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WINTER 2020

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Make 2021 Your Best Year in Business

This year has been like nothing we've experienced in the past when it comes to both our personal and business lives. Surviving through a global pandemic definitely has its challenges, but there are also opportunities to refresh and get back to basics, which will help ensure 2021 is your year to thrive.

Here are three tips to consider when re-evaluating your business as a new year begins:

1. Know Your Audience

Where has most of your business come from over the past year? It's important to check often because it can change quickly. In fact, you may be surprised to see where the bulk of your business has originated in 2020. Is it through advertising? Social media? Past clients? Referral partners? Once you identify how business is coming in your door, you can target future efforts towards specific groups of people who are personally using your products and/or services or those who are sending business your way most frequently.

2. Use Social Media

You've likely heard time and again the importance of using social media to build awareness and trust for your business. That's because it works. And don't forget that it's free, by the way! If you decide to spend some marketing dollars to target specific markets, demographics, etc., social media users can often be broken down so you reach a desired group. Certain ages are more likely to be active on Facebook, others on Instagram, and so on. Do some research to see which platforms work best for you. Build a schedule and consistently post to these platforms. Keep track of the most popular posts and adapt your messaging accordingly. This is an excellent way to build awareness over time.

3. Be Adaptable

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that being adaptable is vital. Many businesses that relied on face-to-face interaction suddenly had to learn Zoom or other live video platforms so that we could continue communicating with clients in a personable manner and make a living. Never has it been more important to avoid doing something the way you've always done it because you're comfortable. Make yourself uncomfortable. Check out new technology on an ongoing basis and try something new as much as possible. Even build it into your business plan!

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Mike Youds is a Port Alberni-based freelance journalist who has worked for more than 40 years in B.C. print media and communications. He recently rejoined the Valley Vibe editorial team, having contributed to the first editions in 2018.

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Printing & Design: Houle Printing Inc.
Cover Design and Photography: Explore Port Alberni
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In the heart of Vancouver Island, cloaked in emerald moss and connected by the ancient sea, sits a valley filled with opportunity, adventure and wonderment.

As the community fortunate enough to be surrounded by the towering peaks of the Beaufort Mountain Range, lush canopies of the west coast rainforest and salty waters of the Alberni Inlet, we have the privilege of showing each other and the world just how lucky we are.

So, to the residents looking to rekindle their sense of adventure, the young and the young at heart, we invite you to lace up your hiking boots, dust off your kayaks, polish your golf clubs, grab your fishing rods and pack your cameras - it's time to roam near home and explore Port Alberni.

