rights, values, and leadership as foundational to any economic future on Quadra.

① For this reason, the Plan adopts a values-based, whole-system view of the economy. It treats housing, healthcare, transportation, environment, culture, and community capacity not as “external” to the economy, but as the systems that make economic life possible on a small island.

Four Interconnected Dimensions of Wellbeing

To operationalize this broader understanding, the engagement process used four interconnected dimensions of wellbeing as an organizing framework:

Economic

secure and dignified livelihoods, local enterprise viability, household incomes, access to essential services, and material security across seasons.

Socio-cultural

housing stability, health and social care access, caregiving and mutual aid networks, inclusion and belonging, education and skills development, and the relationships and norms that shape community cohesion.

Psychological

feelings of safety and stability, stress and uncertainty, agency and control over daily life, hope and future orientation, and the capacity to cope, recover, and participate fully in community life.

Environmental

the condition of land and water, energy systems, climate risks and resilience, and ecosystem health that underpins everyday life, recreation, and local livelihoods.

- ① These dimensions are inseparable in practice. Economic security influences psychological wellbeing and shapes who can access housing, services, and community participation. Socio-cultural supports, including care networks and inclusion, buffer stress and strengthen psychological resilience, while also enabling people to take economic risks such as starting or expanding local enterprises. Environmental conditions and climate impacts affect livelihoods, infrastructure, food security, and health, with direct psychological and socio-cultural consequences. Together, the four dimensions reinforce one another, shaping the overall wellbeing and long-term sustainability of the community.

Community-Led and Evidence-Informed Approach

The design of this project reflects a deliberate balance between community knowledge and formal evidence. The process combined:

- A large-scale community survey capturing values, priorities, and perceptions of challenges and opportunities;
- Semi-structured interviews with key knowledge holders, including We Wai Kai Nation representatives, community leaders, service providers, business owners, and long-term residents;
- Two facilitated community workshops that allowed residents to test ideas together, identify gaps and bridges, and translate vision into near-, medium-, and long-term actions.

① Rather than privileging any single data source, findings were interpreted through triangulation across these three forms of engagement. Where different sources aligned, confidence in the findings increased. Where they diverged, those tensions were treated as meaningful and were explored rather than smoothed over.



Relationship to Indigenous Planning and Self-Determination

From the outset, this Plan has been framed as complementary to, not a substitute for, We Wai Kai Nation's own economic, cultural, and land-based planning. Indigenous participation in interviews and community workshops provided insight into values such as awinak'ola (in the Kwakwala language) and into possibilities for partnership, but the project team has remained clear that this document cannot define Indigenous priorities or replace Nation-led processes.

This distinction is essential to how "economic diversification" is understood in this Plan. Diversification on Quadra is not only about settler community needs or market opportunities; it unfolds within Indigenous territory and must proceed in ways that respect Indigenous jurisdiction, rights, and self-determination.



4.

Engagement Process and Analytical Approach

This Economic Diversification Plan was developed through a structured, multi-stage engagement and analysis process designed to reflect lived experience on Quadra Island, incorporate multiple forms of evidence, and support shared understanding across community groups and partners. The approach emphasized transparency, methodological rigour, and iterative learning, ensuring that priorities emerged through convergence across different sources rather than reliance on any single method or voice. The process combined quantitative and qualitative engagement tools, facilitated collective deliberation, and ongoing coordination among project partners. Together, these elements provided both breadth and depth, while allowing findings to be tested, refined, and contextualized over time.

Overall Approach and Participatory Action Research Orientation

The engagement process aligns with principles of Participatory Action Research. Community members, organizations, and partners were engaged as contributors to sense-making rather than as research subjects. Engagement activities were designed to be iterative, with early insights informing subsequent stages and later activities providing opportunities to validate, challenge, and refine emerging themes. This orientation supported shared ownership of the process and ensured that the Plan reflects community knowledge alongside structured analysis. It also allowed tensions, trade-offs, and areas of uncertainty to remain visible rather than being resolved prematurely.

Community Workshops: Design, Activities, and Outputs

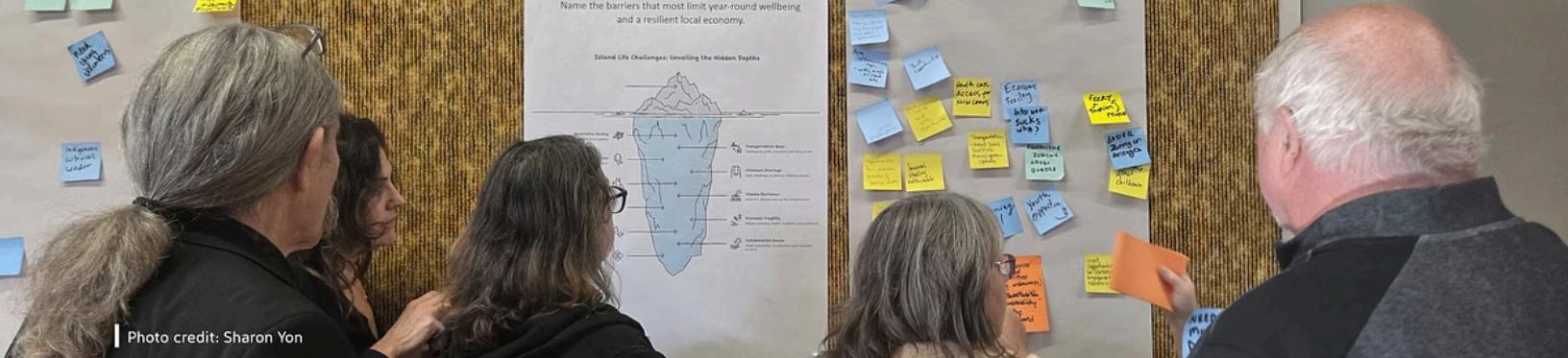
Two facilitated community workshops formed the core spaces for collective discussion and sense-making.

1 June 3, 2025

The first workshop, held on June 3, 2025, focused on community visioning. Through participatory activities, participants identified shared values, strengths, challenges, and aspirations. Activities were structured to encourage dialogue across perspectives and to surface both areas of alignment and tension.

2 October 4, 2025

The second workshop, held on October 4, 2025 at Cape Mudge Hall and hosted by the We Wai Kai Nation, built on findings from the survey and interviews. Participants engaged in structured review of emerging themes, prioritization exercises, and collaborative discussion aimed at translating shared concerns into forward-looking directions. This workshop emphasized validation, refinement, and collective reflection rather than decision-making. Workshop outputs were documented through notes, visual materials, and synthesis reports, which informed the development of strategic directions and time-horizon priorities presented later in the Plan.



Community-Wide Survey: Design, Distribution, and Analysis

A community-wide survey was designed to capture residents' values, perceptions of challenges and opportunities, and perspectives on Quadra Island's economic future.

Survey development was informed by early community workshop discussions and background research (literature review), ensuring alignment with local context and issues of concern. The survey included a combination of scaled questions, ranking exercises, and open-ended prompts covering community values, economic sectors and supports, infrastructure and services, and perceived risks and opportunities. Distribution occurred through multiple channels, including community networks, organizational mailing lists, and online platforms, to maximize reach across different segments of the population.

Survey responses were analyzed statistically to identify patterns, areas of alignment, and system-level constraints. Open-ended responses were reviewed to provide contextual insight but were interpreted cautiously and used to complement, rather than drive, conclusions. Survey findings informed subsequent community workshops and contributed to the identification of shared values, baseline conditions, and priority areas discussed later in the Plan. The survey was distributed during August and September 2025. A total of 251 completed questionnaires were analyzed after careful screening.

Key Knowledge Holder Interviews: Design, Conduct, and Analysis

Selected in-depth interviews were conducted to add contextual depth to survey findings and community workshop discussions. Interview participants included individuals with diverse roles and perspectives, including representation from the We Wai Kai Nation, community leadership, service provision, business, and long-term residency. Interviews followed a semi-structured guide designed to explore experiences of economic change, interconnections between systems, perceptions of opportunity and constraint, and perspectives on long-term community wellbeing. Interviews were conducted between July and October 2025, recorded with consent, transcribed, and analyzed systematically.

Qualitative analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns, points of divergence, and relationships between economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Interview insights were used to deepen understanding of issues already identified through broader engagement and to illuminate how pressures are experienced in practice. Interviews were not treated as representative on their own, but as an interpretive layer within the broader evidence base.

