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FALL/WINTER 2025/26

LANDMARKS IN THE VALLEY

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VALLEY VIBE

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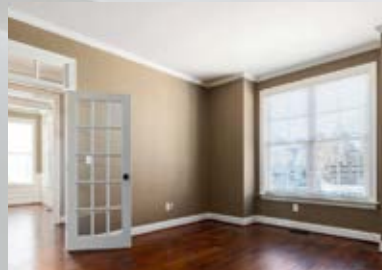
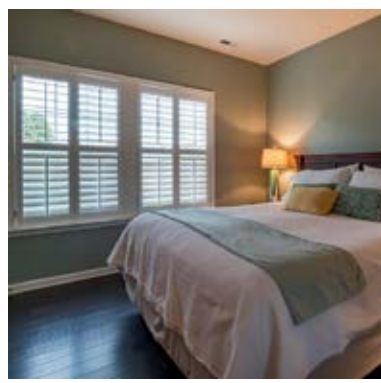


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LANDMARKS

In and Around the Alberni Valley

The Alberni Valley truly is the heart of Vancouver Island. Surrounded by mountains, rivers, creeks, and lush rainforest, there is always a new place to explore.

The main road into Port Alberni is via the Alberni Highway; travelling around Cameron Lake, through Cathedral Grove, and over the Port Alberni summit. The drive is magical to say the least; upon first entering the Alberni Valley, visitors and residents alike, are greeted by 360 mountain views, encompassing our beautiful town; but entering the Alberni Valley wasn't always this way.

Travelling through the Barkley Sound and up the Alberni Inlet used to be the main route for anyone travelling in or out of Port Alberni. Imagine, if you will, how our beautiful town might look from that perspective; travelling on a ship, boat, or canoe, rocky mountains rising almost perpendicularly from the water on either side of you, trees covering the mountain sides. Certain parts feel as though you're in the middle of a mountain lake, rather than an inlet. We truly are blessed to live in such a beautiful place.

Alongside the natural beauty the Alberni Valley has to offer is our amazing community. Friendly faces are seen throughout the town, whether you're running errands or going for a walk along the Dike. Accompanying those smiling faces are friendly hellos, quick conversations, and an amazing sense of community. You can feel how close this town is when you check out a Bulldogs game or go into a local coffee shop, everyone comes together to support one another.

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Nations. Many of their traditions and lifestyle are still present in our community today; as seen during many of our local festivals and events.

The Alberni Valley is like a breath of fresh air with many places to explore all year long, filling you with rich history, strong community, and beautiful scenery. Around the lake, through the grove, over the hump, and you're home.

#1 - Stamp River Provincial Park: A Year-Round Escape into Nature

Just a 15-minute drive from Port Alberni down Beaver Creek Road, Stamp River Provincial Park offers a quick and easy retreat into the wild beauty of Vancouver Island. Whether you're looking for a weekend of camping, a few hours of hiking, or simply a place to relax by the river, this park has something for everyone. One of the park's most spectacular natural events is the annual salmon run, taking place in late summer through early fall. Thousands of Pacific salmon gather in the pool below the falls before making their way up the fish ladder to reach their spawning grounds. It's a fascinating sight, easily viewed from trails that run alongside the river, with informative signs along the way that the whole family can enjoy.

Of course, where there's salmon, there are also black bears. These natural predators are often spotted during the run, so visitors are reminded to stay aware and keep pets leashed.

The park's forested trails offer stunning views of the waterfalls, especially during the rainy fall and winter months when the river roars with power. In summer, calmer sections of the river make great spots for a quick dip or picnic, and the riverside campground provides a peaceful place to spend a few nights immersed in nature.

Whether you're hiking through crunchy autumn leaves, cooling off in the river on a hot day, or simply watching the salmon leap upstream, Stamp River Provincial Park is the perfect year-round escape into the heart of Vancouver Island's natural beauty.