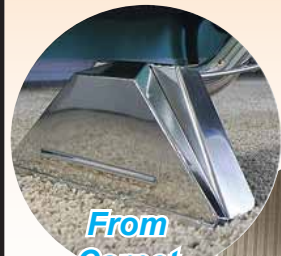


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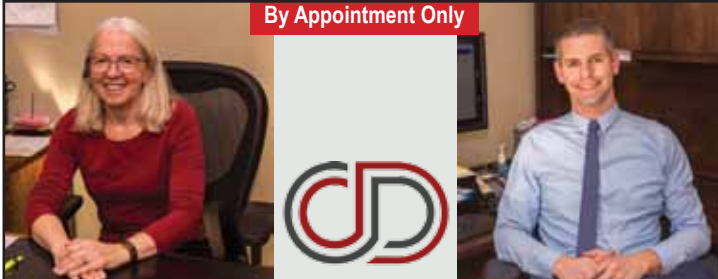
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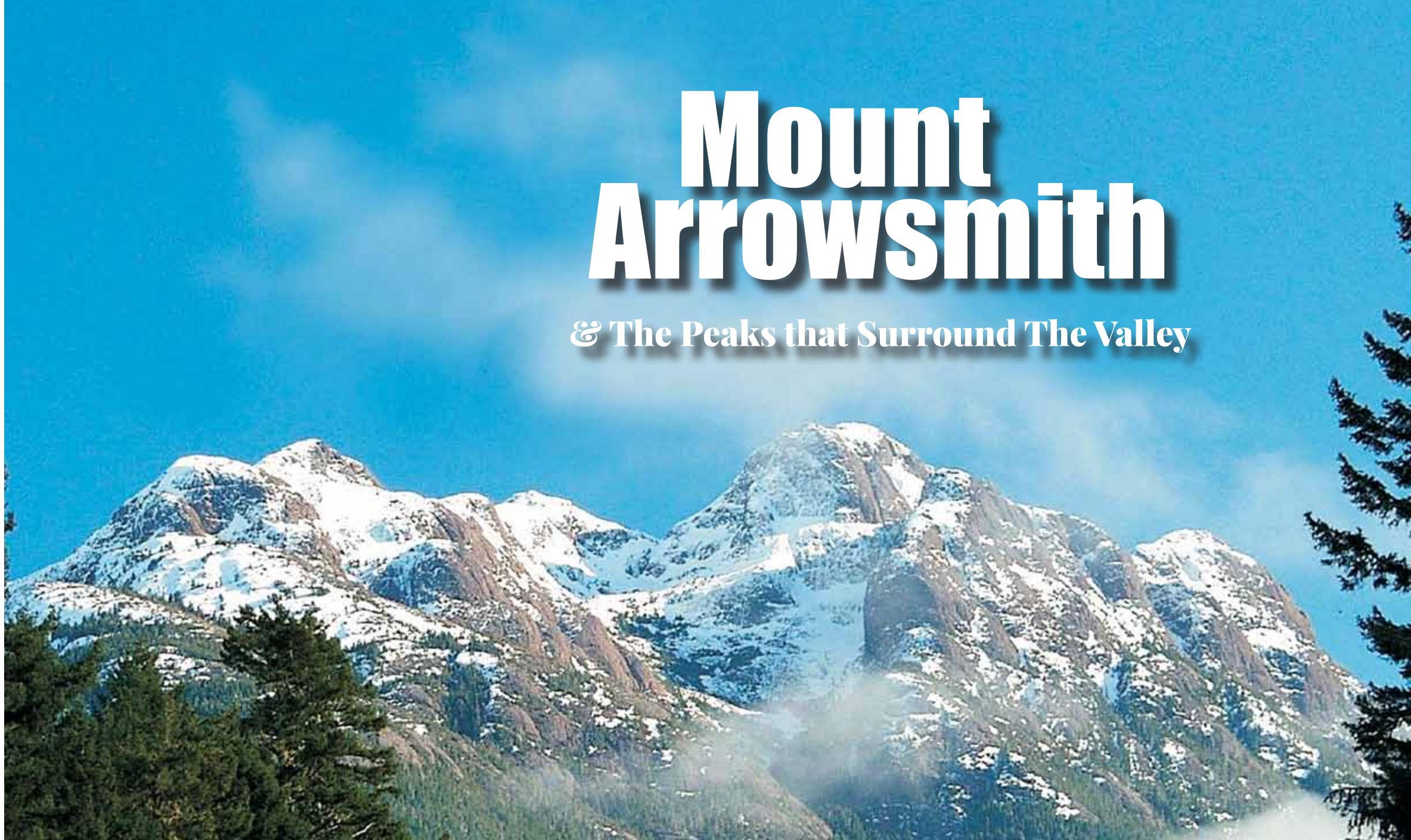
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Mount Arrowsmith

& The Peaks that Surround The Valley



Mount Arrowsmith is a prominent feature of the Alberni Valley. With three distinct peaks, and the tallest standing at 1,817m tall, it is the tallest mountain south of Port Alberni on Vancouver Island. As of September 2009 it is a designated part of the 1,300 hectares of Mt. Arrowsmith Massif Regional Park.

Originally named by the Hupacasath First Nations as Kuth-Kah-Chulth meaning "that which has sharp pointed faces", the Hupacasath First Nations has strong cultural connections with Mt. Arrowsmith and Mt. Cokely, as they sit within their traditional territory. During the mid- 1800's it was given the English name of Mt. Arrowsmith after cartographers Aaron Arrowsmith and his nephew John Arrowsmith. On the eastern side

of the Island it was often referred to as The Sleeping Maiden, given the silhouette against the setting sun.

Mt. Arrowsmith has drawn people to it for centuries, with evidence of Indigenous peoples hunting for marmots and collecting berries. In 1910 the C.P.R built a tourist chalet at the east end of Cameron Lake, which is now the oldest trail on Vancouver Island, and is still highly trafficked by avid hikers and explorers. Since then, upwards of 10 other trails have been built and maintained, offering options for easy family hiking to intermediate and advanced hikers looking to reach the summit.