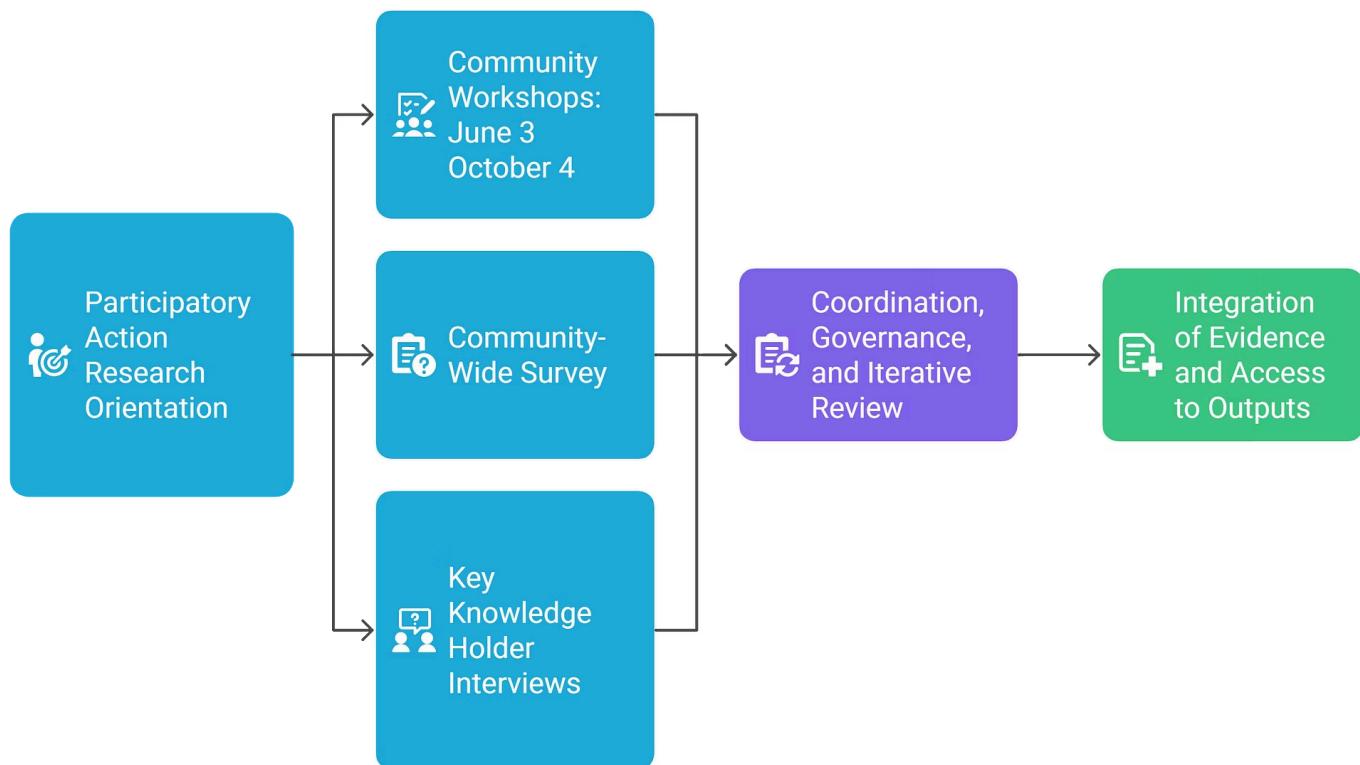
Coordination, Governance, and Iterative Review

Throughout the project, regular coordination meetings were held involving the Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce directors, the project coordinator, and the project consultant. These meetings supported continuity across engagement stages, facilitated integration of findings, and ensured alignment between community input and the evolving structure of the Plan. This governance and coordination layer allowed emerging insights to be revisited, clarified, and contextualized over time, and ensured that the document reflects the full engagement process rather than isolated engagement moments.

Integration of Evidence and Access to Outputs

Findings from the survey, interviews, community workshops, and coordination discussions were examined together to identify areas of consistency, divergence, and uncertainty. Where multiple sources aligned, confidence in the findings increased. Where perspectives differed, those differences were reflected in the framing of priorities rather than resolved prematurely. All major reports, summaries, and engagement outputs generated through this process are publicly available at www.quadraEDP.ca, supporting transparency, ongoing learning, and future use by community members, organizations, and partners.

Engagement Process and Analytical Approach



5.

Current Economic Baseline and Key Challenges

This section brings together evidence from the community survey, community workshops, interviews, and existing planning documents to describe Quadra Island's current economic baseline. The focus is on identifying prevailing patterns, strengths, and constraints that shape economic life on the island today. Rather than advancing solutions, this section establishes the conditions within which economic diversification is being discussed.

While this report includes selected high-level visuals, the full dataset and interactive results are available at www.quadraEDP.ca.

The people that are providing the labour to make our economy function on this island should have a reasonable place to live their life out of, right?



Photo credit: Sharron Yon

Overall snapshot of Quadra Island's economy

Quadra Island's economy is small, mixed, and closely tied to its social and environmental context. Economic activity spans a range of interconnected sectors, including marine-based industries, tourism and hospitality, forestry and wood products, local food and agriculture, arts and culture, trades and construction, caregiving and personal services, and home-based or remote work. Many residents rely on a combination of income sources rather than a single sector. Across engagement activities, participants emphasized that economic activity on Quadra cannot be understood solely through sectoral categories. Economic choices are closely linked to community values, environmental stewardship, relationships, and the capacity of local systems to support everyday life. These considerations shape how residents assess both opportunities and limits associated with economic diversification.

“Basically, nature should have every role in future planning.

Every... plan should ask the question, 'how is this going to affect the natural environment?

What residents say they need for a healthy economy

Survey results indicate strong agreement around the elements residents view as foundational to a healthy local economy. Infrastructure and essential services consistently ranked highest, including the environment, ferry service, housing, roads, skilled trades, and energy and climate resilience. Childcare also ranked near the top, reflecting a shared understanding that childcare functions as core economic infrastructure by enabling participation in work and community life. Local businesses, local food systems, and community organizations ranked in the upper-middle tier of priorities. This pattern suggests a preference for locally rooted, community-scale economic activity supported by reliable foundational systems. Traditional economic sectors such as tourism, the marine economy, and forestry ranked lower in priority, not because they are unimportant, but because respondents consistently indicated that economic activity cannot be sustained without first addressing service and infrastructure constraints. Taken together, survey findings describe a community that prioritizes reliability, stability, and local control as prerequisites for economic resilience.

Key sectors and patterns

Community workshops and interviews provide additional context on how Quadra Island's economy functions in practice. Tourism and marine-based activity continue to play important roles, with established employers and emerging interest in diversification within the recreation and marine economy. Forestry remains part of the economic landscape, though participants emphasized interest in approaches that prioritize sustainability and value-added production over volume-based extraction.

Tourism supports local businesses and seasonal employment, particularly during summer months. At the same time, participants consistently noted that tourism activity is closely tied to ferry access and housing availability, shaping both its benefits and its pressures. Arts, culture, and Indigenous creativity were frequently identified as important contributors to community life and economic activity, with interest in cooperative models and dedicated cultural spaces.

Local food production is viewed as both an economic and community asset, with opportunities identified in greenhouse production, cooperative marketing, and value-added processing. Caregiving and personal services are increasingly important as the population ages, creating both demand for services and potential employment, provided working conditions are viable.

A lot of people absolutely refuse to use our local grocery stores because they're slightly more expensive than Campbell River...Someday, if that continues, those stores are going to close their doors.

Home-based and remote work is already present and valued, particularly by residents seeking to live on the island while maintaining external employment. However, these opportunities remain constrained by housing availability, childcare access, internet reliability, and suitable workspace.

Survey respondents identified Indigenous-led and Indigenous-partnered economic opportunities as more likely to represent opportunity than challenge. Community workshop discussions emphasized interest in deeper collaboration with the We Wai Kai Nation across housing, tourism, arts, and land-related initiatives, while recognizing that leadership and priorities must remain Nation-defined.

Cross-cutting challenges

Housing and affordability

Housing and affordability consistently emerged as central factors shaping economic stability. Survey results show that affordable housing is viewed by most respondents as a significant challenge rather than an opportunity, and cost of living concerns frequently appear alongside housing availability. Survey responses indicate that most respondents currently own their homes, with smaller proportions renting or living in seasonal or shared arrangements. This pattern was interpreted in community workshops as contributing to workforce challenges, particularly for people seeking to relocate to Quadra for employment or to remain year-round. Insights from interviews emphasized that housing challenges affect both residents and organizations attempting to support economic and community wellbeing. Housing pressures were discussed in relation to workforce stability, service provision, and the capacity of community organizations to operate effectively. These perspectives align with existing planning documents, which identify housing availability and infrastructure capacity as key constraints affecting long-term economic viability. Housing challenges intersect with water systems, infrastructure capacity, and land-use considerations, reinforcing the need to understand housing not as a standalone issue but as part of a broader system affecting economic participation.

Seasonality and off-season fragility

Seasonality remains a defining feature of the local economy. Survey respondents identified summer-winter imbalances as a major challenge, and interviews described how seasonal employment patterns contribute to income instability and workforce vulnerability. This dynamic reinforces the difficulty of sustaining year-round services and businesses.