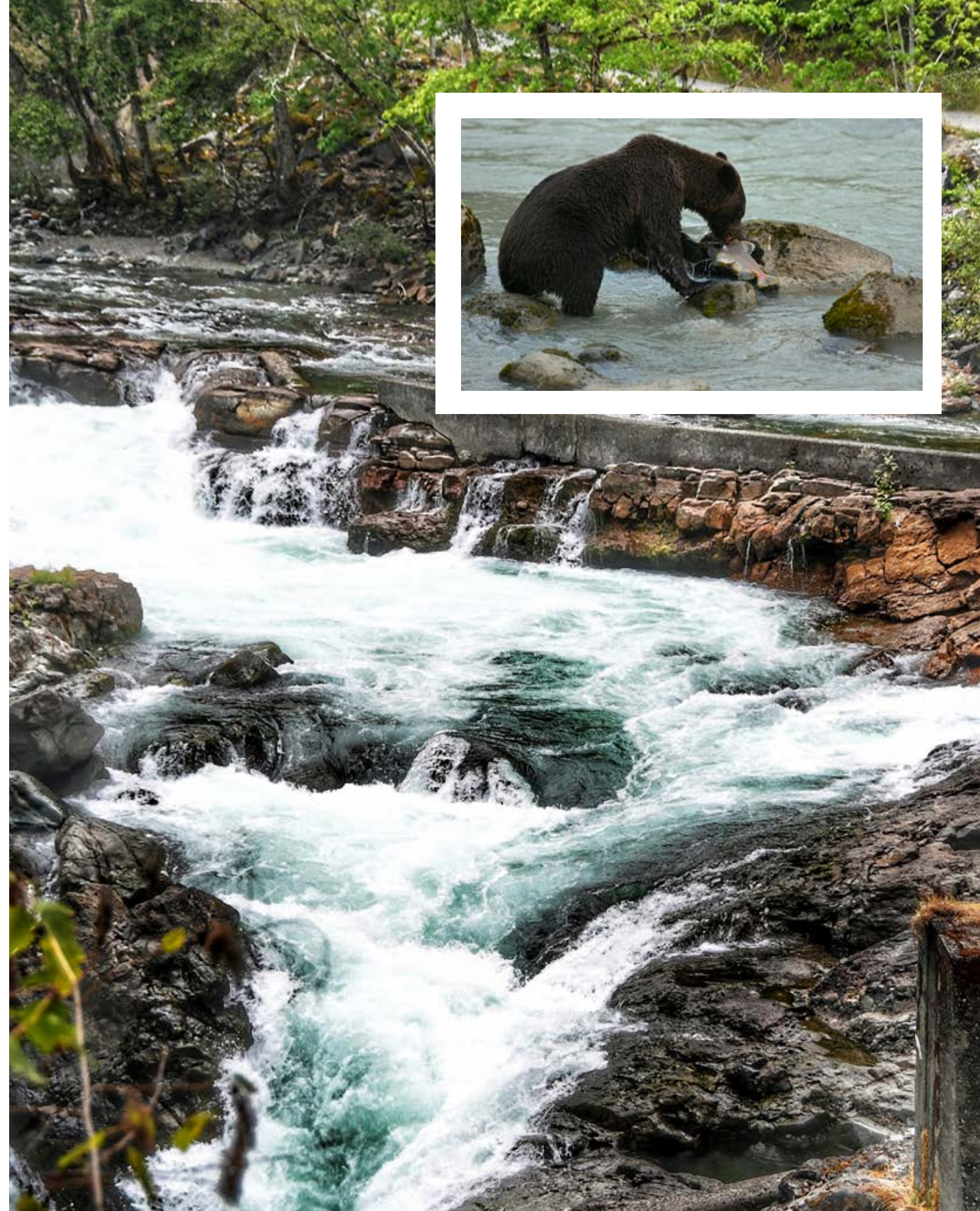


Photo Credit by Dawn Auffrey, Stamp Falls



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#2 - John Douglas Park: Port Alberni's Waterfront Gem

Tucked away at the end of Plywood Drive, John Douglas Park—formerly known as Canal Beach—has become one of Port Alberni's most cherished destinations for outdoor fun and waterfront relaxation. Renamed in 2018 in honour of local community advocate John Douglas, the park is now a symbol of the city's shift from its industrial past toward a more vibrant, recreation- and tourism-focused future.

Once the site of a bustling industrial mill, the area has been thoughtfully revitalized into Port Alberni's only sandy beach dedicated to non-motorized water sports, including kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, and windsurfing. It's a transformation that didn't happen overnight—the beach is the result of passionate community advocacy and a shared vision to reclaim public access to the waterfront.

Two vibrant murals, created by local artists Alicia LaRue (Winddiva) and Alana Orr, celebrate the spirit and history of the space. One tells the story of the beach's evolution from industrial grounds to a beloved local park, while the other captures the wind-driven activities that fill the Alberni Inlet.

With a sweeping view of the active Alberni Harbour, John Douglas Park offers something for everyone. Whether you're exploring the shoreline, tossing a frisbee with friends, or heading out on the water, it's an ideal spot to unwind, connect with nature, and cool off during the summer months.

This community-created park stands as a reminder of what's possible when residents come together with a shared vision for change.

#3 - China Creek Marina: A Hidden Gem of History, Nature, and Adventure

Just a short 20-minute drive south of Port Alberni along the rugged and scenic Franklin River Road, you'll find one of the Alberni Valley's most treasured outdoor destinations: China Creek Marina. Surrounded by dense forest, mountain backdrops, and the shimmering



waters of the Alberni Inlet, China Creek is more than just a marina — it's a peaceful escape rich in history, recreation, and natural beauty.

Long before it became a popular recreation site, China Creek's story began in the mid-19th century with a different kind of pursuit: gold. In 1862, during British Columbia's early gold rush era, small placer mines popped up in the area, operated primarily by Chinese immigrants. These miners were in search of "flour gold" — fine, soft particles of gold deposited by the creek's flowing waters. Using tools like the "shoe-rocker," a manual method to separate gold from gravel, these miners laid the foundation for the area's name and its early economic activity.

China Creek took on a new layer of historical significance in 1999, when an international human smuggling crisis came ashore. That summer, four Chinese vessels carrying nearly 600 illegal immigrants crossed into Canadian waters. It was a headline-making event that

Photo Credit by Dawn Auffrey, China Creek (Main)
Photo Credit Tana Pprich (Insert)

spurred national debate about immigration and human trafficking.

While most of the migrants were repatriated to China, two of the ships — ominously named "The Blue" and "The Rusty" — were repurposed in a remarkable and unexpected way. Rather than scrapping the vessels, they were anchored at China Creek and opened briefly to the public as part of an awareness campaign. The goal was to reveal the inhumane living conditions endured by those on board, giving visitors a first-hand look into the desperate journey these individuals undertook.

In 2001, both ships were intentionally sunk just off the China Creek Marina, transforming tragedy into purpose. Today, they lie quietly beneath the surface, serving as artificial reefs and a draw for divers from all over the island and beyond.

Now resting on the seafloor, "The Blue" and "The Rusty"



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are no longer reminders of human suffering, but rather symbols of renewal. These sunken ships have become thriving marine habitats, teeming with life. Divers exploring these wrecks may encounter giant Pacific octopus, Dungeness crabs, wolf eels, and an array of colourful fish and sea anemones.

This underwater site is now considered one of Port Alberni's most unique dive locations, attracting recreational and professional divers eager to explore the eerie, beautiful remains and the ecosystem they support.

With its blend of natural wonder, layered history, and recreational opportunity, China Creek Marina offers something truly special. It's a place where you can cast a line at sunrise, hike through moss-covered trails in the afternoon, and gather around a beachside campfire under a blanket of stars. It's also a place where history – both inspiring and sobering – is preserved in the land and sea.

Known for its breathtaking views and laid-back atmosphere, China Creek is a haven for fishing enthusiasts, campers, RVers, and adventure seekers alike. The marina provides moorage for recreational boaters and is a popular launch point for fishing trips, especially for salmon during the summer season. The area also boasts a well-maintained campground, offering both serviced and unserviced sites suitable for tents and RVs, with amenities including showers, laundry, and even a small store. For hikers, nearby trails weave through coastal forest and along the rocky shorelines, offering scenic lookouts and wildlife sightings.

