

Ladysmith Chamber Year in Review 2019/20

Major Projects:

1. Ladysmith Investment Attraction Website and App:

- a) This is was the next step in a process that started back in 2018 and is being managed by a diverse collection of organizations operating informally under the banner of the Ladysmith Partnership for a Vibrant Economy.
- b) Partnership Members include the Town of Ladysmith, Stz'uminus First Nation, Chamber of Commerce, Ladysmith Downtown Business Association, Cowichan Economic Development, Community Futures and the Nanaimo Airport.
- c) The project involved the creation and launch of two websites (TourismLadysmith.ca and Invest Ladysmith.ca) and the Heritage Walking Tour and Investment App. These investment tools were made possible by a significant contribution from Island Coastal Economic Trust, the federal Digital Skills for Youth program, as well as contributions from each of the partners. The websites and app were officially launched on June 10th. In response to the pandemic we were also able to pivot the InvestLadysmith.ca website to also include the "Open for Business Online Directory". The Directory was designed to highlight businesses that are open and any practices they are implementing to adjust to the pandemic.
- d) The Chamber of Commerce was the lead agency in this project (with a lot of help from Amy Melmock and Barry O'Riordan from Cowichan Economic Development) but the real strength of the initiative was, and continues to be, from the buy-in from everyone participating in the Partnership for a Vibrant Local Economy.

2. Economic Development and Tourism Support Services:

- a) Effective July 1, 2020 the Town of Ladysmith has contracted the Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce to provide Economic Development and Tourism Support Services. One of the primary responsibilities of this contract is to maintain the previously mentioned Tourism and Investment Tools on an ongoing basis. The contract also involves some administrative oversight of the Partnership for a Vibrant Economy (formalising that group a little bit) and managing a small destination marketing fund.
- b) In response to the acquisition of this contract the Executive Director applied and was accepted to sit on the Marketing Committee for Tourism Cowichan representing Community Organizations (Chambers, BIA's etc.) The Chamber also has a voting seat on the Tourism Cowichan Board representing the 4 - Cowichan Chamber Alliance (Board Director Andrea Rosato-Taylor holds this position).
- c) We've been able to leverage this contract to acquire a student through the Canada Summer Jobs Grant (despite the fact that it's not summer anymore). The program has been given more flexibility in response to the pandemic and has allowed us to hire Chelsea Kensall as a Marketing Coordinator. Chelsea will be working 20 hours per week from now until early December.

3. Policy Development

- a) The Ladysmith Chamber have cowritten 3 policies over the past few years that have been submitted and unanimously accepted by the BC Chamber of Commerce at their annual AGM and Policy Conference. Policies have dealt with WorkSafe BC surplus, impacts of fishing closures on recreation fishing industry, and derelict vessels.
- b) In July 2019 the Chamber President participated in a face-to-face conference with provincial representatives (primarily deputy ministers) to discuss Chamber Policies.
- c) Then on Dec 4th, 2019 you Chamber President participated in BC Chamber Lunch with Premier event. She was assigned a seat at the Minister of Finance table and was asked to be the host for the table. Tammy reports that this was an amazing experience and Minister James was so interesting to talk with. They discussed efficiencies around the PST system and Tammy has since communicated with her via email re:....

4. Relocation and Resource Guide

In partnership with the Ladysmith Chronicle we produced a new Relocation and Resource guide – a publication for those newly relocated and those considering relocation. It's been a big hit and far more professional than our old Relocation kits.

Events:

1. **Business Mixers:** have been held at Ladysmith Museum, Waypoint Insurance, Left Coast Fashions and Ironworks Café & Creperie. If you would like to host a mixer once Public Safety measures allow it, please contact Mark or Jacquie – it's a great way to showcase your business to other Chamber members and the community.
2. **Food Truck Program:** Supervised and administered the Food Truck program at Transfer Beach in partnership with the Town of Ladysmith for the third straight summer. After a late start due to Covid, the Food Truck programs was a very popular attraction this summer (again due to Covid).
3. **Golf Tournament:** The 2019 version of the Golf Classic was very successful and the Chamber owes a huge thank you to our two tournament sponsors **Re/Max** and **Nanaimo Airport** and an even bigger thank you to our Title Sponsor Ladysmith & District Credit Union. An added feature was the awesome video of the event by Dean Richards, myladysmith.com. Unfortunately, the 2020 version of the Golf Tournament had to be cancelled due to the pandemic and we hope to be back on the course in June 2021.
4. **Fall Speaker Series:** The very popular, and well received, Fall Speaker Series featured three presenters over three separate events: Val Litwin, CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce; Mayor Aaron Stone; and Colin Sprake, business coach and mentor. Proudly sponsored once again by the Ladysmith & District Credit Union and thanks to In the Beantime and Microtel for their support catering and hosting these events.

5. **All Candidates Forum:** We hosted the Federal All-Candidates Meeting at Aggie Hall in early October. Co-sponsored by the Town of Ladysmith, the Chronicle, Island Pigasus and Myladysmith.com (who added live video component for viewing on YouTube for people who were unable to attend). We are currently working out the details for a Provincial All-Candidates Forum and details will be released soon via the Chamber website, Social Media channels and the media.
6. **Tour de Rock:** The Chamber proudly sponsored the Tour de Rock's "Adopt a Rider Program" for the second straight year.
7. **Christmas Social:** The Chamber & LDBA hosted their 3rd Annual Christmas Social at Cottonwood. Thank you to **Glen Naylor Financial Group** for sponsoring this popular annual event. Stay tuned if the event will happen in 2020 – it seems doubtful, but we'll make that decision in the next few weeks.
8. **Chamber Week and our 90th Birthday Party:** The Chamber & the Ladysmith Historical Society joined to celebrate Chamber Week and Heritage Week at the Museum on Feb 20th, 2020. The Chamber turned 90 years old this year but unfortunately Covid threw a wet blanket on most of the planned festivities. We'll come back bigger and better for our Centennial celebration in 10 years!
9. **Hot August Nights:** A series of events designed to encourage and raise awareness of the importance of shopping local. Businesses were encouraged to stay open late from 5 – 7pm every Thursday evening during the month of August. The public was invited down through a comprehensive media blitz. The evenings were augmented with some art displays and a DJ. Hot August Nights was organized in partnership with the Chamber, the LDBA and the Ladysmith Arts Council and was made possible by a Grant in Aid from the Town of Ladysmith.

Pandemic Response:

The office of the Ladysmith Visitor Centre and Chamber of Commerce temporarily closed due to the Covid-19 Emergency on March 18th. We continued to provide Chamber and Visitor servicing and Chamber Communications online and be a resource for information through social media, newsletter, and by email and phone. We worked hard to sift through the myriad of information that was coming out in the early days of the pandemic to find the pieces that were important for business and to pass that information along to our membership through our various communication channels.

After going it alone for several weeks, we joined forces with a number of other Cowichan-based groups under the banner of "Buy Local Cowichan". The goals of this group were to provide relevant resources, tools and information about funding and grants for the Cowichan Valley business community during the COVID-19 crisis. The group also aimed to encourage local residents to shop local and to inform them of what businesses were open and how they were operating in response to the pandemic.

The office reopened at the end of June and beginning July 1st we were able to once again open daily for the summer with help from a Canada Summer Jobs grant that allowed us to hire Clifton Tollefson.

The Chamber is managing to keep afloat through the pandemic despite losing all our fundraising capacity due to our being able to qualify for the Canada Wage Subsidy Program.

We're now back to our regular off-season hours which are Mon – Fri 10am to 4pm.