



# HAICO WORLD INDIGENOUS BASKETBALL CHALLENGE SCORES A SUCCESS

The Skidegate Saints shared their passion for basketball on a global stage this summer, jumpstarting a new event that attracted thousands of spectators and displayed Haida Gwaii's culture, hospitality and sportsmanship to the world.

The first-ever HaiCo World Indigenous Basketball Challenge was held from August 10-13 at the Simon Fraser University campus in Burnaby, with additional games played in Skidegate both before and after the tournament. The idea for the tournament grew out of the Saints' 2015 visit to New Zealand, where they had been invited to play the Maori National Team. After the Maori team committed to coming to Haida Gwaii this year, the Saints came up with the idea of hosting a larger tournament and inviting indigenous teams from around the world to compete.

Dave Wahl, secretary general of the Skidegate Saints and one of the tournament organizers, called it a huge success. "Sixteen teams from around the world participated in the basketball tournament and each team shared aspects of their culture through song, dance, speechmaking and sharing of ideas and goals," he wrote to the Gwaii Trust. "In total, 2,500 fans came

to watch games and an additional 23,000 (unique) viewers watched games online. All of these online viewers watched commercials promoting Haida Gwaii business and tourism... All 16 teams want to enter again next year and we have dozens of teams contacting us from around the world including the national teams of Botswana, Ghana, Palestine and Cayman Islands."

The Saints applied for a \$10,000 Community Innovation grant to help cover some of the expenses of putting on this major event, and we were pleased to approve their application. Our Community Innovation grants are designed to help non-profit organizations and local governments fund community projects, and can provide up to \$10,000 in matching funds. The basketball challenge shared many of the Gwaii Trust's goals and objectives, including the promotion of the cultural and economic health of our community, and fostering a spirit of cooperation, cultural understanding and trust.

For more information about our grant programs, visit our website at gwaiitrust.com, or drop in to our offices in Old Massett or Skidegate.