Whether you're spending the afternoon kayaking along the inlet, relaxing on the beach, or exploring the nearby hiking routes, China Creek delivers a serene, immersive experience in nature – just far enough from town to feel like an escape, but still accessible for a spontaneous weekend getaway.

Whether you're here for a quiet weekend getaway or an adventurous dive into the past, China Creek invites you to connect with the land, the water, and the many stories it holds.

#4- A Legacy on the Rails - The Alberni Train Station

At the gateway to Harbour Quay stands one of Port Alberni's most iconic buildings – the historic Port Alberni Train Station, a structure that has witnessed more than a century of transformation in the Alberni Valley. Now, in 2025, it embarks on yet another exciting chapter with the newly renovated space that will soon house The Station Taphouse, blending the city's rich heritage with a fresh community hub for food, drink, and gathering.

The story of the Port Alberni Train Station is deeply rooted in the development of Vancouver Island's transportation network. Originally part of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway (E&N) – incorporated in 1883 by coal baron Robert Dunsmuir – the railway was created to support the island's booming coal and lumber industries, as well as the Royal Navy base in Esquimalt. By 1905, the rail line had reached Port Alberni, with the very first train rolling into the city in December 1911.

Constructed in the same year, the Port Alberni Train Station quickly became the social and economic heartbeat of the community. Designed by R.A. Bainbridge, the building's architectural charm and strategic location made it a key hub for passengers, freight, and mail. Between 1911 and 1953, crowds regularly gathered at the station – whether to welcome loved ones, receive important deliveries, or simply watch the world arrive by rail.

At its peak, the Canadian Pacific Railway (which eventually absorbed the E&N Railway) operated 45 stations on Vancouver Island, with eight located in Port Alberni alone. Passenger service continued until 1953, after which the train system transitioned primarily to industrial use.

The Port Alberni Train Station – the last remaining of its kind in the city – stands today as a designated heritage building, symbolizing the city's connection to communities across the island from 1912 to 1970. Though updated in the 1950s to reflect changing transportation needs and again in 1990, when a second storey was added, the building retains much of its



original character, thanks in large part to the Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society (WVIIHS). Since 1983, volunteers from WVIIHS have worked tirelessly to preserve the station and its railway legacy. In fact, it was this dedicated group that restored the station’s original appearance in 1990. Today, the station continues to serve as a museum and ticket office, keeping the story of Port Alberni’s rail history alive.

#5 - Port Alberni’s Lighthouse & Maritime Heritage Centre: Honouring the Coast’s Nautical Legacy

Just down the inlet from the bustling Harbour Quay stands one of Port Alberni’s gems — a lighthouse and maritime museum that not only offers picturesque views of the Alberni Inlet but also tells the compelling stories of the West Coast’s rich nautical past.

This site is home to the Port Alberni Maritime Heritage Society, established in 1989 with the goal of preserving and celebrating the maritime traditions of Vancouver Island’s rugged and storied coastline.

While the base of the Port Alberni lighthouse was built in the early 1990s by the Maritime Heritage Society, its most remarkable feature — the lantern — carries a much older legacy. This lantern was donated by the Chrome Island Lighthouse in 1989, connecting two ends of Vancouver Island through shared history.

Chrome Island, located off the southeastern tip of Denman Island at the entrance to Baynes Sound, has had a lighthouse since 1891. Originally perched atop the keeper’s house, the structure was later replaced with a skeletal tower and enclosed lantern room in 1922, before its final upgrade to a concrete tower in 1989 — at which point the historic lantern made its way to Port Alberni.

Though the beacon at Port Alberni’s lighthouse is functional and is lit during summer days, its primary role is not navigation, but education. Today, it serves as a small maritime museum — a labour of love by local volunteers and historians — welcoming visitors to step inside and explore the seafaring past of the

Alberni Valley and beyond.

Within the lighthouse museum, visitors will find thoughtfully curated displays on lighthouse technology, vintage maritime artifacts, models of historic vessels, and biographies of West Coast lighthouse keepers who once braved isolation and storms to keep mariners safe. One of the most inspiring stories featured is that of Minnie Patterson, who served alongside her husband Tom at the Cape Beale Lighthouse from 1895 to 1908. In December 1906, when the Coloma, a ship carrying lumber from Puget Sound to Australia, was caught in a brutal storm and began taking on water, the Pattersons witnessed the ship’s distress but couldn’t raise help via telegraph.

Minnie, with unwavering determination, set off on foot in the pouring rain for over 9 km, accompanied only by her dog, to seek assistance in Bamfield. Upon arriving, she found no help waiting — so she rowed a boat out to the Quadra, a nearby ship, to deliver the message herself. After securing aid, she returned home to care for her five children. The effort took a toll on her health, and she

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passed away five years later.

In 2011, the Canadian government posthumously honoured Minnie’s bravery with an engraved silver tray, now proudly displayed at the lighthouse — a tribute to her courage and endurance.

The lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Centre are more than just a museum; they are a living tribute to those who lived, worked, and sailed along these coastal waters. From heroic tales like Minnie’s to the preservation of vital maritime infrastructure, the site invites visitors to connect with the people, vessels, and stories that helped shape life along the Alberni Inlet and Vancouver Island’s western shores.

Whether you’re a local resident, a history enthusiast, or a visitor passing through, the Port Alberni lighthouse is well worth the stop — a quiet, scenic spot where history is kept alive, and the spirit of the coast endures.

#6 - Mount Arrowsmith

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.

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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 was 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.

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.



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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, 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 pacific ocean 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.

#7- Harbour Quay

Port Alberni’s Harbour Quay is almost as iconic as the steam train and Mount Arrowsmith. Ever since it was opened on August 11, 1984, it has been a place for people to gather, shop, and enjoy the view.

It has always been a big deal in this community – and it’s been like that from the very beginning. At the grand opening gala, it was estimated that between 3,000 and 4,000 people were in attendance. An old Alberni Valley Times article said the large crowd gave “the opening a carnival atmosphere as they browsed through stores and market booths, munched on snacks, watched dancers, listened to bands and climbed the clocktower to the observation deck.” And it wouldn’t be a party in Port Alberni back then without a fly-past of the Martin Mars flying tanker as it dumped thousands of gallons of water into the harbour.