“One of the challenges in operating a business is the seasonal fluctuations. From business owners I've spoken with, I often hear that summer pays for winter. ... Basically, tourism is subsidizing those businesses, and us! The fact that we can go get a coffee at Aroma in February is because of tourism in the summer.”

Environmental risks and land-use tensions

Environmental conditions are closely linked to economic considerations. Interviews and community workshops highlighted concerns related to wildfire risk, water security, watershed health, and marine ecosystem protection. Participants emphasized that environmental risks are not abstract, but directly affect insurance, infrastructure planning, livelihoods, and long-term community resilience.

Labour force, jobs, and income stability

Labour force patterns reflect a high degree of seasonality and income variability. Survey respondents and community workshop participants identified off-season economic fragility, seasonality, and the availability of year-round employment as notable challenges. Interviews and community workshops highlighted labour shortages in caregiving and some trades, compounded by demographic shifts and retirements. Education, training, and mentorship were frequently identified as important supports for both workers and business owners. Participants referenced existing regional training opportunities and expressed interest in local mechanisms to support skill development and knowledge transfer. Across engagement activities, participants consistently emphasized that employment stability is closely linked to housing, childcare, healthcare, and transportation.

Infrastructure, services, and connectivity

Infrastructure and service access directly shape economic opportunities on Quadra Island. Ferry service is essential for access to regional services, markets, and employment. Survey results identify ferry dependence as a significant consideration for the community's future. While the two-ferry system is widely valued and functions well under normal conditions, participants noted that disruptions due to mechanical issues or severe weather can create substantial costs in time, missed appointments, disrupted deliveries, and lost productivity. Healthcare access and aging-related needs were also identified as major challenges, with growing demand for caregiving and health services affecting both residents and workforce stability. Internet access remains uneven in reliability and coverage, limiting the feasibility of remote work and home-based businesses for some residents. Water, sewer, and aquifer capacity were identified through interviews, community workshops, and existing plans as constraints affecting where and how new housing or economic activity can occur.

Volunteer capacity, governance, and coordination

Volunteer capacity underpins many aspects of economic and social life on Quadra Island. Survey results indicate that volunteer burnout is a significant concern. Community workshop participants emphasized the importance of clearer priorities, coordination across organizations, and alignment with regional and Indigenous partners to avoid over-reliance on a small number of individuals.

Equity, inclusion, and Indigenous partnership

Survey responses, community workshop notes and interviews identified age-related groups, including young adults, working-age residents, and seniors, as those most affected by economic challenges. Community workshops emphasized the importance of ensuring that economic planning reflects inclusion, accessibility, and Indigenous partnership. Discussions highlighted opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation-focused initiatives, joint projects, and cultural partnerships with the We Wai Kai Nation. These conversations reinforced the importance of centering Indigenous leadership and partnership in ways that align with Nation-defined priorities.

Summary: assets and vulnerabilities

Quadra Island's economic baseline reflects a community with strong social capital, diverse economic activity, rich natural and cultural assets, and an emerging practice of collaboration between the Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce and the We Wai Kai Nation. At the same time, the baseline is shaped by interrelated vulnerabilities, including housing and cost-of-living pressures, seasonal and precarious employment, infrastructure and service constraints, environmental risks, volunteer fatigue, and the need for continued attention to inclusion and Indigenous partnership. This baseline provides the context for the sections that follow, which identify shared priorities and strategic directions grounded in these realities.



6.

Community Values, Vision, and Desired Future

This section describes the shared values that shape how Quadra Island residents think about their economy, along with their collective vision for the future. These values and aspirations emerged consistently through the June and October community workshops and were reinforced by survey results, with interviews providing additional context. Together, they form the social, cultural, and ethical foundation for economic diversification on Quadra Island.

| Photo credit: Sharon Yon



Shared Community Values

Across engagement activities, participants spoke first about how the economy should function, not only about what it should produce. Economic diversification was consistently framed as a means of supporting quality of life, environmental care, and social wellbeing, rather than as a goal in itself. During the June community workshop, participants identified a clear set of shared values to guide Quadra Island's future. Participants emphasized that economic activity should strengthen relationships, protect land and water, and support people across all life stages.

Shared Community Values



Survey results reinforced these community workshop discussions. Environmental stewardship and quality of life ranked among the highest-rated values. Trust, collaboration, community connectedness, and respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples were also consistently rated as important. All values included in the survey received high importance ratings overall, indicating broad agreement on the principles that residents believe should guide economic decisions. Interviews added context to these findings by describing Quadra Island as a place shaped by strong social ties, volunteerism, and shared responsibility. Participants expressed concern that these relational qualities could be eroded if economic change is not carefully managed, particularly in the face of demographic shifts, cost pressures, and development demands.

Indigenous Values and Worldviews

Indigenous perspectives shared through engagement activities added an essential dimension to how economic values are understood on Quadra Island. We Wai Kai Nation participants emphasized that economic diversification is not about simply adding sectors or increasing output. It is about maintaining balance, long-term responsibility, and collective wellbeing across generations. Engagement activities emphasized that reconciliation must be reflected in practice through respectful relationships, shared leadership, and collaboration on initiatives aligned with Indigenous priorities. Community workshop discussions also highlighted recognition among non-Indigenous participants that Indigenous knowledge and leadership should play a stronger role in shaping future economic and land-related decisions on Quadra Island. This was expressed as both an opportunity and a responsibility as the community looks ahead.

Debates and Trade-offs in the Community Conversation

While there is strong alignment on core values, engagement activities also revealed important debates shaping how residents think about the future. One central tension is between economic development and preservation. Participants expressed a desire for more housing, services, and stable employment, particularly for working families and younger residents. At the same time, there is concern that unmanaged growth could undermine the island's quiet character, natural environment, and close social relationships.

Another consideration was the balance between local self-reliance and regional dependence. Residents value local businesses, food systems, and services, yet remain highly reliant on ferry connections for healthcare, employment, and shopping. Participants noted concern that increasing off-island spending can weaken the local economy.

Seasonal rhythms also emerged as a concern. Summer activity brings income and vibrancy, but also places pressure on ferries, housing, infrastructure, and volunteers. Many participants expressed a desire for a more stable year-round economy that reduces winter vulnerability and supports permanent residents. These perspectives reflect real trade-offs that residents believe must be navigated thoughtfully rather than resolved through simple or one-dimensional solutions.

Community Vision for the Future

The desired future articulated through engagement activities is not framed in terms of rapid growth or large-scale development. Instead, it emphasizes balance, resilience, and long-term stability. Participants described a future in which Quadra Island has reliable, attainable housing and essential services that allow people of different ages and income levels to live and work on the island. The vision includes a diverse, locally rooted economy composed of many small enterprises rather than relying on a single dominant industry. A stronger local food system and greater self-reliance in meeting daily needs were frequently highlighted. Participants also emphasized the importance of protecting watersheds, forests, shorelines, and marine ecosystems as the foundations of both livelihoods and wellbeing.

Engagement activities consistently pointed to the importance of stronger and more consistent partnerships with the We Wai Kai Nation, with a focus on collaboration and shared leadership in economic, cultural, and land-related initiatives. Community life rooted in volunteerism, mutual support, and local decision-making was seen as central to Quadra Island's identity and future.

Overall, participants were clear that Quadra Island should not become a large industrial centre or mass tourism destination. The desired future is one in which basic needs are met locally, meaningful work is available, families and younger people can remain, elders are supported, and land and water are safeguarded.

Desired Outcomes Across Interconnected Dimensions of Wellbeing

Across community workshops and survey responses, participants described success in interconnected terms that reflect economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and psychological wellbeing. These dimensions were consistently discussed as mutually reinforcing rather than as separate outcomes.

From an economic perspective, participants emphasized the importance of stability and reliability. This includes more year-round employment, viable local businesses, and meaningful support for entrepreneurs, trades, and caregivers. Economic wellbeing was closely linked to the ability of households to plan for the future and to remain on the island across seasons.

Socio-cultural wellbeing was described in terms of access, inclusion, and connection. Priorities included attainable housing, accessible healthcare, childcare that enables participation in work and community life, and services that support aging in place. Participants also highlighted the importance of community spaces, arts, and cultural activities in sustaining social ties, identity, and everyday belonging.

Environmental wellbeing was framed as foundational to all other dimensions. Participants emphasized stewardship of land, water, and marine ecosystems, along with practical responses to wildfire risk, water security, and climate change. Environmental care was not viewed as a constraint on economic activity, but as a necessary condition for long-term resilience and prosperity.

Psychological wellbeing emerged through discussions of stability, dignity, and a sense of belonging. Participants emphasized the importance of a community environment in which people feel supported, able to cope with change, and optimistic about the future.

