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Originally from South Africa, I moved to Port Alberni in November 2024 with my wife, Enette (a pharmacist), and our two children, Elma and Luan. With a PhD in Practical Theology, extensive coaching training, and certification as an Enneagram facilitator, I create a safe space for growth and transformation. I specialize in helping clients navigate anxiety, frustration, conflict, anger, grief, self-harm, shame, guilt, and relationship challenges. I incorporate Enneagram-based personality coaching to enhance self-awareness, drive lasting change, and foster both personal and group growth. As a trained mediator, I also assist in conflict resolution and strengthening relationships. My approach is relational, practical, and grounded in neuroscience, helping clients build resilience and lasting habits for a fulfilling life. If you feel stuck or overwhelmed, I'd love to walk alongside you. Let's create a life where you don't just survive—you thrive.

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## WEST COAST AESTHETICS

West Coast Aesthetics is owned and operated by me, Dr Cecile Smit. I was born, raised and trained in South Africa. Port Alberni has been my home now for the last 16 years. I have been trained and worked in several areas of medicine which includes anaesthesia, women's health, in patient care and aesthetics. I currently practice oncology locally. I have been injecting Botox and dermal fillers since 2010. I feel passionate about anti-aging and making everyone feel like their best and natural self. I continue to enhance my skills through conferences and workshops. I truly believe that experience matters.

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# VALLEY VIBE

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Article Sumbitted By  
**MOUNT KLITSA  
GARDEN CLUB**

**Gardening! Since the dawn of man, the garden has sustained body, mind and spirit. It has provided food to nourish; medicines to support and cure; fabric and dyes to clothe; colour and scent to delight the senses; and rest for the weary spirit. Port Alberni is rich, not only in gardeners, loamy soil and accessible manure, but, also, in a support system of local (many family owned) garden centres, and a bank of knowledge held by local farmers and resident gardeners.**


The Mt Klitsa Garden Club celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2025. Started in March 1955 at the home of Ann Thomson of McCoy Lake Farm, the club membership has grown from 15 to 80. The Club’s emblem is the local wildflower, the Trillium. This choice was made based on the success of the club’s bid to protect and conserve the plant which resulted in the 1958 Conservation Law.

The current club meets at the Echo Centre at 7pm on the first Thursday of each month from October to May. Business is dealt with quickly to allow plenty of time to share knowledge, ideas, and opportunities for learning as well as the chance to win one of many garden-themed draws or prizes. The monthly Parlour Show allows members a sneak peek at other gardens and the Plant Table is a fund of low-cost recycling and sharing of implements, cuttings, seeds, magazines and books.

One half of each meeting is dedicated to a speaker. Topics range from seed saving to fermenting and preserving, from making cannabis edibles to wine, from plant diversity to invasive species, from permaculture on acreage to container gardening, or from water gardens to fire smart horticultural practice! Most speakers are local to the town or island so the information they share is pertinent to our gardeners.


The Garden Club year launches in September with an incredible display of bouquets, produce, preserves, herbs, teas and seasonings at the Fall Fair. The plant sale in May boasts a long line-up of eager customers waiting for opening time so as to pounce on the hundreds

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of reasonably priced contributions of plants, seedlings & seeds from the membership. June is a social month spent touring members' gardens and culminating in a garden party.

The knowledge available in the room at a Mt. Klitsa Meeting is positively encyclopedic. The "Getting to the Root of It" feature allows members to ask for advice on everything and anything. No question is regarded as silly. Suffering from a plague of pests? Need advice on pruning? The breadth and depth of knowledge in the room can usually provide an answer. Help is always at hand!

Casting a look into the past highlights the relevance of gardening in today's quickly changing world. Gardens, even to just a small kale or potato patch, have been absolutely vital to families throughout the ages. Many of Canada's immigrants arrived as a result of the devastating potato crop failure resulting in the Irish Potato Famine. The wartime Victory Gardens became a necessity when supply chains were threatened. The 100 Mile Diet provoked a resurgence of interest in understanding the importance of eating local, not only for the good of the planet, but with the premise that

what grew locally best suited the body.

Most recently, the restrictions and insulating challenges of the pandemic rekindled a will to learn practices which were fast becoming lost to the more recent generations - and their adoption helped people survive, and even thrive, through that challenging time. In addition to gardening, baking (who will forget all those photos of sourdough?), preserving and even making and mending one's own clothes became de rigeur.

Unpredictable weather, ruined harvests, disrupted supply routes, rapidly rising costs, etc., present themselves as very real challenges now and in the future. Suddenly, WWII Victory Garden type slogans - Waste Not Want Not, Grow Your Own, Pick Your Own, You Can Can or Buy Local - could become watchwords for our present day! The recent rise of the 'Buy Nothing' culture reflects a growing trend in becoming more self-supporting and in charge of leading a more self-sustaining life. A rural town like Port Alberni can allow for even broader choices that could include making your own clothing by growing flax or nettles, farming sheep, llamas or rabbits alongside planting or foraging for dyes.