During the 1940's and 1950's cabins were built on the massif and Arrowsmith became a ski destination in the

winter months. In 1956 the Rosseau Chalet opened in memory of Port Alberni mountaineer Ralph Rosseau, who passed away a couple years earlier when a snow bridge on Mt. Septimus fell on him during a hiking expedition. His wife, Lillah, felt that Ralph would have wanted the chalet to be completed for the use of young people searching for fresh mountain air. The project took nearly two years and a great deal of hard work to complete. Any materials not indigenous to the immediate area were carried up on men's backs. At the opening ceremonies, over 80 people attended and Mrs. Rosseau cut a ribbon of yellow cedar bark to officially open the space. Unfortunately, in the 70's this chalet was destroyed by vandals.

Photo credit: Sharlene Patterson



During the 1960's, during the upsurge of the logging industry, the mountain and surrounding areas saw more and more logging roads push up the mountain. The introduction of these logging roads made Mt. Arrowsmith more accessible to the general public, and it became a popular destination among the Vancouver Island hiking community.

In 1972, 607 hectares on the north slope of Mt. Cokely were sold to the ACRD for operation as a regional park and a downhill ski operation was built. Unfortunately, in 1999, the ski resort was closed due to financial struggles; maintaining the roads during winter months proved to be too expensive. Although there is no specific ski lodge or running lifts, many people still utilize the mountain for backcountry downhill and cross country skiing. With backcountry skiing, you are responsible for carrying your gear with you up the mountain, which means it is strenuous and technically difficult. With any backcountry adventures, go at your own risk and stay safe.

Mt. Arrowsmith is home to three distinct bioclimatic zones. A biogeoclimatic zone is defined as "a geographic area having similar patterns of energy flow, vegetation and soils as a result of a broadly homogenous macroclimate"; the term is used as a classification system by the BC Ministry of Forests and Environment Canada, and was originally used to manage forestry resources. British Columbia

has fourteen different ecosystems. Mt. Arrowsmith contains a Coastal Western Hemlock zone, Mountain Hemlock zone, and an Alpine Tundra zone. Each zone classifies the different trees that are present; Mt. Arrowsmith is home to common coastal western and mountain hemlocks, bigleaf maples, dogwood, amabilis fir, thin leaf huckleberries, and sitka spruce. Once into the alpine tundra, ice, snow, rocks, mountain lakes, and glaciers, with some shrubs in the dwarf evergreen family present; this is also home to the endangered Vancouver Island Marmot.

Just as most places in the Alberni Valley, Mount Arrowsmith offers a taste of history and the strength of nature. It stands tall, inviting a unique sense of wonder, and if you ever have the chance to summit this mountain, you will not be disappointed. Breathtaking views of the Alberni Valley, Sproat Lake, and the surrounding mountains in one direction, and the eastern side of the Island, complete with the Strait of Georgia in another direction, will leave you feeling inspired and empowered. There is something magical about hiking to the top of a mountain, it has a way of putting the world in perspective, reminding you to be present and grateful.

Mt. Arrowsmith isn't the only peak worth mentioning in the Alberni Valley, given that we're blessed with 360° mountain views from almost any part of town.

Imagine yourself standing in the middle of the Valley

Photo credit: Nicole Brazzale



looking directly at Mt. Arrowsmith, now rotate to your right. Just south of Arrowsmith lies the McLaughlin Range, which stands at 1327m tall. Continuing south Mount McQuillian stands 13km from Mt. Arrowsmith at 1575m tall.

Rotating about 3km south west of Mount McQuillian we see Limestone Mountain at 1492m tall. Now let's head back up the Inlet towards Patlicant Mountain, standing at 1239m tall. Next we see Mount Hankin at a modest 668m elevation. Across the Inlet lies the Arbutus Summit with a 535m elevation.

Continuing rotating north west towards Sproat Lake, Mount Anderson stands tall at 1259m. Klitsa Mountain overlooks Sproat Lake at 1630m elevation. Between Sproat Lake and Great Central Lake lies Mount Porter at 1330m tall.

Finally, rotating north east we see the Beaufort Range which is home to Mount Joan at 1556m tall, Mount Hall at 1487m tall, and Mount Irwin at 1313m tall.

All of the mountains encapsulate what we call home. They offer spectacular hiking opportunities, beautiful views, and the awesome reminder of how small we are compared to the nature that surrounds us. Living in a Valley that offers such rich and luscious natural beauty is truly a blessing. So, next time you find yourself staring off into the mountains, you'll have an idea of which ones you're looking at!



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All Aboard!!

VOLUNTEERS, TEAMWORK PUTTING NUMBER 7 BACK ON TRACK

by Mike Youds

Full steam ahead for 2021.

Ninety tonnes and 90 years of history have been painstakingly dismantled, repaired and reassembled for Alberni Pacific Railway's return to service, and that's only counting the engine.