Pillars of Holistic Wellbeing

Psychological

Addresses mental health and emotional stability

Socio-cultural

Emphasizes community cohesion and social support

Environmental

Highlights the importance of a healthy ecosystem



Economic

Focuses on financial security and essential services

From Values to Strategy

Together, these shared values and aspirations establish the boundaries within which economic diversification must occur on Quadra Island. They clarify that diversification is not about expanding economic activity for its own sake, but about shaping the local economy so it better supports people, relationships, land, and future generations. These values and the community's long-term vision directly inform the next section of this Plan, which outlines the Strategic Directions and Opportunity Areas that respond to Quadra Island's current baseline, its challenges, and its desired future.



7.

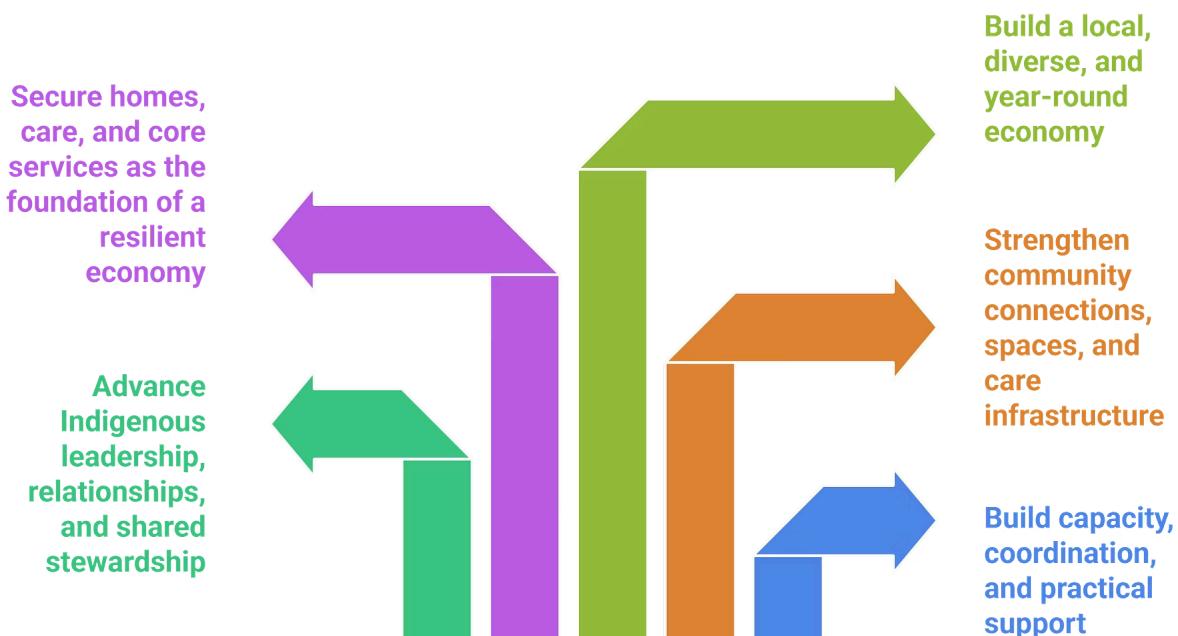
Strategic Priorities and Pathways Forward

| Photo credit: Sharon Yon



The five strategic directions outlined below synthesize what residents, business owners, volunteers, service providers, and Indigenous partners shared through the community survey, community workshops, and interviews. Together, they describe a set of practical priorities to guide decision-making over the next five to ten years. These directions are not intended as a fixed sequence or a rigid plan. Rather, they provide a shared framework that can guide choices, partnerships, and investments as conditions, capacity, and relationships evolve. Each direction integrates economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and psychological dimensions of wellbeing and reflects the core values consistently identified across engagement activities: environmental stewardship, quality of life and health, trust, collaboration, community connection, and respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Five High-Level Strategic Directions



Direction 1.

Secure Homes, Care, and Core Services as the Foundation of a Resilient Economy

Across all engagement activities, participants were clear that economic diversification cannot succeed without secure housing, reliable transportation, accessible healthcare, and dependable basic infrastructure. These systems were consistently described as foundational conditions rather than secondary supports. This direction focuses on strengthening the core systems that enable people to live, work, and remain on Quadra Island year-round. Key focus areas include:

Housing and affordability

- Housing affordability and availability emerged as the most consistently identified challenge across survey responses, community workshops, and interviews.
- Participants emphasized the importance of housing solutions that support year-round residents, workers, families, and seniors, while remaining compatible with Quadra's rural character and environmental limits. These could include facilitation for options like tiny homes and short-term accommodations for seasonal workers.
- Community discussions pointed toward approaches such as long-term rentals, multi-generational housing, clustered and village-style development, and housing forms that make efficient use of land and infrastructure without encouraging speculative or extractive development patterns.

Healthcare, seniors' supports, and mental health

- Healthcare services were ranked as the most important sectoral support for Quadra's economic future and among the most pressing challenges facing the community.
- Participants identified aging-in-place supports, access to caregivers, mental health services, and youth wellbeing as essential components of a functioning local economy.
- Strengthening local care infrastructure was framed as an economic investment that supports workforce stability, reduces household stress, and enables residents to remain on the island across life stages.

Transportation and everyday mobility

- Ferry service and local road infrastructure were consistently identified as economic lifelines. Residents emphasized the importance of reliability, affordability, and safe local travel options.
- Community workshop discussions highlighted gaps in everyday mobility, including limited options for safe walking, cycling, and non-vehicle travel.
- Community-generated ideas included shuttles, shared mobility options, e-bikes, bike paths, and traffic-calming measures that support both accessibility and climate goals.

Energy, water, and climate resilience

- Energy systems, watershed protection, and climate resilience were widely recognized as core infrastructure needs.
- Participants expressed concern about drought, wildfire risk, power outages, and water security, particularly in relation to new housing and infrastructure development.
- This direction emphasizes the need for careful coordination between land-use decisions, infrastructure planning, and ecological limits to ensure long-term resilience.

Building a Resilient Economy

Energy and Climate Resilience

Developing sustainable energy solutions and climate resilience strategies.



Housing and Affordability

Ensuring access to affordable and secure housing for all.



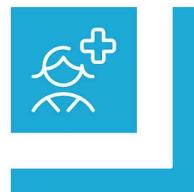
Transportation and Mobility

Enhancing transportation systems for everyday mobility.



Healthcare and Seniors' Supports

Providing comprehensive healthcare and support services for all ages.



- ① Taken together, this direction positions housing, care, transportation, and basic infrastructure as the first-order work of economic diversification: the platform on which all other economic and community strategies depend.

Direction 2.

Build a Local, Diverse, and Year-Round Economy

Residents consistently expressed a desire for an economy that is less vulnerable to seasonality, external shocks, and dependence on a narrow set of industries. While Quadra's economy is already diverse, it remains fragile, particularly outside the summer season. Survey findings reinforce this perspective. Local businesses, local food systems, community organizations, and skilled trades were rated as central to Quadra's economic future, while traditional sectors such as forestry, marine industries, and tourism were ranked as less critical than core services and infrastructure. This direction emphasizes:

Supporting locally rooted enterprises

- Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening small, locally owned businesses, trades, producers, artists, and service providers.
- Opportunities discussed include value-added production, cooperative models, shared facilities, and business clusters that help retain economic value on the island and reduce dependence on off-island markets.
- Quathiaski Cove and Heriot Bay were identified as important service hubs that can support everyday economic activity.

Reducing off-season fragility

- Off-season economic vulnerability and the lack of year-round employment were identified as significant challenges across all data sources.
- Diversification efforts should prioritize sectors and roles that operate year-round, such as trades and building services, arts and cultural production, health and wellness services, and digitally enabled work where connectivity allows.
- Participants also emphasized the importance of stabilizing incomes and services outside peak summer months.

Balancing tourism with community wellbeing

- Tourism was viewed as part of Quadra's economic mix, but not as a dominant or defining priority.
- Residents expressed concern about ferry capacity, housing pressure, volunteer burnout, and infrastructure strain associated with unmanaged tourism growth.
- Future tourism-related activity should be deliberately shaped to align with community values, support local quality of life, and contribute to year-round economic stability rather than contributing to seasonal peaks.

Investing in skills, training, and youth pathways

- Education, skills development, and training were consistently identified as priorities, particularly for youth and mid-career residents.
- Participants emphasized trades training, apprenticeships, mentorship, and pathways that allow young people to remain on Quadra or return after training.
- Strengthening these pathways was seen as essential to long-term community continuity and economic resilience.

Direction 3.