The clock tower was an impressive sight and offered a great spot to take in the sites of the community – to this day people still climb that tower to get a great photo



of Mount Arrowsmith. The clocks were funded by a donation from the estate of Fred Duncan, the owner of the Alberni Valley Times. His family has said that it was fitting that a man who was on deadline at the newspaper will be remembered with a clock.

The chairman of the Port Alberni Harbour Commission Hugh Anderson said, “We have a start here at Alberni Harbour Quay, a basic plan we can be proud of. I hope we just don’t stop and say the waterfront has been developed, because I think there are other things that can be done.”

Initially the plan for the bottom of Argyle was to create the Harbour Heritage Park. In 1982, the estimated price tag was \$2.3 million, with the city contributing \$800,000. The drawing of the plan was that in 1984 when it opens it will be “Port Alberni’s answer to Vancouver’s Granville Island Market,” adding that Port Alberni is going one better because they have the Lady Rose, charter boats, a heritage sawmill, the Two-Spot locomotive, and a spot for boat launching and building. The first plan was approved and passed by Mayor Paul Reitsma’s council in 1982.

The Waterfront Development Committee, chaired by then mayor Gillian Trumper, was the driving force

behind the project after that. Once their plan was finalized, they passed it over to the Alberni Harbour Quay Commission. Soon a design created by architects Norman Hotson and Associates was approved by city council, and the project began to move forward. In the end, they had extra money, which they put toward a boat launch ramp, a small boat dock, and funding for the Two-Spot Locomotive restoration. Luckily, through the years, Anderson got his wish as the Harbour Quay just continued to get better over the years.

In June 2022, Port Alberni gathered again at the Harbour Quay to celebrate. It was National Indigenous Peoples Day, and the celebration would mark another exciting day in the history of the Harbour Quay – the day the Clock Tower was renamed Wolf (Tlookwaana) Tower and given a new look to reflect its historic location in the community. The project included refurbishing the tower to improve safety, replacing the clocks with Indigenous art, painting the tower in traditional Tseshaht First Nation colours, and installing Indigenous storyboards.

The town leaders who first had a vision of what the Harbour Quay could offer the community were on the right track. It is now home to lots of businesses and it a place of gather for the community. Some of the businesses at the Quay include, The Donut Shop

(which has been there since day one), The Sugar Shak, Community Arts Council & The Grove (is a new addition to the area), Salmonberry's, CG Hair Studio, Lady Rose Services, The Starboard Grill, Pinto Goods & Refillery, Homestead Cookhouse, and many more! Not far up the road you can find Porto Taco, Boutique Belle Amies, Kinsmit Quilts, and The Spice Hut in the historic Carmoor Building which is a historical building in our community since 1912. Across the road there's the Card Corner, Gayle's Fashion, Belle's Boutique, and Iron Works Café. The old train station is abuzz with activity as the community awaits a new business that will open in the future in that location.

There are many things that bring us down to the Harbour Quay through the year; beautiful sightseeing spots, a playground, friday night and saturday morning markets, live music throughout the summer, and countless small businesses and restaurants. Whatever the reason is that brings you to visit the harbour quay, you are guaranteed to walk away with a piece of Port Alberni's amazing history.

#8 - McLean Mill National Historic Site: A Glimpse Into Vancouver Island's Logging Legacy

Nestled just outside of Port Alberni in the Alberni Valley, McLean Mill National Historic Site offers a unique and immersive look into British Columbia's early 20th-century logging and sawmilling industry. With over 35 original structures still standing, including a fully operational steam-powered sawmill, McLean Mill is a rare example of a preserved working logging site — and a must-visit for anyone interested in the region's rich industrial heritage.

Established in 1926 by Robert Bartlett (R.B.) McLean, his wife Cora, and their sons, the McLean Mill operated as a family-run business until 1965. For nearly four decades, the McLeans milled timber deep in the forest using steam-powered equipment and hand tools, carving out a livelihood in what was then a rugged and remote part of Vancouver Island.

In 1989, recognizing its historical and cultural significance, the site was designated a National Historic Site of Canada. That same year, the McLean family



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and MacMillan Bloedel generously donated the land and buildings to the City of Port Alberni, paving the way for restoration and preservation efforts led by local volunteers and heritage organizations.

Today, McLean Mill covers nearly 13 hectares and is home to a wide array of historic structures and equipment, including: The original steam-powered sawmill, with belts, gears, and pulleys still intact, logging machinery used to harvest and transport massive old-growth logs, the mill pond and dam, rebuilt as part of the site's restoration, and a collection of worker cabins, a cookhouse, blacksmith shop, and administrative buildings

Visitors can take self-guided walking tours through the site, reading interpretive signs that share the stories of the workers, the McLean family, and the tough but rewarding life of a logging crew in the early 1900s. When in operation, the steam sawmill offers live demonstrations — a rare opportunity to see historic milling technology in action.

McLean Mill National Historic Site is more than just a museum — it's a living snapshot of Vancouver Island's forestry roots, telling the story of a time when logging wasn't just an industry, but a way of life. Whether you're a history buff, a family on a day trip, or a camper seeking a scenic escape, McLean Mill offers a rich, educational, and unforgettable experience.

#9 - Bears on the Boardwalk: A Wild Encounter at Victoria Quay, Port Alberni

In the heart of Port Alberni, along the banks of the Somass River, Victoria Quay has become one of the city's most beloved—and surprising—wildlife viewing spots. Every year, particularly during the late summer and early fall, locals and visitors gather along the boardwalk to witness a truly unforgettable sight: black bears fishing for salmon in the river, just steps away from the downtown core.

Victoria Quay, affectionately known by locals as “the Quay,” is a scenic waterfront area with picnic tables, public art, and interpretive signs. But it's the bears that truly steal the show.

As salmon begin their spawning run up the Somass River, black bears emerge from the surrounding forests,

Photo Credit by Denay Piatka



drawn by the promise of a protein-rich meal. The riverbanks, especially around low tide, become prime fishing territory—and the boardwalk becomes a front-row seat to nature in action.