Gardening, in addition to offsetting rising food costs and carbon emissions, can nurture by providing exercise, stress relief and a great reason to be outside! It offers a means of self-expression and can be practiced no matter where you live. It can be enjoyed on a balcony or patio, in an allotment, by the acre, one raised bed at a time, or even by reclaiming the front lawn or boulevard. Plants can assist to prevent soil erosion, reduce water use, retard the spread of fire by the judicious choice of plantings, feed a family, all the while providing a more diverse landscape with habitats for endangered species like bees, butterflies, and helpful insects. Pets, too, enjoy a shady garden, while chickens, ducks and goats offer admirable tilling, mowing and pest control services.

Port Alberni is rich in opportunities for the sharing of seeds, plants and knowledge which can lead to the ultimate satisfaction of filling your own plate with your very own healthy, organic food. Yes. It can be hard work, but hard work can be equally satisfying in its own right. And the results? Worth every thrust of the fork in the earth!  
<http://mkgc.ca/wp/>





## BEE-RAD'S VACUUM LAND

I've returned to my hometown of Port Alberni to fulfill my lifelong dream of owning my very own vacuum shop. My love for vacuum cleaners began at the age of three and has been ongoing ever since. I've been an avid collector of vintage vacuums and appliances for over 25 years. I offer a rich history of my experience directly in the vacuum and hospitality industry. I'm passionate about delivering personalized old-fashioned service and solutions to each and every customer, for all their cleaning needs & move.

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## Wildlife-Friendly Gardens Benefit Everyone

*Quick tips to help establish native plants and habitat that will increase yield for fruits and veggies, climate resilience, and more.*

**By The Fur-Bearers**

All things in nature are connected and rely upon each other – and anyone who's spent time in a garden will have seen this in action. But many residents may not realize the impact that adding native plants can have – and not just in terms of traditional garden design or aesthetics. Here's a few tips that can help your garden connect to the rest of the community and provide benefits for one and all:

1. **Planting native.** Simply adding native, area-appropriate plants to an existing garden can make a dramatic impact. Pollinating insects and wildlife evolved alongside these native plants, and intricate relationships already exist. By adding native plants of any kind, you're already giving your garden a role in ecological connectivity, which is essential for biodiversity (a healthy mix of the native plants, insects, wildlife, and other life in the area).
2. **Encouraging pollinators** can increase yields. If you're growing fruits or veggies in your yard, adding plants that attract pollinators can make a sizable impact on how much food you produce. Say good-bye to manual pollination and hello to a healthy ecosystem that rewards you with more fruits and vegetables when you harvest.
3. **Diversify bloom time.** Ensuring there are native plants blooming through various times of year not only adds colour and interest to your garden, it can ensure active pollination and food sources for many insects, wildlife, and birds, across the seasons.

1. **Limit (or don't) deadhead.** The act of removing spent flowers from plants to encourage new flowering growth is a wonderful way to get more out of your plants. But with some native plant species, leaving spent flowers – seedheads – intact will benefit wildlife and birds and provide winter interest. A species like *Anaphalis margaritacea* (Pearly Everlasting) is a great example of a plant to leave intact.
  2. **Delay spring cleanup.** Removing leaves, fallen tree limbs, and collapsed perennial or annual flowers may accidentally remove essential habitat for pollinators. Not only do these pollinators help plants grow, they can be important food sources for native and local wildlife. Wait until the temperature is consistently above 10°C and you'll be protecting essential habitat.
  3. **Be bear aware.** Planting native is important, but being bear smart matters, too. By managing or removing plants that are specifically attracting black bears to urbanized areas, we can reduce the chance of a negative encounter between people, pets, and bears. Some berry-producing plants and fruit trees are typically of greatest interest to black bears. Talk with your neighbours and local gardening experts to learn more about exclusions, electric fencing, and appropriate plantings for your specific area. Learn more about how to coexist with bears in the Alberni Valley at [TheFurBearers.com](http://TheFurBearers.com).
- It is vital that we create connections to nature, not just for the ecosystem, pollinators, and wildlife, but for ourselves. Experiencing nature, even with native plants in an urban area, provides mental health benefits and can bring joy to people. Enjoy spring, and thank you for helping our community grow.





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Thanks to our community's support, The Salvation Army Alberni Valley Ministries provided 158,806 meals in 2024 and 300 toy hampers at Christmas. Your generosity makes this possible—past, present, and future. Thank you!

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# Hupačasath

welcomes you

The Hupacasath First Nations people are a living history of the Alberni Valley. For thousand of years, our ancestors have instilled the importance of community on central Vancouver Island. Our traditional territory includes the town of Port Alberni, Great Central Lake, Sproat Lake, Mount Arrowsmith, Thunder Mountain and Mount Klista. The Hupacasath First Nation is one of the 14 Nuu Chat Nulth First Nations. The collective term, 'Nuu Chat Nulth' means "all along the mountains and sea."