Advance Indigenous Leadership Relationships, and Shared Stewardship

Indigenous perspectives emerged across the engagement process as both a core community value and a key opportunity area. Respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples ranked among the highest guiding values in the survey, and Indigenous-led economic opportunities were one of the few areas viewed more as opportunity than challenge. Indigenous leadership also encourage partnership. This direction recognizes Indigenous leadership as central to Quadra's economic future. Key elements include:

Recognizing Indigenous governance, values, and leadership

- Economic planning on Quadra must acknowledge that the island lies within Indigenous territory and that Indigenous governance, rights, and values are foundational to decision-making about land, water, and economic activity.
- Indigenous worldviews emphasizing interconnectedness and stewardship were consistently identified as essential to long-term sustainability.

Creating space for Indigenous-led economic initiatives

- Survey and community workshop participants expressed strong support for Indigenous-led cultural, tourism, stewardship, and economic initiatives.
- Practical pathways include co-developed projects, joint funding applications, and governance arrangements where Indigenous partners lead or co-lead initiatives aligned with shared priorities.

Strengthening relationships and mutual understanding

- Engagement activities identified both strong interest in collaboration and gaps in understanding of Indigenous history, culture, and governance.
- Participants suggested cultural programming, education, shared events, and trust-building initiatives as important bridges.
- Stronger everyday relationships were seen as essential to long-term collaboration.

Navigating land and resource decisions collaboratively

- Discussions around forestry, land use, and resource-based activity highlighted both economic opportunities and environmental concerns.
- This direction emphasizes the importance of open, inclusive forums where complex trade-offs can be discussed with Indigenous leadership at the table.
- Reconciliation and Indigenous economic leadership are positioned here as integral to economic diversification, not as parallel or optional considerations.

Direction 4.

Strengthen Community Connections, Spaces, and Care Infrastructure

Community connection, volunteerism, and local organizations were repeatedly identified as defining strengths of Quadra Island. At the same time, residents expressed concern about volunteer burnout, aging demographics, and the fragility of key community spaces and institutions. Survey results show strong support for investments that sustain connection and care. This direction focuses on:

Improving communication, information, and wayfinding

- Community workshop participants identified gaps in information-sharing, wayfinding, and visitor orientation.
- Suggested responses included a welcome centre, digital platforms, improved signage, and clearer communication about appropriate use of public spaces.

ⓘ Participants emphasized that clear information and wayfinding are not “extras” but everyday community infrastructure. On an island where services, public spaces, and access points are dispersed, better wayfinding supports resident wellbeing, reduces avoidable pressure on volunteers and local services, and helps protect sensitive environments by guiding use to appropriate locations.

Supporting volunteers and community organizations Investing in gathering spaces and programming

- Many essential services, events, and programs rely heavily on unpaid or minimally paid labour.
- Participants emphasized the need for better coordination, recognition, training, and succession planning to reduce burnout and distribute responsibility more evenly across the community.
- Residents strongly supported indoor and covered outdoor gathering spaces, arts and maker facilities, youth programs, and intergenerational activities.
- These spaces support social wellbeing, cultural life, and local economic activity through events, markets, and programming.

Caring for seniors, youth, and families

- Aging-in-place supports, childcare, youth training opportunities, and mental health services were consistently identified as high priorities.
- Participants emphasized that care infrastructure is economic infrastructure and should be treated as such in diversification efforts.

① By strengthening the social and physical infrastructure of connection and care, this direction supports the community fabric that underpins economic resilience.

Direction 5.

Build Capacity, Coordination, and Practical Support

Across interviews and community workshops, participants emphasized that Quadra's main constraints are not ideas or commitment, but limited time, capacity, coordination, and clarity of roles. This direction addresses the conditions needed to translate shared priorities into sustained progress. Key elements include:

Clarifying priorities and sequencing

- Engagement activities generated many ideas and identified many needs.
- Participants emphasized the importance of focusing on a manageable set of priorities at any given time, with realistic timelines and clear responsibility.

Strengthening coordination and governance

- Quadra's economic and community life involves many actors, including Indigenous partners, community organizations, volunteers, businesses, and regional and provincial agencies.
- Continued collaboration will require shared decision-making mechanisms, information-sharing, and ways to manage conflict and overlap.

Building tools and skills for project development

- Participants noted strong local expertise but limited capacity to turn ideas into staged, fundable projects.
- Shared toolkits, templates, and access to technical support for planning, data use, engagement, and funding applications were identified as valuable supports.

Monitoring progress and adapting

- The survey, community workshops, and interviews provide a strong baseline.
- Ongoing data collection and shared reporting can help track whether these directions are improving quality of life, stewardship, and economic resilience, and allow for adjustment over time.

① Together, these five strategic directions articulate a clear message from the community: economic diversification on Quadra Island must be grounded in secure homes and services; shaped by diverse, locally rooted livelihoods; guided by Indigenous leadership and stewardship; sustained by strong community connections and care systems; and supported by sufficient capacity and coordination to move forward deliberately and realistically.

8.

Strategic Priorities and Directional Roadmap



This section translates the strategic directions identified in Section 7 into a staged, directional roadmap that reflects community input, capacity realities, and the need for flexibility over time. It reflects what community members identified as both important and realistic through the survey, interviews, and, most directly, the October 4 “From Vision to Action” community workshop. The roadmap does not assign responsibilities, set binding timelines, or make commitments on behalf of any organization or governing body. Instead, it serves four complementary purposes:

- It identifies a limited number of near-term, medium-term, and longer-term priorities that consistently emerged across engagement activities.
- It summarizes practical starting points and pathways that participants themselves articulated during community workshops and discussions.
- It highlights potential collaborators and partners as named by participants, without presuming capacity, mandate, or agreement.
- It acknowledges that roles, sequencing, and resourcing will need to be confirmed through future dialogue, capacity assessment, and formal decision-making processes.

Taken together, these priorities form a directional roadmap rather than a fixed plan. The intent is to support coordinated thinking and informed choices over time, while remaining responsive to changing conditions, relationships, and community capacity. This roadmap is designed to be revisited and adapted. As work advances, some priorities may move forward more quickly than anticipated, while others may need to pause or shift in response to funding availability, organizational capacity, policy change, or new information.



Guiding Principles for Shared Progress

Community members were clear that how work moves forward matters as much as what is pursued. The following principles, which shaped the engagement process itself, are intended to guide future efforts aligned with this roadmap:

→ **Start with what is possible.**

Focus first on actions that have broad community support, some existing momentum or capacity, and a plausible pathway to resourcing, rather than attempting to advance too many initiatives at once.

→ **Respect Indigenous leadership and decision-making.**

Any work involving We Wai Kai Nation lands, rights, cultural priorities, or governance must be shaped through Indigenous-led or co-led processes, consistent with Nation-defined protocols and priorities as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Principles.

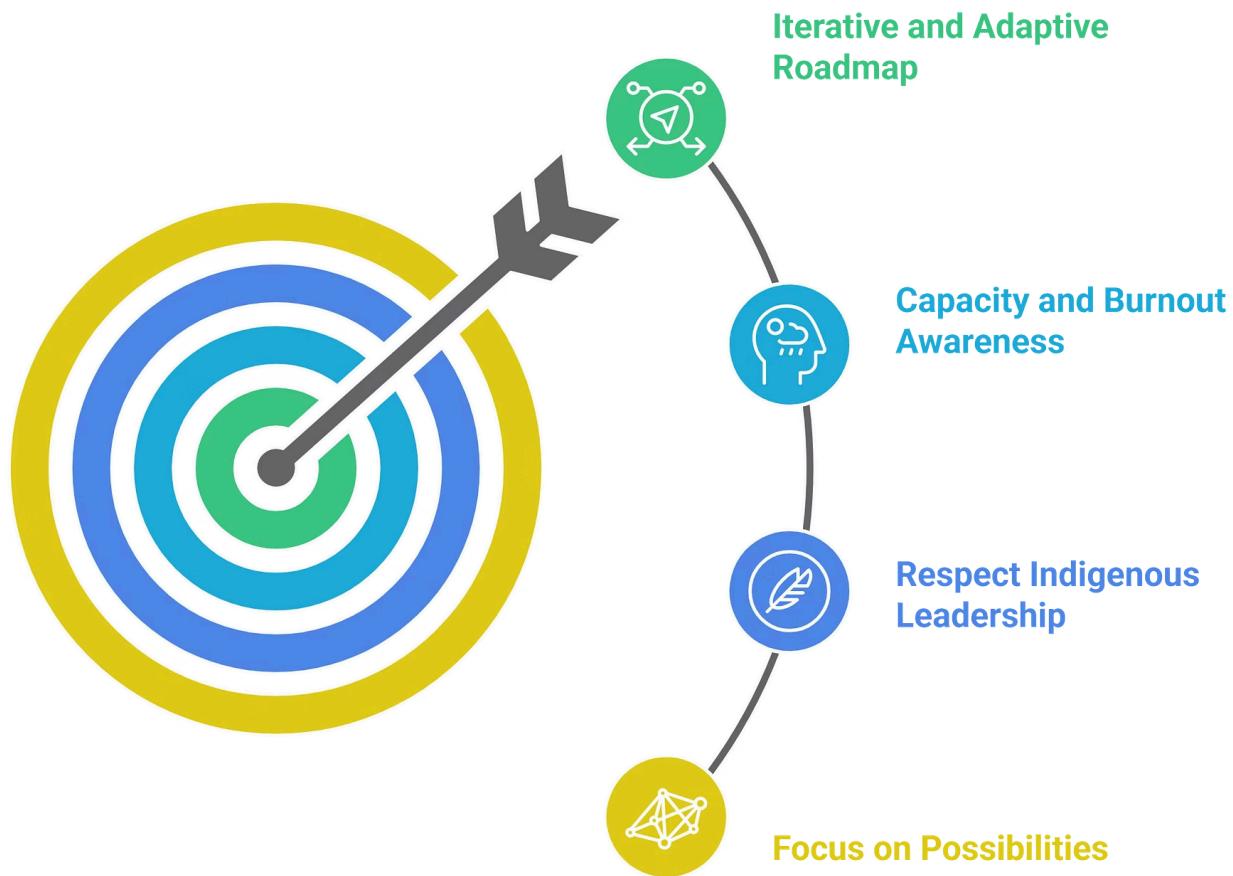
→ **Be attentive to capacity and burnout.**

