

Quadra Island Economic Diversification Plan

Key Knowledge Holder Interviews



Summary Report



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Summary

A total of ten key informant interviews were completed as part of the data collection phase of the Quadra Island Economic Diversification Plan Project. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and then grouped into themes.

Purpose of this Report

This brief report shares the highlights of the themes identified in the interviews that were completed as part of the development of an Economic Diversification Plan for Quadra Island. The interview analysis will be incorporated into the Final Report and Roadmap for the Project.

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 Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Theme 1: Values	5
Theme 2: Strengths and Assets	6
Theme 3: Gaps and Challenges	8
Theme 4: What is Economic Diversification	13
Theme 5: Solutions and Ideas	13
Theme 6: Building Stronger Connections between Indigenous and Settler Communities	23
Theme 7: Community Connections	25
Conclusion	26
Appendix - Semi-Structured Interview Guide	27

Introduction

Along with the community-wide survey and two public workshops, a series of in-depth interviews was completed with people who know Quadra Island well. These conversations add depth and context to the numbers and workshop notes, helping us to understand the “why” behind the data and the history behind key issues.

We spoke with a range of community members representing different sectors of the local economy and different demographics. Special attention was paid to including perspectives that were underrepresented at the workshops, and to including representation from the We Wai Kai Nation.

Ten interviews took place between August 12th and October 21st, 2025. Most interviews took about two hours; however, some were shorter to accommodate the limited time of the interviewees.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide that contained thirty-five questions. The conversations explored:

- Personal definitions of economic diversification
- Perceptions of community values, strengths and challenges
- Optimistic and pragmatic visions of the future
- Four dimensions of wellbeing (economic, environmental, socio-cultural, and psychological)
- Cross-cutting and future-oriented themes
- Indigenous perspectives

NVivo, a data analysis software program, was used to code the interview transcripts. A total of 1008 codes were used to create 1822 references or snippets of conversation. These references were organized into seven themes. To protect privacy, comments were anonymized and not linked to specific people or organizations.

Together with the survey and workshop results, these interviews help ensure that the Economic Diversification Plan is grounded in real experiences, local knowledge, and the values people want to see reflected in Quadra Island’s future.

Theme 1: Values

One of the first questions the interviewees were asked was about the values that should guide economic decisions on Quadra. Values often came up later in the conversation as well. This report will highlight a few values in particular that emerged strongly from the interview analysis.

Values from the Official Community Plan (OCP): One of the interviewees was very clear in sharing that the OCP for Quadra includes a list of values that community members agreed upon. This is important work that has already been done and should be cross-referenced with our data. The OCP values include:

- (A) To promote a strong rural community that reflects a diversity of lifestyles, economics and recreational opportunities.
- (B) To promote land use patterns which do not compromise the ecological integrity and rural character of the island.
- (C) To recognize the unique natural characteristics of the island, and to safeguard sensitive areas, including the island's groundwater recharge areas from inappropriate forms of development and sources of pollution.

The Official Community Plan can be found at <https://srd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BYLAWS-NO.-3050.pdf>

Environmental Stewardship: Environmental Stewardship was the value that came up the most in the interviews. Indeed, it was mentioned in some form by almost everyone.

An interviewee representing the We Wai Kai Nation shared that the key value for the Nation and the Kwakwaka'wakw people is “awi’nakola”, which means “being one with the land, the air, the sea, and the spirit realm as well” in the Kwakwala language. Awi’nakola seems to be environmental stewardship in its fullest sense.

“The values that our people had prior to European contact could be summed up by a word in our language called awi’nakola which means being one with the land, the air, the sea, and the spirit realm as well. So it’s a way that our people conducted themselves and how we were stewards of our traditional territory.”

Some of the non-Indigenous interviewees also suggested that Indigenous values relating to environmental stewardship and general worldview would be very helpful. For example, the value of “Namwayut” which means “we are all one” in Kwakwala, and the value of “Heshook-ish Tsawalk” which is a Nuu-chah-nulth word that means “everything is one.”

Several interviewees said that we need to prioritize a healthy environment over economic growth. And one person suggested that all decisions should consider how the natural environment will be affected.

“Basically, nature should have every role in future planning. Every... plan should ask the question, ‘how is this going to affect the natural environment?’”

Integrity, Accountability, and Trust: Integrity, accountability, and trust emerged as strong values that are especially important for local businesses. One interviewee illustrated this quite well when they said:

“Well, the first thing I always say is, if you threw a rock in the pond at Bold Point, the south end knows by lunchtime. So...you have to be accountable. There's no anonymity on Quadra Island.”

Other Values: Many other values were recommended during the interviews and they included (in alphabetical order):

- Affordability
- Authenticity
- Climate resilience
- Collaboration
- Community Care and Connection
- Creative
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Ethical leadership
- Gratitude
- Innovative
- Kindness and Compassion
- Self-sufficiency and Independence
- Small island character
- Teamwork
- Thorough research

Theme 2: Strengths and Assets

Quadra Island has many strengths. Fifteen distinct community strengths or assets were identified in the interview analysis. The list and descriptions provided can be summed up as follows:

Agriculture: Quadra has many small growers and producers, and the ability to grow food on arable land.

Arts and Culture: Many types of artistic expression were mentioned. The number of visual artists here, including Indigenous artists, the annual Studio Tour, and the music and theatre scenes, were all mentioned as huge assets and a draw for people to live and visit here.

“We're lucky, we've got a really talented group of artists on the island. And they're a huge part of the economy here.”

Caring People: Quadra is seen as a community that takes care of people in need.

Commercial Zones: There are commercial zones, especially in Quathiaski Cove, where people naturally come to do business, and that have commercial space to rent.

Community Events: There are an incredible number and variety of community events on Quadra, mostly organized by volunteers, and including ones with long traditions, such as May Day.

Community Spirit: People like to say that “everybody knows each other” on Quadra and there is a strong culture of volunteering and working together to benefit the community.

Different from Other Islands: Quadra is different from other nearby islands in that it is not as busy as the southern Gulf Islands (like Saltspring) nor is “too remote” (like Malcolm Island). It is also unique in that it has downtown access just by “straight walking on to the ferry to Campbell River” and the benefits of “being closer to an urban centre” than many other islands.