Visitors often see bears skillfully swiping salmon from the river or scavenging the shoreline for leftovers. While this may sound like a wilderness experience, it all happens just a few minutes from coffee shops, gas stations, and city streets—offering one of the most accessible bear viewing experiences on Vancouver Island.

To make the experience even safer and more enjoyable for the public, the Arrowsmith Rotary Club of Port Alberni generously sponsored the construction of a dedicated viewing dock at Victoria Quay. This raised wooden platform extends over the riverbank, giving viewers an unobstructed and elevated view of the bears below, while maintaining a respectful and safe distance.

The viewing dock has quickly become a popular destination for photographers, families, and wildlife enthusiasts of all ages. It's also a shining example of how community partnerships can create shared spaces that both celebrate and protect local wildlife.

Whether you're a first-time visitor or a lifelong resident, seeing bears on the boardwalk at Victoria Quay is a special experience that highlights Port Alberni's unique connection to nature. Few places in British Columbia offer such an easy and rewarding opportunity to view black bears in the wild — safely, responsibly, and right in the heart of town.

So pack your camera, grab a coffee from a nearby café, and head down to the Quay. You just might catch a glimpse of one of Port Alberni's wildest locals, fishing in the river as the sun sets behind the mountains.



Our mission is to advocate for Alberni Valley's tourism partners by promoting and marketing the region. We focus on community-driven, responsible management and stewardship initiatives to attract more visitors, diversify the tourism season, and enhance overnight stays.

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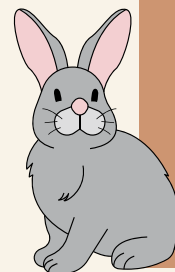
FIVE TIPS TO HELP WILDLIFE THRIVE THIS WINTER

The temperatures are dropping across Canada and many compassionate people are asking how they can support wildlife through winter. The Fur-Bearers has put together this list to help you find ways to support wildlife without directly feeding – because that can lead to significant issues long term.

Let us know which your favourite is!

1. LEAVE THE LEAVES.

A variety of benefits come with allowing fallen leaves to stay in piles on your property, including creating habitat for numerous species of insect and amphibians. These species are important to ecosystems and can also be an overwinter food source for many birds and mammals. Plus, leaves can create a natural mulch that benefits soil health and can reduce weed growth.



2. PLANT NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS

Including trees and shrubs in your yard that wildlife evolved alongside gives them incredible opportunities for food and shelter through winter. Work with a local nursery or gardening group to identify which plants are ideal for your soil, sun, precipitation, and hardiness zone.

3. DONT DEADHEAD NATIVE PLANTS

While removing the spent flowers of a plant (deadheading) can help generate more growth through the seasons, leaving seedheads intact overwinter not only provides visual interest, but offers a food source to birds and other wildlife. Solidago canadensis (Canadian goldenrod), for example, goes from a golden haven for pollinators to a striking winter plant that birds like Spinus tristis (American goldfinch) love to snack on.



4. MINIMIZE OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Wildlife will often avoid people, even in urban areas, and providing them that opportunity can make a big difference in their ability to thrive through winter. Reducing outdoor lights – particularly decorative lighting that illuminate greenspaces – will make your property more comfortable for wildlife to move through and potentially find habitat within.

5. CREATING NESTING BOXES

Whether it's for bats, birds, or squirrels, creating a nesting box can offer local wildlife additional habitat and safety from extreme temperatures in winter.



The Fur-Bearers INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THEFURBEARERS.COM

Celebrating 20 Years at John Paul II Catholic School

Article written by Heather Thomson

Port Alberni's St. John Paul II Catholic School is celebrating its 20 anniversary this school year. Opened in 2005, it had at the time 37 students and five staff. This year, they have 152 students and 20 staff.

"We are just a small, family-centred school," explains Rachelle Warman, who is in her ninth year as principal of the school. "We offer parents an alternative to the public – we offer them choice, and although we are a Catholic school, our students consist of multiple different religious backgrounds. We pride ourselves in being very diverse."

Before returning to a Catholic school, the building was known as Smith Memorial School. The first Catholic school in the Alberni Valley, it opened in 1951 and didn't close its doors until 1975. At that time, it was operated as a separate schools system with no government funding. Tuition was paid by parents and the local Catholic church.

The late Father William Smith spent 20 years saving money to bring his dream of a Catholic school in the Alberni Valley to fruition. Sadly, he never did see his dreams become reality. After his death in 1950, the Catholic church purchased Arrowsmith Lodge, the former site of an army hospital. The hospital was between Eighth and Ninth Avenues and Morton and Maitland Streets – the site of the current Our Home on Eighth Shelter and the low-energy housing project Maitland Village.

Today, St. John Paul II is an independent school receiving 50 per cent of its funding coming from the government, and the remaining 50 per cent being paid by parents through tuition and fundraising. It is located diagonally opposite from the original Catholic school, on the corner of Eighth Avenue and Maitland Street.

The school is focused on its core values – love, faithfulness, relationships, community, well-being,

diversity, and excellence. It is rooted in moral and value-based education in a welcoming, inclusive, and diverse community. It offers a small-scale, close-knit family atmosphere that focuses on growth, joy, and the Holy Spirit.

Warman says the school works to build a strong relationship with the parents, one where parents are partners in educating their children. "Our faith tells us that parents are the first line of education for children," she explains. "Our parents are our leaders, our volunteers, and our support, whether financially or with their time."

The school is a Catholic school, and Warman says they respect and recognize all faiths and people who do not come from a faith-based background. "Non-faith-based families come knowing they are coming to a faith-based school that is focused on good Christian values and good education," she adds. "They come with an




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openness to receive this message of God’s love.”

She says often parents come with questions, and they do their best to answer. “We strive to be a place of love – one that understands the importance of building up our children, no matter what this faith is,” she says. “Their children are God’s children too.”

“We are developing a relationship with Haahuupayak Elementary. The focus is on having Trevor Little build relationships with our staff and students, sharing the Nuu-chah-nulth culture, language, and traditions,” Warman explains. “In this partnership, we are doing the very important and necessary work of truth and reconciliation, one that began six years ago with Tseshaht Elder Anne Robinson and Hupacasath Elder Angie Miller.”