Community conversations repeatedly highlighted the limits of volunteer and organizational capacity. Progress should distribute responsibility across partners and include support for those carrying sustained workloads, rather than relying on a small number of individuals or organizations.

→ Treat this roadmap as iterative and adaptive.

Priorities should be revisited at regular intervals, such as every one to two years, to reflect on what has progressed, what has stalled, and what needs adjustment in light of new conditions or learning.

Guiding Principles for Shared Progress



- ⓘ With this framing in place, the sections that follow outline near-term, medium-term, and longer-term priorities that reflect strong patterns across the engagement process and provide a practical structure for moving forward without overcommitting capacity or constraining future decision-making.

Near-Term Priorities (Years 1–2)

Near-term priorities focus on initiatives that participants identified as both urgent and feasible within current or modestly expanded community capacity. These priorities emerged most clearly through the October 4 “From Vision to Action” community workshop, where participants articulated long-term “north stars” and then worked backward to identify practical steps that could be taken within a one- to two-year horizon. Across all themes, participants emphasized that near-term work should focus on groundwork, coordination, and clarity rather than large-scale delivery. The priorities below reflect that orientation.

Housing Pathways and Foundational Work

Housing was consistently identified as a system-wide constraint affecting workforce stability, families, seniors, and the viability of local businesses and services. In the October community workshop, at least two groups independently selected housing as their primary focus, underscoring its centrality to economic resilience. In the near term, participants did not call for immediate large-scale construction. Instead, they emphasized the need for shared understanding, clearer pathways, and conditions that would enable future housing solutions to proceed in ways that align with island character and infrastructure limits. Near-term focus areas include:

- Building a clearer picture of existing housing conditions, including types of housing and tenure arrangements such as owned homes, long-term rentals, secondary suites, mobile and modular units, and informal arrangements.
- Exploring housing forms that align with the idea of “homes that fit island life,” including gentle density, small clusters, secondary suites, cooperatives, and other small-scale approaches.
- Convening structured conversations or roundtables on housing pathways that bring together residents, landlords, renters, potential partners, and relevant agencies to clarify constraints and possibilities.
- Improving shared understanding of water, septic, and health requirements by working with Island Health and the Regional District to clarify what is required for new or adapted housing under current regulations.

① Community workshop discussions identified the Regional District, Island Health, housing-focused organizations, and local builders as potential contributors to this groundwork. Any roles, leadership, or responsibilities would need to be confirmed through further dialogue and capacity assessment.

Power Outage Preparedness and Climate Resilience for Homes and Small Businesses

Concerns related to power outages, internet reliability, wildfire risk, drought, and broader climate impacts were raised repeatedly in both interviews and community workshops. In the October community workshop, one group developed a near-term “north star” focused specifically on improving resilience to power outages for households and small businesses. Participants framed this as an area where relatively modest coordination and information-sharing could reduce vulnerability and stress, even before larger infrastructure investments are possible. Near-term focus areas include:

- Compiling and sharing clear, accessible information on existing grants, rebates, and programs that support household and business resilience measures, such as backup power, wildfire preparedness, and related upgrades.
- Supporting households and small businesses to assess risks and prioritize basic resilience steps appropriate to their context and capacity.
- Exploring the feasibility of community-scale resilience concepts, such as shared hubs or facilities that could remain operational during outages and serve multiple functions.

① Community workshop notes suggest that a local organization could potentially play a coordinating role in gathering and sharing information, with collaboration from the Strathcona Regional District, elected representatives, utilities, and service providers. Any such role would need to be voluntary, clearly scoped, and aligned with available capacity.

Quadra-Wide Information and Wayfinding Tools

Participants in the October community workshop identified improved information-sharing and wayfinding as a keystone concept that connects many priorities: supporting local businesses, improving access to services, orienting residents and visitors, and reducing pressure on sensitive or inappropriate spaces. This idea was framed not as a single product, but as an integrated system combining digital and physical tools. Near-term focus areas include:

- Assessing the feasibility of a Quadra-wide information platform that could include an offline-capable app, a web-based portal, and complementary physical signage.
- Clarifying what types of information are most needed by different users, including residents, visitors, service providers, and emergency responders (for example, service directories, events, trails and beaches, emergency notices, and local business listings).
- Identifying potential hosts or stewards for such a system, with explicit recognition that information platforms require ongoing maintenance, updates, and governance.

ⓘ Community workshop participants' discussions suggested that local and regional organizations, including Indigenous partners, the Regional District, non-profits, and funders such as ICET, could be involved in exploring this concept further. Any next steps would depend on interest, mandate, and long-term sustainability.

Tourism: Near-Term Focus on Stewardship and Readiness

Tourism is an established part of Quadra Island's economy and contributes to local livelihoods, particularly for accommodation providers, food services, artists, guides, and small businesses. Community conversations acknowledge its importance, while also expressing concern about how tourism interacts with housing availability, ferry capacity, infrastructure, and volunteer effort. In the near term, participants did not call for tourism growth or expansion. Instead, they emphasized the need to better manage existing visitor activity and to prepare the conditions for a more deliberate, community-aligned approach in the future. Near-term priorities related to tourism therefore focus on stewardship, coordination, and readiness rather than promotion. These include:

- Improving visitor information, orientation, and wayfinding so that visitors are better directed to appropriate places, understand local expectations, and reduce pressure on sensitive areas and community infrastructure.
- Supporting existing tourism-related businesses and organizations through clearer communication, shared information tools, and coordination, rather than encouraging new development.
- Clarifying how tourism interacts with other system pressures, particularly housing, ferries, services, and volunteer capacity, so that future decisions are grounded in evidence and lived experience.
- Building shared understanding within the community about the role tourism currently plays, its benefits and limits, and the conditions under which it could better support local wellbeing.

- ① This near-term focus on orientation, information, and local benefit sets the foundation for more structured tourism planning and funding decisions in the medium term.

Supporting Existing Services and Care Organizations

The “Mobility and Services” group in the October community workshop emphasized that strengthening existing service and care organizations is a near-term opportunity to improve economic resilience and quality of life. This theme is echoed in survey findings and interviews, particularly in relation to aging-in-place, caregiving, and mental health. Participants emphasized that many services already exist, but are stretched, under-resourced, or vulnerable to burnout. Near-term focus areas include:

- Working with existing service organizations to identify where targeted supports, such as modest funding, space, equipment, or coordination, could meaningfully extend capacity or reduce strain.
- Supporting succession planning, volunteer recruitment, and training for programs that rely heavily on a small number of individuals.
- Identifying gaps in services for groups such as people under 55, youth, and families, and exploring whether existing organizations could address these gaps if appropriately supported.

① Which organizations engage in this work, and in what ways, will depend on their own governance structures, priorities, and capacity. The emphasis in the near term is on listening, alignment, and support rather than expansion or mandate change.



Medium-Term Priorities (Years 3–5)

Medium-term priorities build directly on the groundwork established in the first two years. Where the near term focuses on clarification, readiness, and shared understanding, the medium term is where alignment becomes possible: aligning planning tools with community priorities, aligning partners around a manageable set of initiatives, and aligning investment decisions with infrastructure limits, community values, and governance realities. At this stage, priorities shift from identifying what is needed to creating the conditions for sustained progress, including clearer policy pathways, coordinated roles, and stronger linkages between economic decisions and the systems that make island life workable.

Aligning Housing, Land Use, and Infrastructure

As near-term housing groundwork clarifies needs, constraints, and viable pathways, the next phase is to align housing aspirations with land use planning, infrastructure capacity, and regulatory tools. Community conversations emphasized that housing solutions must be pursued in ways that are realistic, environmentally responsible, and compatible with island character.