Diverse Community: Quadra is a diverse community in that it has residents of all ages, and people of varying incomes and backgrounds.

Work/Life Balance: Life on Quadra affords a particular kind of work/life balance where you can do the things you might do on vacation, like mountain biking or going to the beach, after work. This is one of the things that is attracting people to move here, especially people who are able to work from home. One interviewee called the work/life balance on Quadra its “number one strength.”

Local Expertise: Quadra has a population with a wealth of knowledge, including people who are experts in their fields.

Local Groups: Quadra has a great abundance of local groups and non-profits who are each making their own contribution and helping to make the community great. There are organizations that have part of their mission to bring people together for events (Chamber of Commerce, Quadra Recreation Society, Quadra Island Foundation, the Legion) and who are open to and supportive of new ways to do so.

Meeting Places: There are many meeting places for bringing people together (e.g halls, hotels, resorts, lodges, coffee shops, restaurants, lounges, and pubs).

Natural Beauty: Tourists (and many residents) are primarily attracted to Quadra by the natural beauty of the landscape and the large number of recreational activities that can be done out in nature (e.g. hiking, mountain biking, cycling, kayaking, golf, beach-going, and scuba diving).

Natural Resources: Quadra has a large land base, much of which is uninhabited, and many natural resources, such as forests, minerals, lakes, and ocean.

Safety: Quadra is perceived as safe, and this is backed up by the RCMP who report that crime on Quadra is quite low.

Supports for Small Business: There are many services on Quadra that could help small businesses and social profits, including a credit union, a Chamber of Commerce, a Community Foundation, as well as many experienced (often retired) people who could provide mentorship.

Well-Serviced Community: Quadra is well served in the area of healthcare, having two doctors’ offices, as well as a weekly blood lab, a community nurse, and a social worker. Residents have good access to alternative health practitioners, including massage therapists, a chiropractor, and a physiotherapist. Quadra is also well served by the trades, with carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and other tradespeople on island. Plus, Quadra is close to an urban centre (Campbell River).

Work Remotely: Quadra is seen as a good place to work from home in a home-based business or work remotely as an employee of an organization or company.

Theme 3: Gaps and Challenges

Quadra is also facing many gaps and challenges. Those that emerged from the interviews have been grouped into sixteen different sub-themes, many of which have been broken down further, as delineated below.

Capacity of Non-Profit Organizations: Quadra is depending on volunteers and non-profit organizations to do much of the work and they are struggling due to lack of capacity and volunteer burnout.

Changes and Projected Changes in Traditional Industries:

- **Fisheries:** There has been a decline in wild salmon which has affected the fisheries and income in this sector. This can be related to environmental factors as well as management.
- **Forestry:** The number of jobs in forestry has declined due to changes in technology.

“The shrinking number of jobs in that industry... is related to the type of machinery that’s employed now. It’s not that forestry isn’t happening, but there’s less employment in forestry.”
- **The Arts:** Funding has been cut to the arts sector and there are projections that there will be a decline in sales of art as younger generations cease to value it.

Environmental Challenges

- **Forests:** Some of the concerns expressed about the forests on Quadra included the following: Forestry has tended to operate in a vacuum and not be concerned about its impact on the other sectors of the economy. The water table near logging operations could be affected in “pocket communities.” Logging impacts the beautiful forests on Quadra, both in terms of destroying habitat, and also reshaping the landscape, thus impacting the “attraction” of the forest. One of the main forestry companies on Quadra is Mosaic. They are now very difficult to criticize in terms of their impact on the environment because they have entered into partnership with the We Wai Kai. Many people who would normally speak out about environmental concerns are the same people who support Indigenous rights, and *“it’s extremely difficult for people, with a conservation-minded outlook, to also speak against the opportunities for Indigenous people.”*
- **Fire:** A major threat that Quadra faces is forest fires. Clear cuts are the number one place where fire starts and Quadra has many of those right now.
- **Water:** Healthy watersheds are critical to wild salmon as well as to successful neighbourhoods as people need water in their wells in order to live. Another concern is that the water in Drew Harbour is being polluted by people dumping their waste into the water close to shore.

- **Development:** People were concerned about the environmental cost of land development e.g. for housing or industry, and suggest that a fine balance and caution against “overdevelopment” is needed.
- **Balance Between Predator and Prey:** The “wild side” of Quadra includes a lot of wild animals. Preventing the deer population from getting out of control entails keeping the natural balance between predators and prey.
- **Climate Change:** Climate change and its impact is a concern for many people on Quadra, certainly in terms of the potential increase in wildfires and drought.

Ferry Challenges:

- **Traffic and Time Waiting in Line:** Ferry traffic increases in the summer due to the number of extra people coming to Quadra, including tourists, seasonal residents, and people traveling through Quadra to get to Cortes for the same reasons. This can lead to multiple ferry waits as the ferry can only fit so many vehicles per trip. So while travel by ferry already adds extra time to any trip off-island, having to wait for a ferry because the ferry you hoped to take was full adds additional time and can make you miss the thing you were traveling for. Ferry traffic seems to be the number one thing people complain about on Quadra. Still, the physical barrier of a ferry, as opposed to a bridge, provides many benefits as well.
- **People Choosing to Move Because of the Ferry:** The ferry adds extra time and expense to the commute of people who need to travel off-island for work or school or extracurricular activities. This can be especially difficult with the multiple ferry waits in the summer, and cancellations due to wind at other times of year. Some people end up moving off Quadra because this commute is just too difficult. Many of the people who leave are working age, and families with kids, a demographic that is needed on Quadra.
- **The Impact of the Two Ferry System on Retail Local Businesses:** The increase a few years ago from one ferry to two, and from one trip per hour to two during most of the day, has led to more residents leaving Quadra to do their shopping because it is so quick and convenient now, which has resulted in a decrease in business at local stores, and also an increase in ferry traffic.

Housing Challenges:

- **Not enough “attainable” housing:** To some, housing feels like the number one challenge that Quadra is facing right now. There is not enough “attainable” housing to meet the demand (to rent or to buy) and the challenge of creating more attainable housing feels “deep and pervasive.”
- **High Price of Real Estate:** Quadra is a desirable place to live, especially for retirees, and the cost of buying property keeps going up due to the high demand. This makes it difficult for the working people to find property they can afford to buy.