Local volunteers with Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society (WVIIHS) have been steadily making progress on repairs to the 1929 Baldwin Number 7 locomotive while others have restored tracks and coaches. They could not have done it on their own, said Peter Geddes, society president.

Two years ago, the heritage steam train to McLean Mill National Historic Site had to be pulled from service when problems were discovered with its boiler. In

place of the Number 7, the society continued to operate with an Atco diesel locomotive, always considered a temporary substitute.

"Most people want to see steam because it's pretty exciting," Geddes said. "It's old and it still works, and steam is so much more powerful."

The 1929 Baldwin locomotive, stripped of its drivers and water tank, has stood idle for months in an old Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway roundhouse owned by the City in Port Alberni. An anonymous donor, the society and municipality each provided \$20,000 to get the steam train back on track.

About 20 regular volunteers tackle various tasks at the roundhouse and along the railway. With the help of

expertise from across Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, the society is on the final stretch.

"It took longer than expected," Geddes said of the boiler repair. "We tested all the tubes and took it up to pressure and it's good," he added.

The boiler had to be completely overhauled, which would have been routine work 100 years ago. In 2020, the essential know-how is not readily available. A small group of union boilermakers — some retired, some still working in the trade, mostly on industrial steam plants nowadays — answered the call from elsewhere on the Island. A union bricklayer worked on the smokebox, restoring its brickwork.

Volunteer-wise, the society counts on a stable supply

of industrial mechanical experience. Much like Geddes, a former city fire chief who grew up in logging camps at Beaver Creek and Great Central Lake, they enjoy working with machinery.

"Just about every club everywhere, they're aging out and having difficulty getting volunteers," Geddes explained. "We're pretty lucky. If you have a job somewhere, you can usually get somebody to get it done. If you have a facility and stuff and a few people who are keen, it's amazing what comes out of the woodwork."

Eventually, they intend to see the heritage train back in full summer operation, chugging up the track with passengers from all over the world.



Peter Geddes, president of Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society, with the Number 7 Baldwin locomotive undergoing repairs in the group's roundhouse. (Mike Youds)

“The dream is still to go back to the mill,” Geddes said. All going well, Number 7 will make that dream a reality. Considering this locomotive’s long and winding journey, that would hardly be surprising.

Steam donkeys and steam locomotives powered coastal logging in the first half of the 20th century. APR’s Number 7 was originally one of two ordered in 1928 by Campbell River Timber Company from Baldwin Locomotive Works, founded by inventor and industrialist Matthias Baldwin and once the largest manufacturer of steam locomotives in the world. They were specially designed for hauling logs, as many as 40 loaded cars at a time, built for power rather than speed and with weight centred over the drive wheels.

Engines No. 2 and 3 operated on the Island’s east coast until 1938, when the owners went bankrupt after a devastating wildfire season. They were then purchased by H.R. MacMillan Exporting Company, which eventually became MacMillan Bloedel.

With the advent of truck logging, steam locomotives were gradually phased out in the 1950s, but not the Number 7, renumbered 1007 and kept in service at Franklin River on Alberni Inlet.

In 1954, as a powerful storm swept the coast, tragedy struck. A bridge weakened by flood conditions gave way, sending the locomotive into the river. Two crew

members, an engineer and head brakeman, could not escape. The fireman, a non-swimmer, barely survived after he was thrown into the swollen river and swept downstream. Weeks later, the locomotive was dragged from the river.

Relatively intact, the engine was repaired and returned to service. It was leased to Comox Logging in 1955 before MacMillan Bloedel reacquired and operated it until 1969. The engine was used as a switcher in the yard until it was retired in 1972. Coincidentally, the last vestige of the Baldwin company closed in Philadelphia that same year. As it turned out, there was much more in store for Number 7.

The B.C. government later bought the engine — understood to be the last steam locomotive in service in North America at the time — and donated it in 1991 to Port Alberni. WVIHS restored the engine in the late 1990s, operating a tourist run to McLean Mill. In 2009, the community celebrated Number 7’s 80th year as the train steamed into the Port Alberni Railway Station, another legacy of the 1920s. Summer runs were temporarily halted in 2017 while trestle work was done. The next year three boiler tubes ruptured, another setback.

Now, 50 years after the old log train locomotive was mothballed, the society is focused on having it operational for a gradual resumption of heritage steam



A team of volunteers poses while repairing tracks on the Alberni Pacific Railway. (Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society/Facebook)

train runs. That means not only completing repairs but passing inspections. Over the long haul, they want to make the heritage train financially sustainable. They also face the additional hurdle of pandemic uncertainty.