This medium-term phase is critical because it is where housing moves from general intent to practical enabling conditions. Without policy and infrastructure alignment, even well-supported housing ideas can stall or create unintended pressure on water systems, services, or neighbourhood cohesion. Medium-term focus areas include:

- Integrating housing and affordability priorities into future Official Community Plan and zoning updates, with explicit attention to water, sewer, and aquifer capacity.
- Exploring housing tools referenced in community conversations, such as land trusts, cooperatives, lease-land models, and partnership-based approaches, to understand where they may be appropriate and feasible.
- Identifying locations and forms for modest, small-scale density that support workforce and community needs, developed through dialogue with residents and Indigenous partners.

① At this stage, collaboration among the Regional District, the We Wai Kai Nation, housing-focused organizations, and the wider community becomes especially important. Decisions related to land use and density were consistently identified as requiring careful process, transparent communication, and respectful engagement.

Developing a Community-Aligned Tourism and MRDT Strategy

The Sustainable Tourism group at the October community workshop articulated a medium-term “north star” focused on tourism that reflects community values, contributes to local wellbeing, and avoids exacerbating existing pressures related to housing, ferries, and cost of living. Tourism was framed not as a growth engine in itself, but as a sector that must be deliberately shaped so that benefits are clearer, pressures are managed, and community priorities remain central.

The medium-term horizon is the right time for this work because it allows tourism decisions to be informed by near-term groundwork (especially around housing pathways, resilience, and information/wayfinding) and situated within a broader economic diversification strategy rather than treated as a standalone plan. Participants identified the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) as a potential tool to support community priorities, including infrastructure, mobility, information services, housing-related initiatives, and support for local non-profits. Medium-term focus areas include:

- Developing a community-aligned tourism strategy that clarifies desired visitor types, seasons, scales, and experiences, and explicitly links tourism activity to local benefits.
- Exploring MRDT feasibility, governance options, and potential uses through a transparent process grounded in community priorities and clear communication about trade-offs and benefits.
- Working with tourism providers, accommodation operators, community organizations, and Indigenous partners to identify initiatives that support both residents and visitors, and that align with broader economic diversification goals.

- ① Any decision to pursue MRDT or other tourism-related initiatives would require formal processes and agreement among relevant governments, industry participants, and community organizations.

Strengthening Local Economic “Ecosystems”

Rather than prioritizing large, single-sector projects, community voices consistently pointed toward strengthening interconnected clusters of small, locally rooted activity. These include food systems, arts and culture, trades, care services, and other forms of community-scale enterprise. Participants emphasized that resilient economies on small islands tend to be built by reinforcing many smaller, mutually supportive activities rather than by relying on one dominant sector. The medium term is where these clusters can become more coordinated and visible, with shared infrastructure and networks that reduce isolation among small operators and help local expertise translate into stable livelihoods. Medium-term focus areas include:

- Supporting shared spaces and networks that allow local producers, makers, artists, and service providers to collaborate, such as maker spaces, shared kitchens, studios, or small business hubs.
- Creating mentorship, apprenticeship, and training opportunities that connect youth and new residents with experienced local entrepreneurs, tradespeople, and practitioners.
- Exploring ways to strengthen local procurement and “buy local” practices among residents, organizations, and institutions, helping to keep economic value circulating within the community.

- ① These actions build on strengths consistently identified in community workshops and interviews, including creativity, volunteerism, small-scale entrepreneurship, and a strong interest in learning and capacity building. By the end of this medium-term horizon, the aim is to have clearer planning pathways, stronger collaboration, and more coordinated local “ecosystems” in place, creating the conditions for longer-term governance and infrastructure choices that protect quality of life and steward land and water responsibly.

Longer-Term Priorities (Years 5 and Beyond)

Longer-term priorities reflect deeper structural shifts that require sustained commitment, trust-building, and coordinated investment over time. The work undertaken in the near and medium terms is intended to establish the relationships, policy alignment, and practical readiness needed to make progress on these longer-horizon changes in ways that are consistent with Quadra Island's values and capacities.

Shared Governance and Long-Term Partnerships

Over the longer term, community conversations point to the importance of more coordinated, transparent, and inclusive governance arrangements around economic, land, and environmental decision-making. Participants emphasized that many of Quadra Island's most persistent challenges, housing, infrastructure, climate resilience, and economic diversification, cut across mandates and jurisdictions and cannot be addressed effectively by any single organization acting alone. Longer-term focus areas include:

- Strengthening shared governance arrangements between the We Wai Kai Nation, regional authorities, and community organizations on key economic, environmental, and land-related issues.
- Developing standing forums or tables for ongoing dialogue on housing, land use, climate resilience, and economic diversification, allowing issues to be addressed proactively rather than in response to crisis.

ⓘ Ensuring that Indigenous values and rights are fully reflected in how planning and economic decisions are made, consistent with Indigenous self-determination and governance processes. The form, timing, and scope of such arrangements will need to emerge through respectful nation-to-nation and community-to-community dialogue. Participants were clear that these relationships cannot be rushed or prescribed and must be built through trust, clarity of roles, and shared learning over time.

Major Investments in Infrastructure and Community Resilience

Significant capital investments, whether related to energy systems (e.g., water and wastewater infrastructure, multi-purpose community spaces, transportation improvements, or large-scale resilience projects) are most likely to fall within the longer-term horizon. These types of investments require not only funding but also clear governance, community support, and demonstrated readiness. By the longer-term stage, work undertaken in the near and medium terms can contribute by:

- Providing a clear rationale for investment grounded in community values, engagement findings, and evidence.
- Demonstrating readiness through smaller pilot initiatives, coordinated planning efforts, and established partnerships.
- Positioning Quadra Island to pursue available funding opportunities when timing, capacity, and alignment allow.

① Participants emphasized that large infrastructure decisions should proceed deliberately, with careful attention to environmental limits, long-term operating capacity, and the cumulative impacts on community life.

Keeping the Roadmap Alive

This roadmap is intended to remain a living guide rather than a fixed plan. To keep it relevant and realistic over time, community members suggested several ongoing practices:

- Revisiting priorities at regular intervals, such as every one to two years, to assess progress, adjust sequencing, and respond to emerging opportunities or risks.
- Tracking a small number of clear, meaningful indicators, such as housing options, access to services, volunteer capacity, and year-round livelihood stability, in ways that are simple, transparent, and useful for decision-making.
- Continuing to combine local knowledge, Indigenous knowledge, and data when shaping future directions, consistent with the engagement approach used to develop this plan.

① With a sustained, capacity-aware approach grounded in relationships, Quadra Island can move step by step toward the future articulated by residents, Indigenous partners, and stakeholders. As this work evolves, the roadmap should be revisited alongside related initiatives, including the forthcoming Sustainable Tourism Plan, to ensure that tourism-related actions reinforce, rather than duplicate or conflict with, the broader economic diversification priorities outlined here.

Strategic Directions & Time Horizon

Strategic Direction	Near Term (1–2 Years)	Medium Term (3–5 Years)	Longer Term (5+ Years)
 Homes that Fit Island Life	Housing groundwork	Small-scale non-market housing	Expanded housing mix
 Diverse, Year-Round Local Livelihoods	Year-round business support	Mixed local employment base	Stable, diversified local economy
 Indigenous Leadership & Economic Relationships	Relationship-building	Partnership pathways	Long-term Indigenous-settler economic collaboration
 Infrastructure, Energy, Water & Climate Resilience	Risk awareness	Climate-resilient infrastructure upgrades	Long-term watershed security
 Capacity, Care & Community Foundations	Volunteer sustainability	Shared service models	Durable community institutions





9.

Indigenous Leadership and Economic Relationships

This Economic Diversification Plan is situated on the traditional territory of the We Wai Kai Nation. Economic futures on Quadra Island must therefore be understood within Indigenous jurisdiction, laws, values, and governance, which are foundational to how land, waters, and economic activity are stewarded. While Indigenous leadership and relationships are reflected throughout the strategic directions and roadmap, this section brings those commitments together explicitly, clarifying opportunities for collaboration as well as the limits of this Plan. The Discovery Islands Chamber of Commerce and project partners have articulated public commitments to reconciliation aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the BC Reconciliation on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. This section builds from those commitments and from what was shared through interviews, community workshops, and the community survey. It does not define Indigenous priorities or speak on behalf of the We Wai Kai Nation. Rather, it outlines how economic diversification work on Quadra can be better aligned with Indigenous leadership, relationships, and responsibilities as expressed through this engagement process.

Context and Commitments

Community participants emphasized that reconciliation must extend beyond symbolic recognition to shape how decisions are made, who leads them, and how benefits and responsibilities are shared. For non-Indigenous organizations and actors on Quadra, this entails approaching economic planning in ways that respect Indigenous self-determination, acknowledge the limits of settler-led processes, and remain open to guidance and correction as relationships evolve.