Warman says it has a family feel that comes from the strength the connections within the school have on students, parents, and teachers. “It all comes from love – a love we want the children to feel, not only from us, but from our Creator,” she explains.

It is also important to the faculty of the school that they are teaching their students to be good citizens of the community. Located close to two shelters, Warman says students become familiar with the struggles some people in the community face. This exposure to some of the less fortunate people in the community makes it important to ensure the students approach this from a place of love and compassion.

Warman says the staff and students at St. John Paul II are proud of their small school and all that it has and continues to accomplish. She believes the roots they are giving the students will provide them with a strong foundation.

St. John Paul II will mark its 20th anniversary in many different ways throughout the school year. Each is designed to celebrate the history of the school and uplift the students and their spirits.

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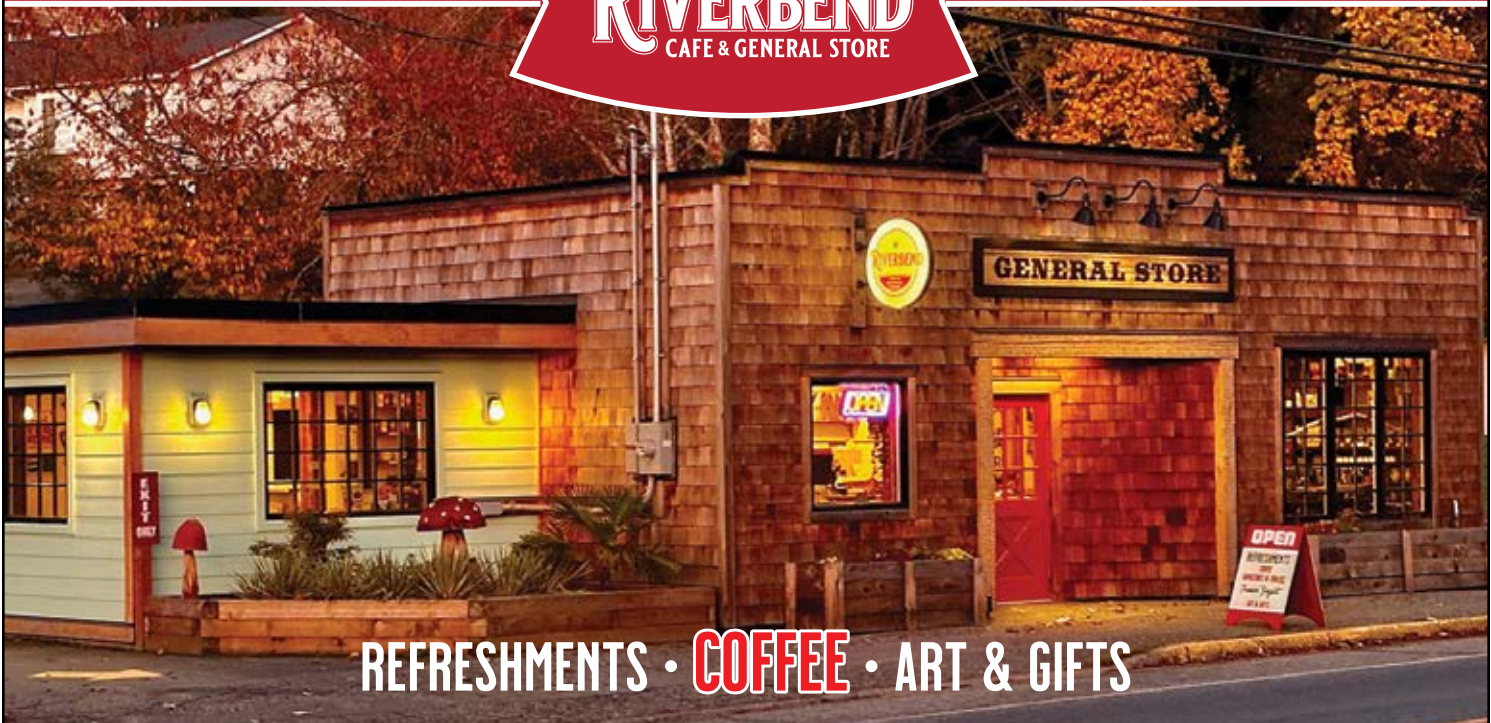
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PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS MOVING PORT ALBERNI FORWARD

FROM PLANS TO PROGRESS

Building a Safer, Stronger Port Alberni

As we head into a new election year, the City of Port Alberni is reflecting on how far we've come and where we're going next. Guided by our *2023–2027 Corporate Strategic Plan*, we're focused on projects that make our community safer, stronger and more connected.

Progress on Priorities

The Strategic Plan is our roadmap. It keeps us focused on what matters most to residents: safe neighbourhoods, reliable infrastructure, a healthy economy and welcoming public spaces.

Many of the changes are already visible. The Quay-to-Quay Pathway, improvements at Clutesi Haven Marina and upgrades at Victoria Quay aren't just about appearance — they're about making it easier and more enjoyable for people to walk, cycle and gather. Features like better lighting, safer crossings and accessible amenities mean these spaces can be enjoyed by more people, more often.

Master Planning: Charting the Path Forward

Rather than tackling projects in isolation, the City is taking a coordinated approach through its Master Planning process. New plans are underway in areas such as transportation, parks and recreation, utilities, fire services, stormwater management, wastewater, drinking water and greenhouse gas reduction.

This process allows us to see how one decision ripples into many. Improving transit corridors or multimodal routes, for example, feeds into development, energy planning and business investment. Updating stormwater strategies supports better land use, infrastructure and environmental health.

Public engagement is at the heart of this approach. By consolidating engagement across these plans, we're making it easier for people to participate and ensuring feedback is heard and integrated. The plans also build on existing policies such as the Official Community Plan, which is being updated to reflect what residents want for growth, land use and community character.

By the end of 2025, the goal is to have draft master plans ready to guide capital investment and zoning decisions for years ahead.

