



HOMALCO
Wildlife & Cultural Tours

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HOMALCO WILDLIFE & CULTURAL TOURS ANNOUNCES EXPANSION FOR 2021 SEASON

Campbell River, BC (March 10, 2021) — Today, the Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours organization, an Indigenous community-owned business, announces its expansion plans for 2021. In spring of this year, the 20-year-old ecotourism organization will be opening a new Homalco Adventure Centre in Campbell River, launching two new, state-of-the-art adventure tour vessels and introducing a new *Whales, Wildlife and Culture* tour.

According to Tourism Development Officer for Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours (HWCT), JP Obbagy, “After a long year of restricted business, we are really looking forward to an exciting spring of substantial expansions for our organization.” Despite pandemic-related supply chain delays, he confirms the buildout of the Centre, manufacturing of the watercrafts and tour staffing are underway. He adds, “As we move forward, we are integrating the highest possible standard of covid-19 safety protocols into all aspects of these operations.”

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The Homalco Adventure Centre will be located in the Discovery Harbour Mall at 1344 Island Highway in Campbell River, adjacent to the Coastal Community Credit Union. Designed to

immerse visitors in First Nations culture at the outset, the Centre's contemporary Indigenous design will feature art from various local First Nation artists, guidebooks and more.

A defining component of the HWCT tours will be two, new, landing craft boats that offer *Adventure Seating* featuring zodiac-style, fresh-air seats and *Comfort Seating* providing protection inside the cozy cabin. Obbagy emphasizes, "Safety is our number one priority, and we are employing the expertise of the best mariners in the business to ensure we've identified and addressed all vessel safety concerns."

The new *Whales, Wildlife and Culture* tour expands the expertise of HWCT's team with the addition of marine naturalists, skippers and Indigenous guides. Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours Marketing & Social Media Coordinator Chyanne Trenholm describes the tour as "something totally unique on the Island. We now have the ability to bring whales and other marine life into our realm of exploration. Of course, the Homalco cultural experience is always a unique part of all our tours, and our new boats will allow us access to land-based activities."

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While covid-19 international restrictions will likely still be in effect, Tour Coordinator for Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours Shirley Badger is confident that the tours will continue to fill. "We have seen tremendous interest in Indigenous tourism from our domestic market and our own provincial residents who are passionate about wildlife, culture and the natural beauty to be found in the Territory of the Homalco."

“All of this great news spells progress for the Homalco First Nation,” says Chief Darren Blaney. “While covid-19 is still a factor for the foreseeable future, our Homalco First Nation is ready to welcome visitors again, for now, and as long as we deem it safe to do so. With this expansion great things can happen: knowledge of our culture and appreciation for our environment can be shared with a larger audience and more of our people can be hired and their skills developed. I believe our tour company will continue to help in healing, creating resilience and building a bright future for our people.”

More information regarding the Grand Opening of the Adventure Centre and the *Whales, Wildlife and Culture* tour will be announced in the coming weeks. To find out more about HWCT, visit www.homalcotours.com.

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Homalco Tours delivers sustainable, award-winning cultural, wildlife and nature experiences with an authentic Indigenous perspective. Tours include exploration of the land and waters of Homalco Territory, namely Bute Inlet which boasts spectacular wilderness and some of North America’s most sought-after wildlife, including grizzly bears, salmon, eagles and whales.