Indigenous Worldviews and Economic Thinking

Indigenous perspectives shared through interviews and community workshop participation emphasized a worldview grounded in interconnectedness between land, sea, air, people, and spirit. Within this understanding, economic activity is not a separate or extractive domain, but part of a living system that carries responsibilities across generations.

Economic diversification, from this perspective, is not defined by growth in output or the number of sectors alone. It is understood as the pursuit of balance, responsibility, and collective wellbeing. Economic activity that undermines ecological health, cultural continuity, or relational accountability is seen as incompatible with long-term prosperity. This worldview calls for approaches that prioritize stewardship, avoid short-term extraction, and recognize land and water as relations rather than inputs.

Economic Relationships as Relationship Work

Across interviews and community workshops, economic diversification was consistently framed as relationship work rather than solely as sector development. Participants described the need to strengthen everyday relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents through communication, presence, and shared experience. Suggested practices included learning about Indigenous histories and contemporary realities, attending Indigenous-led events where appropriate, and supporting shared projects that foster practical collaboration. Within this framing, economic outcomes are inseparable from trust, mutual understanding, and respect. How decisions are made, and how differences are navigated, were seen as equally important as the projects themselves.

I think there's tons of opportunities and the Nation is always open to partnerships, whether that's joint ownership, et cetera, we're always open to those opportunities. So if someone has a business idea and it's feasible and it makes sense, we're happy to come to the table.

Indigenous-Led and Co-Developed Opportunities

Participants expressed strong interest in Indigenous-led and co-developed economic initiatives that reflect Indigenous priorities and governance. Areas identified through interviews and community workshops include cultural and educational initiatives, land- and water-based activities, arts and heritage, tourism experiences shared on Indigenous terms, and value-added activities connected to stewardship and resource management practices.

Indigenous representatives emphasized openness to collaboration where ideas are well-considered, respectful, and aligned with the Nation's priorities. Community members and organizations are encouraged to bring forward ideas and explore possibilities through appropriate channels, recognizing that collaboration proceeds at a pace and in a form determined by the We Wai Kai Nation, with clear attention to governance, ownership, intellectual property, and benefit-sharing. Economic diversification on Quadra is therefore best understood as creating conditions for Indigenous-led opportunity, rather than defining projects in advance.

Consideration of the Evidence Base

Interviews and community workshops provided deep insight into Indigenous values and potential directions for collaboration. In the community survey, however, only a small proportion of respondents identified as Indigenous and very few identified with the We Wai Kai Nation. Survey findings related to Indigenous partnership, therefore, reflect predominantly non-Indigenous perceptions and aspirations, not Indigenous priorities.

Working Commitments for Non-Indigenous Actors

Guided by the engagement findings and existing reconciliation commitments, this Plan articulates the following working commitments for non-Indigenous organizations, funders, businesses, and community groups on Quadra Island:

→ Centre We Wai Kai Nation self-determination.

Economic diversification initiatives should respect We Wai Kai Nation governance, rights, and priorities, and be understood as complementary to, not directive of, the Nation's own planning and decision-making processes.

→ Invest in relationship before projects.

Initiatives should begin with early, ongoing relationship-building rather than approaching collaboration only after concepts or funding proposals are fully formed.

→ Make Indigenous culture and language visible under Indigenous direction.

Actions that increase the visibility of Indigenous culture, language, and history should proceed only in ways and at a pace determined by the Nation, with appropriate resourcing and long-term support.

→ **Support Indigenous-led and co-owned enterprises.**

Where Indigenous-led or co-developed initiatives align with Nation priorities, non-Indigenous actors can offer partnership, technical support, capital, or market access in ways that respect Indigenous ownership, intellectual property, and benefit-sharing.

→ **Resource Indigenous engagement properly.**

Meaningful participation requires dedicated time, funding, and capacity. Indigenous engagement should never rely on unpaid labour or informal expectations and must follow Nation-defined processes.

- ① Together, these commitments clarify how non-Indigenous actors on Quadra can align their economic decisions with the relational, ethical, and governance principles articulated through this engagement process, while recognizing that all Indigenous-related initiatives require separate, Nation-led decision-making beyond the scope of this Plan.

10.

Monitoring, Learning, and Updating the Plan

This Economic Diversification Plan is intended to guide decision-making over time, not to function as a one-time statement or a fixed blueprint. The conditions shaping Quadra Island's economy, including housing pressures, demographic change, climate risks, service capacity, and relationships with Indigenous partners, will continue to evolve. For this reason, the value of the plan lies not only in its strategic directions, but also in how it supports ongoing learning, reflection, and adjustment. This section outlines a practical, capacity-aware approach to monitoring progress and updating the plan over time, grounded in the same principles that shaped the planning process: community knowledge, Indigenous leadership, evidence-informed discussion, and care for people, land, and relationships.



Photo credit: Sharon Yon

Purpose of Monitoring and Learning

Monitoring in this context is not about tracking a large number of technical indicators or producing frequent reports. Rather, it is about periodically asking a small set of shared questions that help the community understand whether it is moving in the direction it intends. These questions include:

-  Are economic conditions becoming more stable and supportive of year-round livelihoods?
-  Are housing, services, and care systems becoming more secure and accessible?
-  Are relationships, particularly with Indigenous partners, strengthening over time?
-  Are environmental stewardship and climate resilience being upheld alongside economic activity?
-  Are community organizations and volunteers able to sustain their efforts without burnout?

- ① Approached in this way, monitoring becomes a tool for collective sense-making and course correction, rather than a compliance exercise.

What to Track: Priority Indicator Areas

Rather than prescribing a fixed set of metrics, this plan identifies a small number of indicator areas that align directly with what residents, community workshop participants, and interviewees identified as most important. Specific measures within each area can be refined, adapted, or replaced over time as capacity and priorities evolve. Suggested indicator areas include:

Homes and affordability

- Availability and diversity of housing options that fit island life, such as rental units, suites, multi-generational homes, and small-scale housing forms.
- Community perceptions of housing stress or improvement over time, using questions similar to those in the current survey.

Core services and care

- Stability and accessibility of healthcare, seniors' supports, childcare, and mental health services, informed by both service provider input and resident feedback.
- Changes in residents' sense of security around aging in place and raising families on Quadra.

Livelihoods and seasonality

- Perceptions of year-round economic stability versus off-season vulnerability, drawing on survey-style questions and qualitative feedback.
- Stories from local businesses, trades, caregivers, and service providers about whether livelihoods are becoming easier or harder to sustain.

Relationships, inclusion, and Indigenous partnership

- Residents' sense of trust, belonging, and inclusion, building on values-related survey questions.
- Qualitative reflections from Indigenous partners, through Nation-defined processes, on whether economic planning and community actions are aligning with their priorities and values.
- Community reflection on reconciliation-oriented activities identified through community workshops and interviews.

Environment and climate resilience

- Community perceptions of environmental health, particularly related to water security, forests, wildfire risk, and shoreline protection.
- Tracking of key resilience-related steps taken at household, community, or organizational levels.

Community capacity and volunteer sustainability

- Self-reported capacity and burnout levels among community organizations and volunteer groups.
- Evidence of improved coordination, shared tools, and clearer priorities across organizations.

ⓘ Many of these areas can be monitored through simple, periodic check-ins rather than new or complex data systems.

Rhythm for Review and Reflection

A realistic review cycle for Quadra Island balances the need for learning with respect for limited time and capacity.

A light check-in every 1-2 years could involve:

- Brief, structured conversations among community organizations, service providers, interested residents, and Indigenous partners if and how they choose to participate.
- Reflection on what has moved forward, what feels stuck, and whether the strategic directions remain relevant.

A more substantial review every 4-5 years could include:

- A short follow-up community survey using selected questions from the current survey for comparison.
- Updated interview conversations with a small number of knowledge holders.
- Community workshops or facilitated discussions, particularly if there have been major shifts in housing, services, or environmental conditions.

- ① Where possible, these reviews can align with other planning or funding cycles to avoid duplication and consultation fatigue.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Ethics

This plan does not assign any organization a formal mandate to lead monitoring or review. Any coordinating or convening roles should emerge through voluntary agreement, based on each organization's governance, priorities, and capacity.

Keeping Learning at the Centre

The most important function of monitoring is learning. For Quadra Island, this means:

- Being open about what is working and what is not
- Valuing stories and lived experience alongside quantitative data
- Adjusting priorities when new information, relationships, or conditions change the picture

Handled in this way, reflection and updating become extensions of the community values identified throughout this process: stewardship, care, respect, shared responsibility, and long-term thinking.

- The Quadra Island Economic Diversification Dashboard at www.quadraEDP.ca will continue to serve as the primary public repository for survey results, visualizations, and future data additions that support this Plan, ensuring transparency and accessibility as learning continues.

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