“We’re up to about...33 [real estate] listings, but...out of the 33...two-thirds are over a million dollars.”

- **The cost of water and septic for new housing:** Once you have land, it can still be very expensive to put in water and septic.

- **The cost of protecting riparian areas:** If you have riparian areas on your property, there may be an additional cost of surveying and protecting them.
- **The time to sub-divide:** To sub-divide a property takes three years or longer.
- **The lack of rentals:** It is very difficult to find a place to rent on Quadra. The lack of rental accommodation is even worse in the summer as rental accommodation is turned into Airbnb's. While some young people have parents on the island, not everyone wants to live in the same house, or even on the same property, with their parents.
- **The lack of housing for summer staff:** There is a lack of housing for the summer workforce. Some employees are living in tents or vehicles. The lack of accommodation can make it very difficult to find summer staff.
- **The Impact of the Lack of Housing:** There is a lack of housing for the people who work in the businesses and who provide the services that are needed on Quadra, for example, personal care workers who enable an aging population to stay in their homes. Many people who wanted to stay on Quadra have had to leave because they did not have a place to live. If employees had proper housing, perhaps they would be more likely to stay and become long-term community members and workers on Quadra, and provide a net benefit to the community through their participation in it.

“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?”

Human Resource Challenges: There is a labour shortage on Quadra for certain types of jobs. According to one interviewee, this is partly due to baby boomers retiring, and COVID encouraging people to work from home or retire. Jobs that do not have a good wage and/or that are seasonal can be especially hard to fill. Succession planning is also a concern, with people who fill key roles not knowing who will replace them when they are gone. Some employers are getting quite desperate for labour and have lowered their usual standards just to find “a body.” Caregivers are in high demand but this job also often doesn’t pay well and few people think of it as a career and are not going into it. Yet the demand for caregivers on Quadra is only going to increase. The size and the composition of the labour pool limit what kind of business is viable on Quadra. If we don’t have the people with the right skills here, we will have to attract them to come here, if they exist at all.

Internet Connectivity Challenges: The internet is not accessible everywhere on the island. And where it is accessible, it often is not reliable. This is difficult for people who work from home in industries that rely on the internet. There is a lack of office space for people who need to access the internet for work, and cannot access it from their home.

Lack of Services: There is a perceived lack of accommodation and restaurants to serve the demand by tourists. There are other activities and services as well that are not on Quadra, for example, a dentist, reliable legal services, vet services, or a brewery.

Lack of Space: There is a lack of appropriate and affordable space for artists, makers, businesses or industries to operate on Quadra.

Mental Health and Addictions Challenges: There is very little crime on Quadra but when there is crime here, there is often a mental health or addiction issue behind it. However, there is a lack of mental health services on Quadra.

Population Pressures: Some Quadra residents are resistant to population growth. However, some businesses feel that population growth is necessary in order to support the economy and the demand for labour. Furthermore, problems elsewhere could lead to increased pressure from people wanting to move to Quadra.

Starting and Running a Small Business, in General, Challenges: A few things were mentioned about how difficult it is to start and run a small business. Starting a business can be expensive, for example, for tools. It can be difficult if not impossible to compete based on price against large corporations, like the ones that have stores in Campbell River. As well, “Trump’s tariffs” have increased the cost of anything imported from the U.S. and have wreaked havoc on the market for Canadian exports in the U.S.

Starting and Running a Business on Quadra Island Challenges

- **The increased cost of doing business and higher prices:** The ferry makes access to markets off-island challenging due to the cost of shipping. This means goods that are imported to Quadra are more expensive, and shipping goods off-island makes Quadra products more expensive to off-island customers. There is also the cost of paying the people providing services to wait in line for the ferry, which becomes even more expensive when there are delays or cancellations. Some service providers are unwilling to even come to Quadra because of the extra time and expense involved.
- **Lack of Support from Locals:** Goods and services on Quadra can be more expensive due to the extra cost of bringing inputs and labour onto the island. Some Quadra residents are not willing to support local businesses due to the higher cost of their products, and the two ferry system has made it easier for them to shop off-island. Negative talk on Facebook can also be a deterrent to supporting local businesses if they are being bashed. This could have the effect of those businesses losing money and possibly having to close.

“The two ferry system has had a negative effect on ‘off tourist season’ sales.

However, it brought us a positive effect during tourist season, making us a more seasonal business.”

“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.”

- **Some businesses are only viable because of the summer tourists:** Demand for goods and services can be quite seasonal on Quadra, especially for the businesses in the food and beverage industry. Their capacity is at max in the summer which can be quite stressful for the businesses and the public alike. But the paradox is that with slow shoulder seasons, many businesses are only viable because of the profit they generate in the summer.

“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.”

- **Lack of an online presence for Quadra:** It was lamented that Quadra does not have a strong online presence like many other communities and this can make it hard to get information out there about businesses on Quadra and “island ethics” or “how to be a considerate guest” on the island.

Tourism Business Challenges

- **The seasonal nature of tourism on Quadra:** The seasonal nature of tourism has its challenges. Business at the local stores is very busy in the summer when the tourists are here in force, and then slow in the winter. This requires finding, hiring and training a lot of staff for the summer. While eco-tourism is a good fit for Quadra as there are so many outdoor activities, it is limited due to the seasonal nature of many of these activities.
- **Resistance to tourism due to lack of benefit to the community:** One interviewee expressed concern about the “extractive part of tourism” where people want to “use the land and the experiences here to boost their social media profile” in exchange for only a small amount of money spent in the community. Tourists were also seen as “transitory” and “not really providing or supporting value” in the community.
- **Resistance to tourism due to its impact:** There is a resistance to tourism by some people on Quadra because of the impact it can have, both on Quadra, in terms of the environmental impact, the traffic, the noise, etc., as well as on the planet.

“People live on the island for a reason and at the end of the tourist season people say ‘we want our island back’ and they are happy to see the tourists go.”

“People fly, people use vehicles, RVs, all of these things, you know. The fuel to power them, the resources that go into these RVs, it’s a hugely impactful industry.”