“The cars run with 180 people on board, but with COVID, will run with only 50 passengers,” Geddes said. “It’s not a paying proposition.”

Despite the challenges, Geddes holds out hope of a possible Christmas excursion, a family tradition in the community.

By late October, that goal edged a little closer. The locomotive was outfitted with its smokebox cover for the first time in two years, wearing the Number 7 plate once again.



Photo credit: Sharlene Patterson

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Maple Syrup

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The Hupacasath First Nations have been utilizing Bigleaf Maple trees for time immemorial; using the lumber to create dishes, pipes, and paddles, while utilizing the inner bark for baskets and ropes. More recently, Bigleaf Maples have been used to create a deliciously unique maple syrup. Kleekhoot Gold Maple Syrup, which is a local Hupacasath business, is innovating the way for Western Canada in Bigleaf Maple Syrup.

Bigleaf Maple Trees are some of the largest maple trees in Canada, growing as tall as 50m high; they grow in the south-western region of BC, but they can be found anywhere between southern Alaska and California. Here on Vancouver Island, Bigleaf Maples are some of the largest and most common maple trees.

Traditional maple syrup comes from the Sugar Maple tree, which uses 30-40L of sap to produce

1L of syrup, while the Bigleaf Maple tree uses 60-80L of sap to produce 1L of syrup. Both syrups are 66% sugar content, but the Bigleaf Maple contains a greater mineral content, with over twice as much calcium and magnesium in the final product.

Maple syrup is an act of agriculture, and the Hupacasath First Nations approach to sustainability is apparent throughout production. Only trees that are over 30cm in diameter are tapped which reduces the risk of damage to the tree, and ensures good sap flow. Utilizing these trees for maple syrup also allows these trees to be preserved from logging, enabling the continuation of thriving ecosystems in our forests.

The process that Kleekhoot Gold uses is innovative. Once the trees have gone through a freeze and thaw cycle, usually between December and March in the Alberni Valley, they are ready to

be tapped. Trees are then tapped and connected through piping, which leads to a designated collection point. Once the sap is collected, it goes through a reverse osmosis system that forces the sap through a membrane which removes the water and concentrates the sap. Then it goes into an evaporator, which boils the sap down into the final product- maple syrup!

Keep your eyes peeled in the coming months and get your hands on some delicious, local, and sustainable maple syrup. You won't be disappointed! To order your product contact the Hupacasath main office.

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Taking Care

Painting the pole with its theme of taking care of the world. (Mike Youds)

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION POLE ASSUMES A LIFE OF ITS OWN

by Mike Youds

A western red cedar tree that stood in the west coast forest canopy for 800 years has assumed a universal message, one that a pair of master carvers is determined to share with the world.

The project, known as the Language Revitalization Pole, has taken on a life of its own, gradually transforming a partly decayed western red cedar into an inspirational work of art at a harbourside site in Port Alberni over the last two years.

A handful of volunteers under the direction of Nuu-chah-nulth (Hesquiaht) carver Tim Paul has been gradually transforming the cedar tree salvaged from a creek near Bamfield. Paul and fellow master carver Cecil Dawson conceived the project, partly as a celebration of healing from wrongs of the past, of cultural resilience and renewal. It has become that and much more.

“We wanted to teach younger generations about the importance of learning from our history,” Dawson says. “It’s a very important project. It’s universal teachings about taking care of our environment, taking care of our rivers, lakes, mountains and sea. That’s pretty important right now. That’s why it’s an important project. It was always the message. In some ways, we were not only thinking about history.”

Their’s is a holistic vision that mirrors the Nuu-chah-nulth world view embraced for thousands of years on Vancouver Island’s west coast: *heshook-ish tsawalk*, everything is one, everything is connected. Physical and metaphysical worlds co-exist.

They believe the tree, which grew to maturity when Nuu-chah-nulth peoples thrived along the Island’s west coast before contact with Europeans, was predestined to bring stories of the past to the future.



Nuu-chah-nulth master carvers Tim Paul and Cecil Dawson begin work on the Language Revitalization Pole in 2019. (Mike Youds)

Centred around 10 Nuu-chah-nulth relatives embodied in elements of nature, the pole designed by Paul speaks of caring for the Earth, the land and water, in short, everything.

“We always felt the message was not just about our people but about people and the planet,” Dawson said.

