

CLAYOQUOT ALLIANCE PROJECT PROPOSAL

BRIAN KOPACH
M.SC. CANDIDATE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

INTRODUCTION

Scientific research work seldom has immediate benefit to people who live in the rural areas where such research often takes place. There are several reasons for this. First, science works in long slow strides, creating and testing new knowledge, generally in technical journals and in the halls of distant university campuses, quite separate from the community setting. Second there is often no forum for science-community communication and interaction. Third, the training of young scientists often neglects most aspects of teaching.

The project that I currently lead for the Whale Research Lab, directed by Dr. Dave Duffus from the Department of Geography, is in its 10th year of operation. The central theme of the project is to understand the ecological and anthropogenic variables that influence the distribution and abundance of gray whales in Clayoquot Sound. In an effort to synthesize and distribute this information I am asking the Clayoquot Alliance for support in creating a plain language workbook to be used by high school students in the communities of Clayoquot Sound.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

With access to the knowledge gained over the last decade of working with the whales in the Sound I intend to create a workbook-style manual that incorporates text, graphics and pictures describing the research the Whale Lab has carried out. The material will be aimed towards senior secondary students, primarily because ecology is synthetic and requires a bit of understanding in a number of subject areas, and is generally introduced in senior biology classes.

The workbook will include reading material that describes the specific subject matter – gray whales and their environment – but also leads into the introduction of new

general terms and concepts. It will also include lab work with maps, prey specimens and photographic material.

Gray whales are also an important element of the history and living culture of the First Nations groups in the Clayoquot Sound region. Chief Earl George, of the Ahousaht First Nation, wrote his Master's thesis on the traditional uses of marine resources with Dr. Dave Duffus. Information from that study will be incorporated as the traditional ecological knowledge component of the workbook.

Work for this project will require time for the compilation of material, layout and graphic design of the workbook as well as printing and distribution to the schools in the Clayoquot Sound region. At this time I am estimating a December 1, 2002 deadline for completion of the workbook. Costs associated with this project are outlined in the budget (see following page) and include items such as printing, binding, graphic design work, and travel stipends for information gathering and consultation trips to Clayoquot Sound. I will also be looking for additional funding to help offset the costs of this project.

This is an innovative project in that science researchers are translating parts of the often complex and "hidden" world of science to a larger audience. It will give senior secondary students a means to learn about the ecological and cultural environment they live in while providing other interested students, teachers or members of the community a plain language document for learning purposes. The development of knowledge by communities working interactively with scientists is a crucial link given the complex management issues faced by communities, such as Tofino, BC, now that non-consumptive resource use has become a major part of local economies through activities such as whale watching.