Threat of the Island being Cut-off: In a natural or man-made disaster, Quadra risks being cut off from the rest of the world if the ferry stops running.

Transportation Challenges

Lack of transportation options: There are few transportation options other than private vehicles on Quadra. This is a challenge for people who don’t have a vehicle, people who have a vehicle but need other options, or people who want to walk over from Campbell River and then be able to get around Quadra. This past summer, the Campbell River shuttle operated on Quadra. This was a great service for some, but it was a private company, and rides were expensive e.g. \$20 for a one-way trip between ferry terminals. This is much higher than public transit would cost, which is typically highly subsidized by the government.

Cycling and walking on the road can be dangerous: Walking or cycling on the roads on Quadra is challenging due to the lack of shoulders. Indeed, many roads have deep ditches where the

shoulder should be in order to carry the large amounts of water that course through during winter rains. Pathways that can be used instead of the road are very limited.

Theme 4: What is Economic Diversification

The interviews were a chance to explore what “economic diversification” means. Interviewees all had very similar ideas which revolved around moving beyond the traditional sources of employment to something more resilient and balanced.

- Four people used the analogy of “not putting all of your eggs in one basket.”
- One interviewee described it as “*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.*”
- Another thought of it as “*a collection of small home based businesses that start small, grow as big as demand requires, relocate to a commercial space if necessary, that fill all the gaps in our economy, offer good value, build on the shop local theme, and that will help build their business and local employment.*”
- One person said, “*fulfilling employment, which is less seasonal in nature, and a variety of employment types*” so that “*market conditions are less likely to have significant reverberations in our community's economy.*”
- Another person shared this similar idea: “*The hope is that we spread the economic risk across multiple sectors to make the community more resilient to downturns and less reliant on tourism but rather, focus on the population's needs.*”
- Several people commented on the idea of “economic growth.” They said that unending growth is undesirable and actually impossible. One person suggested that sustainable growth requires boundaries.
- A term that came up a lot was “balance.”

“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.”

Theme 5: Solutions and Ideas

So many wonderful ideas were shared in the interviews, many of which were solutions to the gaps and challenges that were being discussed. These solutions and ideas were organized into seven sub-themes and are shared below. One interviewee suggested that the Official Community Plan be incorporated into any discussions related to solutions and so we will touch on that first.

Objectives from the Official Community Plan (OCP): The OCP for Quadra contains a list of objectives that were brought up in the interviews as something the community has agreed upon and which need to be adhered to. In particular, the following objectives were mentioned as possibly the most pertinent to making decisions about the future economy on Quadra:

- 2.2h (i) To encourage centrally located commercial zones to provide social focal points and promote an increased level of community interaction and involvement.
- (ii) To ensure that scattered commercial development does not threaten the character of the Island.
- (iv) To protect and enhance the Island's environment, aesthetics and rural atmosphere.
- (v) To minimize the impact of commercial development on the environment, aesthetics, and adjoining properties and to discourage larger scale commercial development likely to result in adverse aesthetics, environmental, and social effects.
- (vii) To encourage tourism opportunities which are appropriate to the ambiance of Quadra Island and which recognize the finite limitations of the land base, the environment, and the local infrastructure.

- 2.2i (iii) To encourage small-scale light industrial uses which provide employment for Quadra Island residents.
- 2.2j (iii) To endorse the economic use of forestlands through the promotion of viable, community-oriented woodlots, and value-added products.
- 2.2k (iii) To encourage agriculture, in particular, local food production.

The Official Community Plan with the full list of Objectives can be found at <https://srd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BYLAWS-NO.-3050.pdf>

Capacity of Non-Profit Organizations: Non-profits do much of the heavy lifting on Quadra and are largely run by volunteers. It was suggested that it would be very helpful if more non-profits could hire staff to do some of the work, and more funding could be applied for to help with this. Communication and collaboration between organizations is also essential.

Collective Voice: It would be easier to support the different sectors of the economy on Quadra if they had associations or collectives or some form of organization that allowed them to speak with a collective voice.

Environmental Solutions

Putting the environment first: The natural environment is key to everything on Quadra as per this quote,

"The natural environment is central to all things on Quadra and we need to avoid over development."

Environmental ethics: Developing a list of environmental ethics for Quadra - for residents, tourists, and businesses – and communicating it widely, even intentionally teaching it in the school, would be helpful as it would guide people towards doing the right thing.

Environmentally oriented businesses and jobs: Focus on creating businesses and jobs that also help the environment.

Decision-making with the environment in mind: Decision-making about the economy and future planning should always ask “how is this going to affect the natural environment?”

Resource management: It was suggested that resource management guidelines be developed.

Clean water: A pump out station for boats would help to keep the water in Quadra harbours clean.

Fire solutions: Deciduous fire breaks would be helpful for preventing forest fires from spreading. It would also be helpful to not have clearcuts close to places where people live as this is the number one place where forest fires start.

Renewable energy and green buildings: Renewable energy could be increased, especially solar energy. Green building technology, including using sustainable building products, was suggested.

Carbon footprint: If many businesses are home-based, this will help to reduce the carbon footprint. If active transportation routes are improved and people use them to get to work, this will also help. Building a circular economy will reduce the need for people and goods to travel long distances.

Keeping nature in balance: Keeping nature in balance is important for a healthy eco-system. One important measure is ensuring there is a proper balance of predator and prey. This would keep the deer population in check.

Make it easy to do the right thing: For all of these suggestions, they are more likely to happen if they are made easy e.g. easy ways to recycle, reuse, repair, reduce and also to dispose of waste (garbage, sewage, chemicals, e-waste).

Accountability: It would be great if there were ways to hold people accountable if they do something that is against the environmental ethics and guidelines that have been established.

Funding Solutions

Several different sources of funding were brought up that could help local businesses and non-profits, including:

- A business fund that local businesses could access
- Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)
- Arts and Culture grants
- Funding from the Strathcona Regional District (SRD)
- Selling things like maps to raise money

Housing Solutions

Developing new housing: There are many pieces of the puzzle when it comes to developing new housing. Increases in density should follow the Official Community Plan and existing zoning. The province is not in favour of “rural sprawl.” Housing that incorporates nature, like the Fircrest development at the golf course, could be a good way to preserve and appreciate Quadra’s natural

beauty and eco-systems. One thing that could be looked at is reduced-sized lots in the areas that are intended to have greater density.