First Nations Education Foundation (FNEF), a not-for-profit group focused on reversing the loss of Indigenous languages, commissioned the pole in recognition of 2019 as UN International Year of Indigenous Languages. Huu-ay-aht First Nations gave the 23-metre, 25,000-kilogram log to the FNEF before it was trucked to the work site on Port Alberni’s harbourfront.

At one stage, University of Victoria signalled an interest in sponsoring the project as a campus installation. When that didn’t develop, FNEF redirected its fundraising and focused on the Alberni Valley as a home for the pole. Owl’s Path Tourism, a new Indigenous enterprise based in Port Alberni, stepped up. They organized a fundraising fashion show, which raised about \$5,000 toward the cost of erecting the pole.

Meanwhile, FNEF continues to pursue other means of financial support. They need roughly \$100,000 to complete the installation.

“The COVID thing has pretty much affected everything,” said Scott Jeary, First Nations Education Fund. “We had a partner in January. By the time we were ready to go in February, the whole world shut down. They were going to finish it off.”

That sponsor, a tourism business, was forced to refund customer deposits for the season due to the pandemic and had to withdraw support for the project.

“We had to swallow that,” Jeary said. “We’ve talked to other charitable organizations and it’s just a struggle right now.”

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They have reapplied for funding through the Canada Council for the Arts.

There was another setback in 2019. Paul lost several close family members within a short period and handed the work to Dawson for a time.

Tapping into community interest in the project, Dawson “conscripted” a few volunteers to lend a hand. They were not Indigenous and they were not carvers, but that was part of what the project was about.

“It became walking the walk of reconciliation,” Dawson says. “It became a community project and still is. All we knew was that we just had to get it done.”

At the moment, the pole is wrapped to protect it from the elements, “put to sleep for the winter,” as Dawson describes it. There have been setbacks in financing the project, but that’s not seen as a major obstacle for the carvers.

“It was never about funding,” said Dawson, a Dzawada’enuxw First Nation carver.

Owl’s Path, which focuses on supporting Indigenous tourism in the region, is still engaged in the project as well. Co-owners Joel Marriott and Mary Mason began working behind the scenes after UVic withdrew, exploring ways in which the pole could form part of a larger project.



Volunteer chisels finishing details in September 2020 prior to winter storage. (Mike Youds)

“We’ve kind of maintained a connection with it. What we’re hoping to do is raise the pole while developing a different cultural centre,” Marriott said.

He sees the pole, not as a memorial, but as a celebration of cultural resilience.

“Once it’s rolling and we start building, with the UN behind it, it seems to be a win-win for the community,” Marriott said. “It’s evolved to the point where it’s one of the first steps for a new chance for Indigenous people out here,” said Marriott, who hails from White Bear First Nation in Saskatchewan.

As Paul once said of the project: “Do it from the heart and do it to make people feel good.”



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The Arrowsmith Rotary Club is entering its 12th year sponsoring the Street Banner Painting program. Late spring to early fall, you will see the many street banners in the “Rotary Arts District” on Argyle Street, which are hand painted by local residents. If you have never painted a banner before, don’t worry. It is easy! You don’t have to be an artist to participate but it does take some time and effort to complete a banner.

For 2021, in addition to the traditional community painting days at Glenwood Center that happen Thursday Feb. 4th, Friday Feb. 5th, Saturday Feb. 6th and Sunday Feb. 7th, a “PAINT AT HOME” option is being added, allowing artists to paint at home.

For more information about the “Paint at Home” program, other registration details, or registration forms, contact the Arrowsmith Rotary Club at arrowsmithrotaryclub@gmail.com, or by phone at 250 724 1642 or 250 724 0683. Completed registration forms and registration fees are accepted at the Rollin Art Center, unless other arrangements are made.

As a requirement, all interested artists must pre-register by Friday January 22nd, 2021.

We are blessed each year to be able to keep a presence in our community, and the banner painting program has helped us to do that and we remain optimistic for 2021.

Health Statement: Public Health Regulations due to COVID 19 will apply during this event.

Contributing partners include:
Arrowsmith Rotary Club
City of Port Alberni
The Community Arts Council
Art Rave



Also, Arrowsmith Rotary can be found on Facebook, as the Rotary Club of Port Alberni-Arrowsmith, and also with the “Rotary Arts District”.

<https://www.facebook.com/ArrowsmithRotary>
Website: <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/683>

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Email: arrowsmithrotaryclub@gmail.com



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New Year, New You

TIME OLD TRADITIONS FOR RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR



Jumping in a body of water in the middle of winter sounds crazy, right? Well, all around the world thousands of people have been jumping into lakes, rivers, and the ocean on January 1st for hundreds of years. In recent years this event has been, fittingly, called The Polar Bear Swim, where people dress up in costumes or down to their bathing suits and jump into freezing cold water on the first day of the New Year.

