



Tuesday, November 01, 2016

Dear Business Owner:

As we approach the time of year when the Chamber of Commerce prepares its annual Membership Renewals I thought I'd summarize just what we've been up to over the past year or more.

In so doing we hope that this list of accomplishments will assist you in understanding the reasons why the Chamber of Commerce is so important to the Business Community.

As current non-member of the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce we invite you to review the points below and then consider a Membership with us so that we can continue to support the Business Community in Port Alberni through these and other ongoing initiatives.

- AVCOC initiated a very unique Shop Local Program in 2013 that is now being mimicked by others, including Victoria. Christmas season 2015 saw \$7500.00 distributed via the Chamber of Commerce to local shoppers including a grand prize of \$2500.00. Nearly 60 local businesses participated. (\$1500.00 Via the Chamber, \$6000.00 via the participating businesses).

- AVCOC runs successful monthly Dinner Meetings 9 times per year. Through 2016 each and every meeting has been a sell-out with at least 50 people in attendance. Typical Dinner Meetings feature 3 Guest Speakers most of whom receive high approval ratings from the attendees.

- The Civic Affairs Committee of the Chamber is highly respected by the City of Port Alberni and is always consulted on matters of importance. The CA Committee meets monthly, sets its own agenda, and often presents the City and/or other levels of Government with different ideas.

- AVCOC now runs the largest and most successful annual event in Port Alberni with the Community Excellence Awards. Typically held in April the ceremony draws upwards of 250 people to a luxury event aimed at honouring the Best of the Best in the Alberni Valley. Some 18 awards were handed out on April 22, 2016. The ceremony in 2017 has a 'RED' theme and already promises to be the biggest and best yet.

- In May of 2016 AVCOC showcased the No. 7 Challenge – a 10k run vs. the Steam Train. The event in 2016 saw more than 200 people register with more than \$14,000.00 collected in various revenues.

- The success of the No. 7 Challenge has morphed into a new event for 2017 called the Tri-Conic Challenge. That event was presented to the City as a feature event for the

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Canada 150 celebrations and from there we applied to the Federal Government for funding. AVCOC was successful in our bid and is now working hard to promote the entire Alberni Valley through this creative 'Build your own' event over the Canada Day weekend in 2017. AVCOC is working with a budget of nearly \$250,000.00 to give you an idea of the size and complexity of this event. Visit us at: www.triconic.ca

- These two events further prompted the Chamber to present an application to the Vancouver Island Race Series to bring back a former 10k run to the Valley. That application was successful meaning that the 'Paper Chase' will be back in Port Alberni on April 2, 2017 where upwards of 600 people will visit the area for a wonderful run.
- AVCOC along with Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot developed a proposal for a Champions of Alberni concept where we suggested a training program for Front Line People in the area. We are pleased to confirm that the City applied for funding for this concept which was accepted. The Chamber will lead this program (Alberni Valley Tourism Training Program) for the next 20 months. A minimum of 300 local people will each receive 5 four hour training sessions aimed at developing them and promoting Port Alberni at the same time.
- AVCOC applied for funding for a major website revamp in 2016 and was successful. We invite you to review our new site – Visitor Services at: www.albernichamber.ca/visitor-info
- AVCOC proposed to the City in both 2015 and 2016 that a sum of \$25,000. Be earmarked for Direct Marketing approaches via Trade Shows. Our request was successful for the 2016 budget. These events are now ongoing with significant input via the Chamber for these.
- AVCOC developed a very impressive local Adventure Map in 2014 which today is in its third edition. The map is distributed widely in the area with more than 20000 copies taken annually. It features creative graphics of more than 75 local businesses along with another 50 or more local sites. Visitors love this product and clearly it leads to additional business for many of our supporters.
- In 2016 AVCOC partnered with a Grade 11 class at ADSS to develop a Restaurant Guide product. The end result is a magazine style format measuring 5 inches by 3.5 (small enough to fit in a purse or hip pocket). The guide features almost 50 different brands covering everything from Fast Food to fine dining establishments. This too is a favourite of our visitors.
- AVCOC in 2015 presented at the BC Chamber of Commerce AGM a plan to eventually eliminate the MSP premium in favour of a more balanced approach via an individual's tax rate. The Government has taken our approach via the BC Chamber of Commerce and appears to be working toward this type of solution.
- In the summer of 2016 AVCOC brought an International Family Circus to Port Alberni as a feature multi-day family event.
- AVCOC is leading the charge with BC Highways on some sort of safety improvement through Cathedral Grove. In the summer of 2015 we commissioned a video production which now resides on our website. The video has been widely distributed to many in the media and public office. Latest word from a high level Highways Employee is that the Government is looking seriously at options that may be available to them.
- The Chamber often writes letters of support for various local initiatives such as the Airport, the Valley Trails and other initiatives.
- The Chamber of Commerce along with the City of Port Alberni recently hosted the Johnston Road Planning Charrette.
- The Chamber of Commerce routinely partners with the District Labour Council to bring Election Forums to the City for the benefit of the public. This will happen again in May 2017 for the next Provincial Election.