“I’m not talking about skyscrapers here. We’re talking about maybe reduced-sized lots....If you’ve got to put out a half million dollars on a lot, as opposed to \$100,000 on a half-acre lot or a quarter-acre lot, you might engage a lot more people developing or willing to settle in on Quadra, and a lot more families, too.”

Funding and Partners: The Strathcona Regional District (SRD) has a new housing service that could help fund a housing project. The Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) was also mentioned as a source of funding for new housing. Large housing developments could require a partner and paid staff to get off the ground.

Models of “attainable housing” that might work on Quadra include:

- Tiny home or mobile home communities (like the one in Ucluelet)
- Mixed use developments that combine commercial and residential space
- Providing housing for seasonal workers
- Developing temporary housing on ALR land
- A land trust or housing trust (like in the San Juan Islands)

Other ideas for how to help people find appropriate housing:

- Landlord/tenant matching service (like the Housing NOW Project in the Southern Gulf Islands)
- Roommate matching service
- Lease land but own your home (tiny home or mobile home)
- Live on a friend’s land
- Purchase property together with friends
- Long-term work/trade arrangements
- “Mortgage Helpers”: Home owners provide rental housing to people who need housing AND get help paying the mortgage through creative arrangements, for example, trailers, tiny homes, co-housing, suites, renting out rooms
- Intergenerational housing or living with family members
- Shared housing models like co-housing
- Cap short term rentals
- Caregivers “live-in”, enabling people needing care to stay in their homes and caregivers to have housing
- Finding a collaborative approach to housing development and working together to make it happen

“There’s been a lot of projects over on Cortes that seem like they’ve gotten the ball rolling on different affordable housing things, so I know that there’s other groups

that are doing stuff...so I know... it can be done, right? It's just getting enough heads together and getting it happening."

Leadership: Interviewees were asked who should lead or support economic diversification on Quadra. It was made clear by everyone that the leadership should come from within the community rather than an external source like the Strathcona Regional District (SRD). Many people suggested that the Chamber of Commerce should lead it or act as a "catalyst," or a new entity with the defined mandate of leading it if the Chamber is not able to. It was also suggested that leadership needs to come "from everyone."

Local Economy Solutions: So many of the suggestions could be combined into how to make the local businesses on Quadra stronger. What follows is a long list of suggestions related to different sectors of the local economy on Quadra, beginning with some historical context.

History: It's important to note where we are coming from in terms of the economy on Quadra as it provides context for where we are headed. Quadra's economy historically revolved around logging and fishing. Work in construction has also been around for a while.

Accommodation: The We Wai Kai campgrounds are pretty maxed out in the summer, but there is potential to expand into the shoulder seasons with RV camping. One interviewee noted that it might be useful to increase other types of accommodation on Quadra as well.

Adapting to living on an island: Keep an inventory of parts/supplies so you don't have to go off island every time you need something. Provide services to Quadra only, or perhaps expand to Quadra and Cortes if you need more customers.

Arts and culture:

- Arts and culture give tourists another reason to come to Quadra.
- Artist cooperative
- Support for Indigenous artists
- Dedicated community theatre (like in Ladysmith or Qualicum)

"If there was a theater that was... like, it becomes a clubhouse... A dedicated space...there's often a bar...it's a social area...and you've got kids that can be painting sets...doing theater programs...improv...dance can happen...and music...It's easy to be heard. You have that closer relationship with the audience, you're not way up and looking down on them...Every age group can get involved and are needed."

- Outdoor stage or covered pavilion
- A community woodworking shop

"A woodworking shop, a maker's woodworking shop, could be a great opportunity for Indigenous makers and Islanders to build their skills, build personal capacity and ability to make things, and explore employment based on more creative skill

sets. You wouldn't necessarily be able to explore this sector without access to tools and a dedicated space. I think that would be incredible, a way to support people growing their skills and secondary jobs in the forestry sector."

- A space for vendors outside of the markets
- Marketing through accommodation suppliers

Caregiving: More caregivers are needed on Quadra as the population ages. Funding is available for families to hire someone through Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL). We need to be having more conversations about who can play the caregiving role for our aging community members, how can they get trained, and where can the funding come from for people who can't afford to pay what a caregiver costs, especially if they are to make a living wage.

Cooperatives:

- Housing cooperatives could be a creative way to provide attainable housing as well as community connection.
- An artist cooperative was suggested as a way to jointly market and sell products (like the Cortes Craft Shop Co-op).
- A cooperative farm market could sell products from Quadra.

Employment types and availability:

- Many jobs on Quadra are seasonal. We can support permanency and wellbeing on Quadra by creating more long-term jobs.
- People are looking for fulfilling employment.
- People want to make a living wage.
- If you want to live on Quadra, sometimes you just need to adapt to what kind of work is available. For one interviewee who moved here as an adult, that meant going into the trades and getting into a program at North Island College in Campbell River.

"I'd done lots of different things [before moving to Quadra], but that wasn't happening here, and I wanted to be here. So, after two years of being a labourer, working for not very much money at all, I said, 'okay, I don't see anything better, this looks like it's a pathway to something" ...So I was an [older] apprentice in North Island College...sitting with 20-year-olds."

Holistic thinking: We need to use holistic thinking, incorporating considerations for housing, childcare, and healthcare, not just jobs.

Fish and seafood:

- Walcan remains a big employer on Quadra. One of the reasons they have been successful is that they produce a high-quality product that can be marketed internationally.
- The mari-culture industry i.e. growing ocean plants like seaweed, is now being developed
- There are opportunities for a shipwright or other marine businesses

Food and agriculture:

- People are recognizing the value of local food. Quadra has arable land in some places that can be developed for agriculture. Aquaponics and growing winter crops in greenhouses are ways to expand capacity.
- The production of Quadra-raised meat can be increased to meet local consumption needs, and farmers making their own value-added products to sell, like bacon and jerky, can be explored.
- Farmers could sell their products through a cooperative, which could include a restaurant.
- A brew pub is another possibility.

