OVERVIEW

The Marine Education and Research Society (MERS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting conservation and understanding of marine ecosystems through scientific research, environmental education, and marine wildlife response. We are based in Port McNeill, on northeastern Vancouver Island, British Columbia in the Territory of the Kwakwala-speaking People. For more information about MERS’ research, education and wildlife response efforts, see www.mersociety.org.

MERS is seeking a Research Director to further and expand our conservation-based research program that helps fill critical data gaps and provides important insights into ways to reduce threats to marine life and ecosystems. In collaboration with MERS’ Science Lead, the Research Director will oversee the daily operation of research for the Marine Education and Research Society including direction, ensuring scientific rigor, and publishing and promoting findings. As one of the senior Directors, they will also contribute significantly to developing strategic direction, organization administration, fundraising and human resources. The Research Director supports, mentors and supervises Research Assistants, Graduate Students and Research Associates. As an organization that tightly marries research with education, the role will also have an outward facing component assisting with training, outreach, contributing to communications and media opportunities, and engaging with stakeholders and the public.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

Strategic, scientific and technical leadership

- Works closely with MERS’ Science Lead to develop research questions, methodologies, and publications;
- Develops and implements new research projects aligned with MERS’ mission, addressing conservation needs and scientific data gaps;
- Supports or co-leads MERS’ current research projects alongside the Science Lead including:
  - Monthly line transect surveys
  - Humpback aerial scar study
  - Entanglement risk analysis
- Humpback population studies
- Provides training and mentorship to Research Assistants and Graduate Students to further MERS’ impact and mission;
- Provides support to the Canadian Pacific Humpback Collaboration;
- Secures strategic partnerships and collaborations to increase reach and scope of research projects and conservation outcomes;
- Plays a lead role in maintaining MERS’ credibility in the regional and global research and conservation communities;
- Shares findings with the greater research community by publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and presenting at conferences and relevant meetings;
- Stays up to date on current cetacean and other marine research globally and locally; ensures projects are using best methods, practices and technologies;
- Evaluates MERS’ research to ensure our work aligns with the organization’s strategic plan, ethics, and goals, as well as addresses current conservation needs or data gaps.

Engagement

- In conjunction with the Director of Communications, shares findings with the public through MERS’ communication channels (social media, newsletter, blog, etc), public outreach, presentations and the media;
- Works closely with community members and marine users to facilitate and promote citizen science;
- Increases capacity for marine mammal monitoring, research and response coast-wide by supporting training workshops for First Nations, Government employees, ecotourism naturalists and additional stakeholders;
- Helps foster community in the Northern Vancouver Island and BC marine mammal viewing sector by participating in learning events, meetings, workshops;
- Primary relationship holder with strategic research partners and collaborators, including First Nations, academia, industry, government and other NGOs;
- Serves on committees and provides input from MERS’ perspective;
- Ensures all MERS staff are kept up to date and informed on MERS’ research findings.

Resourcing and Project Management

- Develops research budgets and closely tracks spending;
● Works closely with the Directors of Development and Operations on funding applications and grant administration;
● Supports other fundraising activities including capital campaigns that benefit research activities;
● Ensures all projects have the necessary equipment and capacity to be completed;
● Monitors research operation and activities to ensure that policies and procedures are followed, and that projects are accomplished efficiently and cost-effectively; taking corrective action as necessary;
● Ensures that all health and safety policies are considered and followed in research activities, including ensuring all staff have correct training;
● Reports to Board regularly on research activities;
● In conjunction with other Senior Directors, hires and manages external research contractors when appropriate;
● Writes, reviews and/or executes data sharing and research agreements.

Human Resources and Team Building

● Works collaboratively with other Senior Directors to ensure solid, unified leadership for the organization;
● Works collaboratively with MERS leadership to hire research staff;
● Trains and supervises research staff;
● Provides scientific support to MERS Graduate Students and Research Associates;
● Works with other Senior Directors to develop and enact solid Human Resource policies;
● Establishes work plans with performance objectives/goals, reviewing progress throughout the year, and completes formal performance reviews for direct reports as required;
● Contributes actively to creating a supportive, collaborative, encouraging and cohesive work environment, including the planning and execution of team building activities and prioritizing mentorship and staff professional development;
● Fosters trust and creates and maintains a safe space for dialogue that is inclusive of all.

QUALIFICATIONS

Education, Experience, Skills

● MSc or PhD in a related field or BSc and 10+ years related work experience;
● 10 years of experience in marine conservation or a related field highly desirable;
● Proven experience leading research teams and field projects with minimal supervision;
● Solid knowledge of British Columbian cetaceans, their conservation and the BC marine mammal research community;
● Excellent leadership, communication and mentorship skills; experience supervising students and/or staff;
● Excellent writing skills, including experience with publishing in scientific journals and science communications for public audiences;
● Experience with procurement and management of program funding;
● Demonstrable experience in working collaboratively with other researchers, government agencies, conservation groups, First Nations, and/or other stakeholders and knowledge holders;
● Good public speaking skills and successful experience in providing presentations to diverse audiences and speaking confidently in media interviews;
● Boat and marine mammal fieldwork skills and certifications (SVOP, MED, RCOC, Marine First Aid);
● Experience with R, Photo Mechanic, Filemaker, Adobe Photoshop, and GIS software.

**Working Conditions**

The successful candidate will spend significant field time working from Northern Vancouver Island. Candidates willing to relocate to Northern Vancouver Island are preferred, however a combination of time in the area plus remote working when not in the field may be accepted. They will spend time on small research vessels and will experience cramped conditions, engine noise, rough seas and cold, damp weather. They may travel locally, nationally and internationally to attend conferences, meetings, presentations, and may conduct field research in remote areas - potentially requiring consecutive days/weeks away. The successful candidate must be able to work irregular/long hours on occasion, including evenings, weekends, and holidays when needed.

**Diversity Equity and Inclusion**

The Marine Education and Research Society is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We do not make hiring or employment decisions on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, ethnic or national origin. We encourage
those with necessary qualifications that self-identify as belonging to underrepresented groups to apply as diversity will be prioritized.

**Salary**

Salary range $55,000-$65,000, plus health and dental benefits and ~4 weeks of paid time off/year to start

**Application Procedure**

Please send an academic CV and cover letter that outlines your research interests and how they align with MERS goals and values, your experience working within a small organization and your leadership skills. Short-listed applicants will be asked to provide three references.

Applications should be submitted to info@mersociety.org. Please label all your attached documents with lastnameFirstname

Applications will be reviewed starting Dec 15, 2023; posting may be extended in the search of the right candidate.