Investing in Community Safety

Safety is built into every decision — whether we're designing public spaces, or planning for growth. In 2022 the City revitalized a building on Third Avenue to house Bylaw Services and the Community Policing team in one accessible location.

We also received a provincial grant to establish a "situation table" — a collaborative team of social services, law enforcement and health agencies that identifies individuals or families at risk and connects them with support before crises escalate. This program has already proven successful in helping vulnerable people get the resources they need.

Our Community Policing program continues to thrive, providing Crime Watch, Speed Watch, Distracted Driving, Bike Registration, and public outreach. These efforts strengthen the bridge between residents and the RCMP, increasing visibility, awareness and prevention.

We've also partnered with Island Health and the Alberni-Clayoquot Health Network on mapping the service gaps in community safety, social services, homelessness, health, mental health and substance use. This work resulted in the creation of the Continuum of Care Coalition to shape future program funding and initiatives.

Staying Connected and Flexible

None of this works if the City operates behind closed doors. That's why keeping residents in the loop is so important. Council receives regular reports on economic development activities and major projects, and we share information through "What We Heard" reports, online dashboards, social media, open houses and surveys.

This openness helps us stay flexible. When challenges emerge — whether in regional markets or infrastructure pressures — we can pivot because transparency and community input are built into the process.

The goal is simple: when you have the right information, you can make informed choices and feel connected to what's happening around you.

Looking Ahead

Port Alberni is on the move. As we enter a new election year, we'll continue to deliver on our Strategic Plan and Master Planning process, keeping community well-being at the centre of every decision. Together with Council, staff, partners and residents, we're building a community that is safer, more vibrant and more resilient.

The progress is visible all around us — from our waterfront poised for revitalization to stronger emergency preparedness and a clear, strategic vision for growth.

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The Story of Pickleball

THE FASTEST GROWING SPORT IN NORTH AMERICA

Local pickleballers want to expand their club to make it possible for everyone to play the sport if they want to give it a try.

You may be asking yourself, “is pickleball a real sport?” and the resounding answer from the Port Alberni Picklers Association is, “of course it is.” In fact, pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in North America.

It can best be described as a combination of tennis, ping-pong, and badminton. There are some discrepancies with where and when it was created, but the most common answer is that it came to life in 1965 in Seattle. The story goes that some children were bored at a party and were given a ping-pong paddle and a waffle ball. The first game was played on an old badminton court with a badminton net. Eventually the net was lowered, paddles were improved, and rules started to take shape.

In 1972, the sport was officially called pickleball. Why “pickle”? The story goes that the creator of the game had a dog named Pickle. Because of its passion for retrieving the balls, the balls soon became known as Pickle’s Balls. The name grew from there.

In 1990, pickleball was being played in 50 states, and it continued to spread, including making its way north of the border. The history of pickleball does not go back that far, but the sport is growing quickly. That is what is behind the drive to open up more courts in the City of Port Alberni. In the summer months, the PA Picklers can be found almost any day, at any time out on the five courts at Gyro Park. Two years ago their club was made up of 69 enthusiastic pickleballers. This summer, that number ballooned to 150 players.

“It’s amazing how someone can pick up a paddle and just

play and have fun,” explains Sam Doumont, president of the PA Picklers. “They are out there laughing and having a great time even if they don’t really know what they are doing yet.”

Doumont says it’s the volume of people picking up the sport that made them decide to approach the City of Port Alberni’s council to see if an expansion is possible. They are thrilled that their proposal was accepted, and they can soon start moving forward on their plans. This will mean the PA Picklers will take two of the neighbouring tennis courts and convert them to permanent pickleball courts. Not only will this offer open access to pickleball for more people, it means people can play without having to set up the courts every time. Currently, the PA Picklers have to set up the nets each time they play, whether it is in the summer courts at Gyro or in the winter at the Alberni Athletic Hall.



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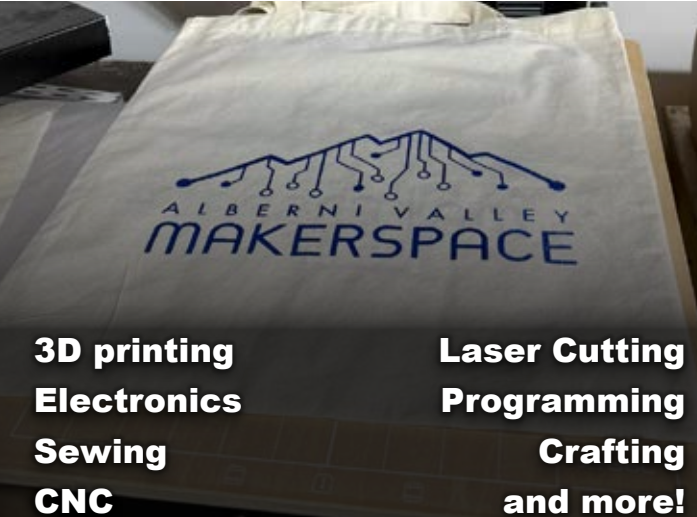
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With two dedicated courts, people can go and play any time, even if they are not members of the club. “It’s the volume of players that is pushing this expansion,” Doumont says.

When asked why she thinks the sport is so popular, she said it’s simple – it’s something anyone can do. All they need is a paddle and a ball, and they can start learning. “Pickleball is about community,” she says, “If I didn’t have pickleball, I don’t know how I would have met people here when I first moved to the Alberni Valley.”

The expansion of the courts is expected to cost approximately \$150,000 – money they don’t have yet. “We’re maybe 20 per cent of the way there,” Doumont says. “But the rest will have to be raised through fundraising.” The team has already been busy fundraising every chance they get. They had a booth at the Alberni District Fall Fair and have an account set up at the bottle depot so people could donate their empties. Doumont says she hopes people support their

fundraising efforts, but she expects it will be a two-year job to complete the expansion. So far the PA Picklers have had a lot of support from the community.

“It really is great for all ages,” Doumont adds. “You just have to pair up with players at your level, and it can be fun for everyone.” The PA Picklers are the only pickleball club in the Valley. Although there are a number of other places you can play in the Alberni Valley without joining a club. The Sunshine Club also offers pickleball to its members, and anyone can drop by to play at Cougar Smith Park. The Sproat Lake Community Hall has a number of courts and players set up in the hall as well, but these courts are private.