Forestry and wood products:

- Bring back some of the jobs that were lost due to the use of machines.
- Produce value-added wood products.
- Use waste wood (slash piles) as a resource.
- Create a community woodworking shop (see Arts and Culture section above).

Fuel: Build a gas station in Heriot Bay.

Gardening and landscaping: There is likely to be an increased demand for workers in this sector as people age and can't take care of their property.

How to compete and stay profitable: Where small businesses can't compete based on price, they can attract customers for other reasons, such as the quality of their products and their contribution to the community. Some businesses will need to diversify their business models in order to stay afloat. Businesses need to learn to manage the seasonal flux and look at ways to expand into the shoulder seasons.

How to make the most of the natural resources: Keep more natural resources on island and either use them as is or turn them into value-added products. For example, milling wood and using it to build houses and furniture.

Labour availability and attracting and keeping people on Quadra: We need to figure out how to attract the type of skills or expertise that are needed for the sectors that we would like to develop. Who should we be attracting to live on Quadra? It is important to look at the current trends as well as the demographics of the current population before making this decision. People are attracted to Quadra for work/life balance or wanting the "island life." Some youth who grew up on Quadra leave because there is no work for them here or they can't afford housing. But then many are moving back because they realize how good it is here. Hakai has attracted many young professionals to the island. When it comes to keeping people here, they will be anchored and more comfortable if they have good housing. People who feel safe and connected will stay and contribute.

Mining: Tailings from past mining operations still exist on Quadra and could be used. Mining could become an industry again on Quadra.

Quadra-brand: Quadra could have its own brand of things that are, or could be, produced here.

“In 5-20 years [I] would like to see Quadra have its own furniture brand, its own beer brand, its own clothing brand, a local cheese brand.”

Self-sufficiency and community resilience: In order to better prepare for the threat of natural disasters, like earthquakes, or global unrest, we should build up our local food security and our ability to survive such things as long power/internet outages, supply system disruptions, or the ferry not running for a long period of time. Businesses and non-profits can work, both independently and cooperatively, on improving the self-sufficiency and resilience of the island economy. Social wellbeing and personal health are also important pieces of building resilience.

“I would rather see economic activity that focused on things that supported community resilience, community self-sufficiency, and social well-being and personal health above whatever the financial implications of that are... You know, that quip that people say, “well, you can't eat money.” That will come home to roost unless we have enough of a strategy, or put enough effort, into those kinds of things.”

Services: We need services that cover the basics and meet the needs of the people who live on Quadra, like housing, childcare and healthcare. We could also look at the services that are available in Campbell River and try to replicate that on Quadra. This would mean that people would not have to leave the island in order to access those services. However, only certain services are going to make sense, given the population and potential demand. Mental health services would help many people and could also help address homelessness, addiction, and crime. Adding services and improving the quality of life on Quadra is a way of growing the economy without necessarily increasing the population.

“Adding services on the island could be a way of growing the economy which doesn't necessarily mean adding more people. Rather, it would mean increasing quality of life and growing economic prospects of Islanders, thereby improving people's mental well-being and their economic well-being.”

Small-scale industrial: There may be some opportunities to develop small-scale or “cottage” industries.

Space: There is a need for more of various types of space, including:

- Office space with internet
- Shared space for artists
- Industrial space
- Commercial space

Supports for local businesses:

- A way to help local businesses would be to run a “Buy Local” campaign.
- A central distribution point for local products could be created.

- Local businesses could cross promote each others' products and services, or create packages that include products and services from different companies.
- Supports to start a new business are available at NIEFS in Campbell River and don't necessarily need to be available on Quadra as well.
- Guidance on what is legal and allowed from a government perspective would be helpful.
- Access to private start up funds for capital expenses with favourable repayment terms could be provided.
- A good practice would be for each business to have a business plan with key performance indicators.
- Businesses could be connected to accountants, bookkeepers, other admin supports.
- Assistance with business succession planning, or planning ahead as a community, so there is a plan in place for key roles in the economy to be filled when people retire or leave.
- A collaborative approach could be encouraged and facilitated, including collaboration between businesses and local groups, and collaboration with other communities. A network of local businesses that welcome and encourage and support each other would be ideal.

Trades and construction: There continues to be work for electricians e.g. heat pumps, solar installations, wiring of new houses as well as the usual repairs and renovations that require electrical work. The entire construction industry is alive and well, with tradespeople often coming over to Quadra from Vancouver Island to meet the demand. Tradespeople on Quadra are also finding work on Cortes Island.

Training for employment and business:

- Education is really important to being successful.

“Education’s key. People have to learn, they have to gain skills, trades, all these kinds of things.”
- It is possible to make more money when you have more training and experience e.g. in the trades.
- North Island College runs a trades program in Campbell River, one of the only post-secondary programs close to Quadra.
- April Point Resort could be turned into a training hub.
- A survey could be done to catalogue all of the businesses that exist on Quadra their learning and training needs (like the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce has done).
- Mentorship and coaching could be provided through a business incubator that taps into the local expertise on the island. Topics could include:
 - How to get started - establishing your reputation, learning the business, working hard
 - Capacity-building
 - Business ethics
 - Finding efficiencies

- How to make a profit
- Systems
- Succession planning

“Quadra's strengths are its people. We have a wealth of very knowledgeable individuals that can be considered experts in their field. Imagine if we tapped into that knowledge, shared that expertise through a business incubator program. Most people want to have their own business but need the encouragement and/or confidence to move forward and take that step.”

- Efforts could be made to pass on some of the key skills that keep our community going, both in terms of skills needed for income, skills required of volunteers, and skills needed to live a rural life e.g. gardening, carpentry.
- Good interpersonal skills are essential, especially at the leadership level, and can be learned through training.
- Business acumen skills are very important for people running businesses.

Value-added products: Value-added products could be produced on Quadra instead of just shipping raw materials off island, for example, using wood for wood carving, furniture making, and house construction.

Work from home and remote work: Quadra is a good place to live for people who want to have a home-based business or work remotely for an employer, and want to get out of the city. This can be improved through things like good childcare and reliable internet.

Tourism Solutions

Communication with tourists: A new website for Quadra could be used to promote Quadra businesses and share other information about Quadra with tourists (and residents). Another option would be updating the existing privately owned www.discoveryislands.ca website. Maps are an important tool as well, for sharing information about the island, promoting local businesses, and raising money (through sale of the map) for local causes.