- The Chamber of Commerce is currently planning a training session through one of our Members to provide a one day program on Social Media Best Practices. Along with our Chamber Member we have also invited other well-known local experts to assist in the program delivery.
- AVCOC initiated a Mobile Visitor Centre in 2014 which has enabled us to connect with more than twice the number of Visitors of past years. This has helped result in increased business at many of our local establishments.
- AVCOC is currently working with others to bring in a delegate from Destination BC to help educate all in the Tourism Sector on the changes with the MRDT program (Municipal Regional District Tax). This session is likely to occur in early December of 2016.
- AVCOC donated the Carved Focal Point Sign (previously at the Chamber of Commerce) to the City of Port Alberni in 2015. That sign is earmarked to be placed at the Millstone Park (Victoria Quay) which is currently under development.
- AVCOC initiated a local Newsletter in 2013. It is distributed widely among our Members and Non-Members – in fact, anyone who is interested. Today it reaches about 800 local email boxes and is ‘opened’ by more than half of those recipients. Our ‘open rate’ is more than double what experts feel is a target of such productions.
- AVCOC manages a team of close of 50 Volunteers who assist the Chamber and local community through our Ambassador Program. The team of volunteers can be found in many places through the high season in particular. Everyday spots include a presence of four people at Cathedral Grove and another two on the Frances Barkley. Other spots include our Mobile Visitor Centre, Harbour Quay, local Campgrounds and more.
- In 2015 the Chamber invited local businesswoman Cheryl Iwanowsky to expand her Blue Fish Gallery to the Visitor Centre. The result has been tremendous. Many visitors to our location comment that this Visitor Centre is the best they’ve ever seen. Talk about first impressions!
- In 2015 our Visitor Centre operations saw almost 50000 people resulting in an annual increase of over 60%. In 2016 the increase is not as dramatic but numbers continue to trend higher.
- In late 2015 and early 2016 the Executive Director of the Chamber visited the Chambers of Commerce in both Ucluelet and Tofino where he introduced several of Port Alberni’s finer businesses. This was done via a surprise contest where virtually all attendees received a gift certificate from a Port Alberni Business. Feedback was exceptional in both cases.
- The Chamber of Commerce employs a number of vulnerable people through its relationship with the Port Alberni Association for Community Living. These people work primarily on our grounds which I’m sure most would agree look very attractive – again assisting us with the First Impression Model.
- The Chamber of Commerce maintains a strong presence on Social Media in particular through its Facebook presence. www.facebook.com/albernichamber This page was initiated in 2015 and now has about 800 ‘likes’ none of which were ever solicited in any way.
- Through our relationship with the fine folks at the Heart of Vancouver Island we helped to promote a website development program for many of Port Alberni’s businesses. This has led to a number of excellent new sites including our No. 7 Challenge site – www.no7challenge.ca and one for the McLean Mill at: www.albernisteamtrain.ca
- In 2015 the Chamber was successful in changing the host agency for the Chambers Group Insurance Plan to a local Member of the Chamber of Commerce – AV Financial giving us an at home option that we hadn’t enjoyed before.
- The Chamber of Commerce is currently coordinating a meeting between the Port Alberni Port Authority and the CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce with the intent of gaining the full

support of the BC Membership – 36000 businesses for the PATH (Port Alberni Transshipment Hub) program. Meeting is planned for early February 2017.

Today the Chamber of Commerce has a membership list of just over 300 businesses. This gives us a strong presence in the Alberni Valley however we firmly believe that our voice will gain in strength with each and every additional Member to our team. We encourage you to look at our stories over the past year or more so that you can understand just what we're up to on a daily basis. It should be noted that the Chamber of Commerce employ's two people on a FT basis plus another two in PT roles. In addition we have upwards of six people working FT in the Centre during the summer months. Supporting the Staff is a board of 13 committed people who meet monthly to steer the ship.

Other factors that you should be aware of:

- Chamber Executive Director is a Board Member of:
 - McLean Mill Society (pending)
 - Port Alberni Junior Hockey Society (Newsletter production)
 - Part of the Rebranding Committee
 - Board Member of West Coast Aquatic Society
 - VIRA (Vancouver Island Running Association) Member
 - Member Arrowsmith Rotary

We thank you for supporting the Chamber of Commerce in any way that you can. We do rely on various levels of funding of which Memberships is a very important element.

Yours truly,
ALBERNI VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Bill Collette
Executive Director