If you are interested in learning more about pickleball or the PA Picklers and how you can support their expansion, you can email PAPicklers@gmail.com. You can also visit their Facebook page by searching PA-Picklers-Association.



PAACL Invites you to join us

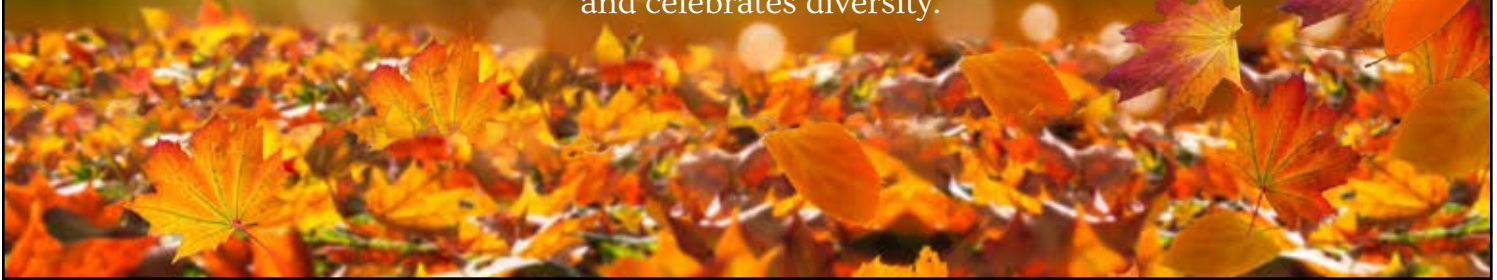
October 21st & 22nd

Burger and Beverage Fundraiser

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Fun Fair

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**The Hupacasath First Nation people
are a living history of the
Alberni Valley. For thousand of years
their people have instilled the
importance of community here.**



In October 2004, hundreds of people gathered for the unveiling of the Alberni Valley's first Welcoming figure. Nuuchii, which means mountain, is the male welcoming figure. He faces east up Johnston, welcoming people who come by land. The figure was carved by Rod Sayers, Cecil Dawson, and Doug David over a four-month period. Although the Hupacasath First Nations raised the figure, the base of Nuuchii is made up of 14 stones, each one representing one of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations.

Nuuchii was the first Hupacasath pole carved in more than 75 years and, in May 2005 was joined by a female welcoming figure facing the mouth of the Somass River, welcoming people who arrive to the Valley by boat. The female figure, called River Princess, was carved by Rod Sayers and Cecil Dawson out of a red cedar log selected shortly after the male figure was raised in the fall.

Judith Sayers, chief councillor for Hupacasath at the time, told the Ha-shilth-sa paper the two figures serve as a reminder to the millions of visitors that pass by every year, that this is Nuu-chah-nulth territory and that their people remain involved in the things that happen in their territory.

To the left of the Welcoming Figures lies the Whaler's Canoe Exhibit. The large carving depicts a proud history of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling Canoe sculpture was carved out of yellow cedar and was originally housed in the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria. It is a tribute to the strong connection between the Nuu-chah-nulth people and the sea. They were known to be great whalers, and this life-sized carving depicts the strength and ferocity of the whalers. They headed out to the open ocean in search of whales in a canoe with only spears and wooden tools. They worked together to hunt some of the largest mammals in the world. The monument is permanently housed in a small shelter at the bottom of Johnston Road and serves as a reminder that, although whaling is no longer a practice among Nuu-chah-nulth, it was once a strong tradition.



5500 Ahahswinis Drive, Port Alberni BC
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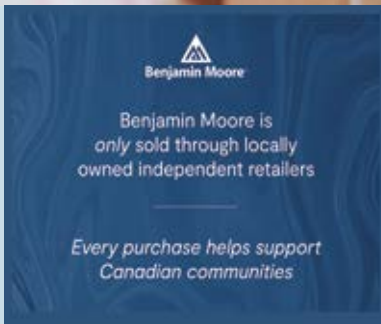
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First Nations people called it Ah-wha- chiss meaning ‘a navigational guide.’

GREAT CENTRAL LAKE

A large lake in the centre of Vancouver Island, it was named by early visitors to the area. Great Central Lake is the deepest lake on the island with a maximum depth of 1100 feet. Joe Drinkwater built and operated the famous floating lodge, the Ark there, which stood from 1911 to 1926.

MOUNT KLITSA

First Nations people named it Klee-sah meaning ‘always white.’

POLLY POINT

The point is on the reserve of the Tse-shaht Band on the east side of the Alberni Inlet, near the site of the former Alberni Plywood plant. Named for a matriarch of the band.

ROGERS CREEK

Drained into the Somass River, it is named for Jeremiah

(Jerry) Rogers, bushwhacker for the Anderson Company in 1800.

SHOEMAKER BAY

The bay was named for Richard Parkinson, a shoemaker who lived in the area in the late 1880’s.

SOMASS RIVER

Almost all Alberni valley rivers and creeks flow into the Somass River which, in turn, empties into the Alberni Inlet.

First Nations named it Tsoo-mah-ahs, meaning ‘river of many tributaries washing the earth.’

WEINER BAY

A bay along Lakeshore Road on Kleecoot Arm of Sproat Lake. Named for Nils Weiner who lived there and was a noted violin maker and boat builder. Nils disappeared mysteriously in 1944 when his home was destroyed in a huge explosion.

DEBEAUX CREEK

Drains into China Creek, it is named for Bobby DeBeaux,

a local character who had his ‘hotel’ adjacent to the Duke of York mine which was near the creek.

CHINA CREEK

Having its sources in the Golden Eagle and King Solomon Basins, China Creek drains into the Alberni Inlet near Underwood Cove. It was known first as Gold River when the Chinese panned for gold C. 1860. Thirty years later, a considerable amount of mining was done in the area which was known by this time as China Creek.

The book, Place Names of the Alberni Valley’ is no longer in print but the book can be explored in the Archives, situated in the AV Museum.





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