Education of tourists: Education of tourists would be useful, for example, about “Quadra ethics,” where to put “waste”, etc. This could happen through maps of Quadra, on a Quadra info website, and at a virtual and/or in person tourist information centre.

Educational experiences: Educational tourism/tours are what people want. Any number of things could be offered as educational experiences for tourists, even how to garden and make compost tea. This could be extended to educational experiences for students, for example, as part of the science curriculum or university studies.

Retreats and weddings: Quadra could become a premier destination for leadership/board/staff and wellness retreats. It has a number of accommodation options that include kitchen and meeting space, and there are many activities and services available that could be incorporated into

the retreat. Quadra is already a popular wedding destination, and this could be expanded to include transportation and various services and tours for guests during their stay.

Quadra is an eco-tourism hub: Most tourists come to Quadra to do outdoor activities. The tourists tend to be fit, active people, but not always. The nature of eco-tourism is highly seasonal. Those activities include walking, hiking, golf, kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, cycling, and scuba diving. Quadra could become a mecca for mountain biking. Bike tours could also be a popular attraction. The diversity of things to do here is very high (everything except snow sports), we just need to discover and market it to potential customers.

Other reasons to visit Quadra:

- Arts and Culture (see section on Arts and Culture)
- Events
- Music
- “Iconic” Quadra traditions e.g. hike and then go to the HBI for poutine; kayak and go out for a nice dinner at Gowland Harbour; go to the market and then go out for Fish and Chips at Coveside. What other traditions do residents and tourists have when they come here?
- What other things can we come up with? For example, Tofino “invented” storm watching.

Benefits of tourism: Tourists are big supporters of buying local. Tourists are willing to donate to help local groups, like the Trails Committee. They have no problem paying \$20 for a \$5 map. Tourism is an easier business to get into because capital requirements can be low e.g. walking tours.

Tourism requires management: The tourism industry on Quadra needs to be managed a bit better in order to prevent “over-tourism.” One strategy for making tourism more sustainable would be to reduce the numbers of tourists and increase the spending per tourist. This has been the strategy of ecologically sensitive places that have limited capacity for tourists like Fogo Island.

Theme 6: Building Stronger Connections between Indigenous and Settler Communities

The idea of building stronger connections between the Indigenous and settler communities was woven throughout the interview conversations and has been separated out as its own theme in order to highlight just how many ideas emerged. Please also see the Values theme which includes the Kwakwaka’wakw value of awi’nakola which means “being one with the land, the air, the sea, and the spirit realm” and is key to understanding Indigenous culture and community on Quadra.

Bridging the Gap with Better Communication and a Closer Connection: The idea of “bridging the gap” between the Indigenous community and the settler community on Quadra was a discussion point in almost all of the interviews. There were various suggestions for how to work on doing this through communication and connection:

- Listening to Indigenous stories and truths will build “compassion and understanding.”
- “Understanding the hard truths of colonization and the multi-generational impacts throughout First Nations communities is critical to relationship building.”
- The settler community attending We Wai Kai events and ceremonies: “*Everyone [is] always welcome.*”
- Getting the word out early and inviting We Wai Kai members to participate in community events in the way that they are comfortable with, be it making a speech or providing music or what works for them, e.g. at May Day, Fall Fair, and Canada Day celebrations.
- Shared community events and being more active in the Cape Mudge community will build trust and connections e.g. holding community feasts together.
- Shared projects, like this one, or a community woodworking shop, will build relationships and trust.
- More conversation with and learning from Indigenous community members.
- Understanding that Cape Mudge is “*essentially a village of elders*” and “*lives change as we get to those advanced ages and priorities shift.*”
- Asking the We Wai Kai Nation for their input and support on projects and ventures: “*If people are approaching the Nation for their input and support...I think it goes a long way...It all boils down to some of that reconciliation that everyone's trying to do these days.*”
- Letting the We Wai Kai know what is going on: “*It's nice to know what goes on in the area and within the territory.*”

Ensuring Indigenous Cultures, Histories & Language are Reflected in Quadra's

Economy & Community Life: The suggestions here came from the We Wai Kai and are all things that they would like to see:

- Signage of place names in Kwak'wala
- Signage with information about Indigenous history
- A yearly event celebrating Indigenous culture: “*I think there could definitely be a weekend a year where people can experience our local history and culture, whether it's dancing or speaking about...what we call our Nuyumbalees, our beginning stories.*”
- Quadra residents having the opportunity to attend Indigenous events and ceremonies: “*I think really having that opportunity for everybody who lives on Quadra to be able to experience our local history and our language and culture.*”
- Finding a way to ensure that the Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre is properly funded and is open regular hours for all to visit.
- Teaching traditional and cultural practices to Indigenous children.
- There was also a suggestion by several non-Indigenous interviewees that they would like to see more Indigenous tourism businesses operating on Quadra, for example, cultural tours.

Exploring Economic Partnership Potential: While there were not many suggestions here, the potential is certainly there for ideas to emerge.

- One opportunity that was suggested was that there could be educational and training programs in the community led by Indigenous people, for example, *“harvesting local plants and trees for health and wellness along with a second program that provides wilderness training.”*
- Increased employment in forestry might be a possible way to work together, although this is tricky with increased mechanization and the current tariffs.

“The We Wai Kai Nation have two woodlots on the island, and they also have a forestry logging company which operates on the island... It would be great to see more local employment, building secondary jobs with island forests.”

- A community woodworking workshop to share space and tools, as well as skills and cultural practices (as suggested in the Arts and Culture section, under Theme 5: Solutions and Ideas).
- The We Wai Kai Nation is always open to new opportunities for partnerships: *“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.”*

Theme 7: Community Connections

Finally, the theme of Community Connections came up over and over again in the interviews and while it is woven throughout the other themes, as has been shown in this report, it also deserves to be a theme unto itself.

“People sometimes just need people, right? Like, they need that network of people around them.”

- Community theatre is a great way for people to connect with each other and with the community in the audience.