The Polar Bear Plunge has been practiced for well over a hundred years in different countries across the world. The first recorded plunge took place in Boston in 1904, Vancouver in 1920, and the Netherlands in 1960. The event originally took place on Christmas Day in Vancouver, before switching to New Year's Day. Each year thousands of people take part in the icy swim.

The Polar Bear Swim has taken place in the Alberni Valley for many years now, with hundreds of people jumping into the Inlet to ring in the New Year. For the past couple years the event has been held at Canal Beach, complete with costume contests, bonfire, marshmallow roasting, live music, and crowds of people cheering on the ones brave enough to jump in.

In 2014 the oldest swimmer was 81 and the youngest was 2 years old, in 2019 the oldest swimmer was 73 years old.

Over the years the Alberni Valley Polar Bear Swim has raised money to donate to local charities such as The Bread of Life and other organizations in the Valley.

Now, you might be asking yourself, why would anyone want to jump into freezing cold water in the middle of winter? Well, the theory behind the cold plunge on New Year's Day is that if you can handle jumping into freezing water, you can handle just about anything that the year will throw at you. It takes a certain type of mental grit to walk or dive willingly into icy water on January 1st, it goes against natural instincts that keep us safe and warm. The water burns as you walk further in, and if you're brave enough to dunk yourself completely, it can literally take your breath away. Once you're out and warmed up though, a sense of strength and achievement washes over you.

The Polar Bear Swim offers a unique sense of comradery. Some people formed teams, donned costumes, while others went solo in their skivvies. Regardless of if you went with a group or not, taking part in something physically challenging like that, brings people together. The crowd buzzes with the same excitement and anticipation as a marathon, everyone eagerly waiting to hear the word "go!". Once the signal is made, everyone runs toward the water, all thoughts of how cold it will be disappears, until of course that first contact is made. By the time your feet hit the water, you're committed. Adrenaline runs

high and you continue into the icy depths. Laughter mixed with yelling fills the air, until you dunk your head under for a brief moment of quiet. Emerging out of the water to continued excitement as everyone runs for shore, is a moment to remember.

It's impossible not to have a huge smile plastered to your face once you emerge from the water. The feeling is almost indescribable; a sense of accomplishment, strength, and power washes over you. Going against better judgement and living to tell the tale is incredibly empowering. It feels like you can take on the world, which is a fitting feeling for the first day of a new year.

As the year goes on, and life's inevitable challenges present themselves, tuning into those feelings of empowerment and strength, remind you that you can do anything. Facing the odds of jumping into freezing cold water in the dead of winter, and coming out not only alive but with a smile on your face, is a feeling you can pull from as often as you need. Suddenly, it makes sense why people have been doing this for hundreds of years.

What is your favourite way to ring in the New Year? Do you enjoy washing away last year with an icy dip, or do you prefer curling up with your favourite blanket and a movie marathon? However you chose to bring in the New Year, we hope it was enjoyable!



MIKE the BARTENDER

written by Glen Mofford

The pretty village of Bowser is located on the east side of Vancouver Island just north of Parksville and is named after BC's seventeenth premier, William J. Bowser. But the name of the community fits perfectly into this story as you will see.

Bowser was a logging community that really began to grow when the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway (E&N) arrived there in 1914. It also had a budding fishing industry and later a sawmill opened. The community was growing that saw houses and businesses being

erected on the side of the dirt highway. In 1925, Joe Charlebois built the rancher-style Bowser Hotel across the highway from the train station and general store. It was one of the more modest hostelries along the E&N route but managed to carve out an interesting piece of our history in its forty-four years of existence.

In 1928 Charlebois sold the Bowser hotel and beer parlour to Cecil "Cappy" and Florence Winfield. The Winfield's put the Bowser Hotel on the international map after word got out about some of the unusual

"employees" that worked at the hotel. They had trained a deer, a raccoon, bear cub and two dogs in the fine art of customer service. It was like an episode from The Waltons, as delighted guests at the hotel got to witness the animals being trained and those that wandered into the beer parlour caught a most unusual sight – a dog serving bottles of beer!

His name was Mike, a black and white English sheepdog-terrier cross that was taught to carry a bottle of beer in his mouth and bring it to a customer's table. Mike would then collect payment for the beer and deposit into the cash register and even would run back with any change owing and the bottle opener. Mike, the bartending dog, it announced on the sign outside the hotel, but you had to see it to believe it.

