

April 8th, 2021

Heather Paul
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RE: UBCM Communities' Strengthening Grant for 2021

It is with great pleasure that I provide this letter of support to the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) in their application for a grant to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Communities Strengthening grant.

As Executive Director of the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (SLCC), I see every day, first hand, the important role that supporting the mental health and housing needs of Indigenous youth and adults plays in building strong, diverse, resilient communities.

In the last few years, we have witnessed and supported staff from both the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations as they balance mental health, sobriety and housing with meaningful employment in Whistler's tourism industry. As Indigenous youth and adults become inspired to explore their options to work in and potentially move into the Whistler community, many of the challenges they face are about successfully accessing culturally aware and diverse local resources. The SLCC has a vision that sees Indigenous staff strengthen their skills and connection to the shared territory that Whistler is built on, and become part of the ongoing evolution and diverse landscape of this globally recognized town. Recognizing and accommodating their different cultural needs when it comes to mental health and emergency housing is part of that vision. We also believe that making some Indigenous programming available to all members of society has the potential to elevate the quality of life for the community as a whole.

COVID has brought full attention to the vulnerable needs and barriers Indigenous people in the province face, and the emotional tax taken on individuals when health and community services are not built with an Indigenous lens. The proposed (UBCM) Communities Strengthening grant will greatly assist in creating a future that bridges the current barriers, saves lives, and redefines individual safety and community relationships. We are excited to see this project move forward.

It is with utmost support that we provide this letter. Best of luck on your funding application and please do let us know the outcome.

Heather Paul

**Heather Paul, Executive Director
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