“That’s the great thing about theatre, all this camaraderie is created because you’re doing something together, not for money, but for the fun of creating communal art in rehearsal, and then you get to share it with the rest of the island.”
- Community Feasts could be held each spring and fall, with one being at the Quadra Community Centre and one at the Cape Mudge Hall, so that the whole community goes to each one.
- Newcomer Welcome events are a great way to connect new people to the community.
- Business networking events are helpful for business people to get to know each other and get their names out into the community.
- “Community conversations” that have the intention of bringing people together to talk about various things, both serious issues and more light-hearted topics. These conversations could

help community members to hear and understand each other better, and lead to decision-making that is for the collective good.

Conclusion

The qualitative interviews represent a key component of the data collection process for the Economic Diversification Plan for Quadra Island. While the survey and community workshops helped us to explore the breadth of thoughts and ideas in the community, the interviews enabled us to explore the depths and look at ideas and issues more intensely in order to enhance our understanding of different perspectives within the community and provide an overall sense of the community's voice. The rich insights will be incorporated into the Roadmap for Quadra Island for the years ahead.

Appendix - Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interview Questions for Key Knowledge Holders

This interview guide is semi-structured and intended to guide the interviewer to ask the questions most relevant to the person being interviewed and their background and experience. Interviewer judgement of which questions to ask will also be based on time, rapport, and topics already covered. However, all questions in Section 1 and 2 must be asked.

Section 1: Consent Confirmation:

1. Do I have your permission to record this conversation?

Section 2: Demographic and Contextual Questions:

1. Can you tell me your name and your role or connection to Quadra Island?
2. How long have you lived on or been involved with Quadra Island?
3. What sector(s) do you feel you represent or are most involved in?
4. Which age group do you fall into?
5. Would you like to self-identify in any way, such as cultural identity, gender, Indigenous affiliation, or newcomer status?

Section 3: Opening Questions on Economic Diversification:

1. What values do you think should guide economic decisions on Quadra Island?
2. Are there Indigenous practices, values, or ways of relating to the land and community that you think could guide Quadra's economic future?
3. When you hear the term 'economic diversification,' what does it mean to you — especially here on Quadra Island? OR Imagine a thriving local economy here—what does it look like to you?
4. What do you feel are the biggest economic challenges facing Quadra Island right now? OR From your experience, what's missing from the local economy that would help support [insert sector e.g. trades and skilled work] here?
5. What strengths or assets does Quadra already have that could support a more resilient or sustainable economy? OR What's already working well on Quadra that we could build on to create a stronger economy?
6. In your view, what kind of future should we be planning for when it comes to the island's economy? What kind of work do you want to see more of on Quadra? What would a thriving Quadra look like to you in 10 or 20 years?

Section 4: Core Interview Questions – Four Dimensions Framework:

A. Economic Dimension

Focus: Jobs, local business, affordability, housing, energy, infrastructure

1. What are some of the key sectors or economic activities that you believe should be strengthened or supported on Quadra Island?
2. What are some of the challenges or barriers you see for people starting or sustaining a business here, and are there supports that help?
3. What would a strong, diverse economy look like for Quadra Island? If you had to describe a healthy economy here in 10 years, what would be happening? What kinds of work would be available? Who would benefit?
4. Are there opportunities for economic partnerships or initiatives that respectfully include or are led by Indigenous people on Quadra?

B. Environmental Dimension

Focus: Land use, climate, transportation, water, forestry, stewardship

1. How do you see the natural environment shaping Quadra's economic future? What role should nature play in future planning? What do we need to protect? Are there Indigenous ways of caring for the land or water that could inform how we shape sustainable economic choices here?
2. Are there ways that economic development could support, rather than harm, environmental goals?
3. Looking ahead, how can Quadra balance economic growth with environmental sustainability? OR Looking ahead, do you see any opportunities for both a healthy economy and a healthy environment to go hand in hand? Imagine Quadra in 2040 — how has the economy adapted to environmental realities like climate change, forest health, or water systems?

C. Social-Cultural Dimension

Focus: Community connection, inclusion, youth, arts, culture, equity

1. How can Indigenous knowledge, values, and leadership shape the future of Quadra's economy? Are there ways we could collaborate more deeply?
2. What kinds of social or cultural supports are needed to make economic life more accessible or fair for everyone on Quadra? OR What kind of supports would help everyone on Quadra have a fair shot at making a living and being part of the economy?
3. How can arts, culture, or education contribute to the island's economic resilience?
4. How can we ensure that Indigenous cultures, histories, and languages are reflected in the future of Quadra's economy and community life?

5. What would a culturally rich, socially connected Quadra economy look like? OR Can you picture an economy on Quadra that celebrates local culture and brings people together? What does that look like to you? If Quadra's economy reflected its community identity, what would that look and feel like?

D. Psychological / Well-being Dimension

Focus: Belonging, safety, mental health, creativity, confidence, identity

1. What role do mental health, safety, and a sense of belonging play in the health of the local economy? OR How do things like mental health, feeling safe, and feeling like you belong affect the local economy? OR What do people need—emotionally and socially—to be able to work, start a business, or contribute to the local economy?
2. How can economic planning support overall well-being, not just income or jobs?
3. What would a well-being-centered economy look like for this community? Imagine an economy designed for human flourishing, what would change? What would we protect or invest in?
4. In what ways can healing, respect, and cultural safety be part of the economic future we're building here, particularly for Indigenous community members?

Section 5: Cross-Cutting and Future-Oriented Questions:

1. Where do you see the biggest opportunities for economic diversification that align with Quadra's values and identity? What are we ready for now? What are we missing?
2. Is there an idea from another place (island, rural community, etc.) that you think Quadra could learn from or adapt? Are there models or opportunities that Quadra is ready for, possibly inspired by other island or rural communities?
3. Do you see any tensions between community values and economic goals? How should we navigate those tensions?
4. What does meaningful collaboration with Indigenous partners look like in the context of economic planning?
5. Who should lead or support economic diversification on Quadra?
6. How can we make sure this process is inclusive and benefits the whole community?

Section 6: Wrap-up and Final Reflections:

1. Is there anything we haven't asked that you think is important for us to understand about Quadra Island's future economy?
2. Do you have any advice for how we can make this planning process as useful and grounded as possible for the community?
3. Are there other people you think we should speak with?