Mike's escapades drew international attention when a writer from the New York Times was on a fishing trip to Vancouver Island and caught Mike in action. He wrote a story about Mike that made it into the paper and was eventually picked up by Life Magazine. Mike was even nominated for a silver medal from the New York Anti-Vivisection Society for his intelligence and loyalty. Mike was a big hit with the local children as he entertained at birthday parties and other special events. Stardom never went to his head as Mike continued to work in the beer parlour and make appearances in and around Bowser. The owners were all smiles as the word spread about Mike resulting in a boost in business from a curious public.

Jack Holt, a retired logger and postmaster for the small community was the first customer to show up when the beer parlour opened at the Bowser Hotel. He became a regular fixture in the beverage room and often used the services of Mike. Holt would spin yarns about his time in South Africa to anyone who would listen. He added some local colour to the bar, at times getting so inebriated that his friends would pile him into a wheelbarrow and take him home, which was just across the street from the hotel.

Holt often sent Mike across the highway to fetch snacks and cigarettes for him in the beer parlour, (strict government rules at the time did not allow proprietors to sell anything other than beer in the beer parlour). One day, in 1941, Mike was sent on a routine trip to the store but never came back. Cappy became concerned and went looking for Mike and it didn't take long before he found the popular dog. Mike was laying beside the highway and was severely injured, it was evident that he had been hit by an automobile and the driver had fled the scene. Although still alive, Mike's injuries were so serious that he had to be put down.

Heartbroken, Cappy and Florence, with the aid of local citizens, had a granite headstone made and buried








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Mike just off the highway where he was hit. On it was simply carved, "Mike." For years locals shared their favourite stories about Mike, and his memory would be revived every time people walked or drove past his small grave.

In 1945, the Winfield's sold the Bowser Hotel. The hotel continued in business until the early hours of a Saturday morning in May 1969 that saw the hotel destroyed by fire. For years following the fire the lot sat empty save for some burned out remnants and close by a solid piece of granite that marked Mike's resting place. But as time passed even that was gone, swallowed up by wild brambles. Drivers today rush past the spot unaware of the events that took place in the Bowser hotel all those years ago, but Mike the bartending dog lives on in the memories of those lucky enough to have met him.



Lessons Learned In 2020

As we go into a New Year, it's important to look back at the lessons we've learned and give gratitude for those lessons. We all have a way of viewing the world, some people default to optimism while others default to pessimism. Our default response to the circumstances of life can come from how we've managed past situations or how we were raised. There isn't a right way to default, but if you'd like to work towards a more positive or growth mindset, noticing how you respond to situations is the first step. 2020 has given us the perfect opportunity to start altering our responses to ones that may serve us better.

When you look back at 2020, how do you feel? Are your initial feelings those of loss, discomfort, and grief? Or are your initial feelings those of growth, hope, and possibility? You might even have a combination of both, all those responses are completely normal.

To live a human experience is to experience emotions from the entire spectrum. 2020 brought about massive change, and with change, can come discomfort. It can be uncomfortable to live life differently. The brain loves homeostasis, that is, it loves the expected.

When you experience a massive shift, like a global pandemic, your brain might not be happy about it. Everything feels out of control and hard, until a new rhythm is created, and structure can be rebuilt. The uniqueness of this past year is that we've experienced this change collectively. We're riding this wave together.

I've learned a lot about myself this past year. My normally positive default of looking on the bright side of life, became at times dulled and burnt out. 2020 taught me that we are resilient. A lot of people have struggled this year, yet we continue to persevere.

Businesses pivoted overnight, parents became teachers, healthcare workers responded with a calm sense of urgency, and our community banded together. Human connection is one of our most important lifelines, and in the face of social distancing, relationships became utmost important.

2020 taught me that vulnerability is at the heart of our ability to connect. More and more people are talking



about their struggles, opening up about their deepest, darkest secrets, and are being met with compassion and grace. Meaningful relationships rely on vulnerability; having the ability to be authentic and real with another human who accepts you as you are, is priceless. This year has forced us to show up in our vulnerabilities, deepening our connections.

Lastly, 2020 has taught me that we don't always get what we want. Being forced to work from home has its challenges, but now that is a viable option for

many businesses. It's opened up a lot of opportunities. Again, there is no right or wrong way to look at these situations, as long as that view is serving you. We get to decide how we want to view each and every situation. I'm choosing to look back at 2020 with gratitude and acceptance.

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
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