Mountain Arrowsmith (shown in the background of Loon Lake) Cal-ka-cath means 'jagged points facing upward' - is the traditional name for Mount Arrowsmith. The mountain which stands before you, is one of the eastern most boundaries of the Hupacasath territory A Nuu Shah Nulth story about Mount Arrowsmith describes a Thunderbird who was hunting over the ocean when it caught two whales. Carrying one in each of its talons, on the way back to its nest, Thunderbird dropped one of the whales on the op of Kal-ka-cath. .

In recent times, an anthropologist and archeologist found the skeletal remains of a grey whale at the top of Mount Arrowsmith. They deduced that it was left behind after a historical flood, but the Hupacasath Elders told them that Thunderbird had left it there eons ago.

The Thunderbird pole (locaed at Loon Lake) honours the supernatural create whose main source of food is the grey whale. When Thunderbird flaps its wings, we hear thunder roll. It carries Lightning Snakes under its wings for hunting and when it blinks, snakes shoot down and stun its prey. Then Thunderbird swoops in and carries its catch to its nest on Thunder Mountain, where it still lives today.

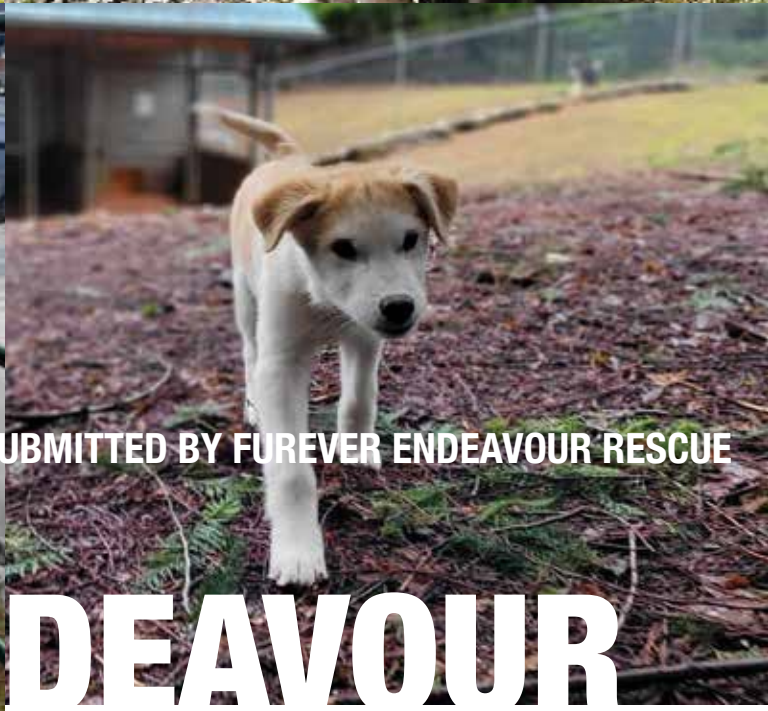


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ARTICLE & PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY FUREVER ENDEAVOUR RESCUE

# EMBARKING ON THIS ENDEAVOUR

Do you believe that every dog deserves a chance at happiness? We certainly do. And who are we? Well, our full name is Furever Endeavour Rescue Network, but you can call us FERN for short. As a volunteer-run nonprofit society, we're dedicated to helping local dogs. With a base of operations nestled in the foothill forest of the Beaufort mountain range in Port Alberni, our team of volunteers works hard to improve the lives of the animals in our care. In partnership with the CARE Network in Tofino, we primarily assist remote West Coast communities that might have limited access to vet care. In addition to working with these communities, we accept surrender requests from Port Alberni families who - for a variety of reasons - need to rehome their

canine companions.

We opened our doors in February of 2024 and we are overjoyed to report that, in our first year of operation, we helped connect more than 40 tail-waggers with their furever families. Most of them were on the larger side - we like big mutts and we cannot lie. But we take dogs of all sizes, ages and breeds. Every individual who comes into our care has their own unique story and personality. From silly snuggly puppies to wise old souls, each FERN dog has plenty of love and joy to give.

## The Folks Behind FERN

Furever Endeavour Rescue Network was founded by

close friends Cydney Pedersen, Lee Voorspools and Darien Edgeler. These animal-lovers make up FERN's board of directors, and they dedicate a great deal of time to ensuring that Furever Endeavour chugs along smoothly. Contrary to what some people may think, running a rescue involves a lot more than just playing with puppies. {Although that certainly does happen. And it's as delightful as you'd expect.} There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes. Processing applications, for instance. Other ongoing tasks include kennel cleaning and maintenance, social media posting, bookkeeping, networking, training, fundraising and so on. The list is longer than a full-grown dachshund!

Thankfully, FERN has a growing number of volunteers who help us fight the good fight. These amazing individuals lend a hand in so many critical ways. They walk the dogs in our care and take them to the vet. They bathe and socialize them. They've even been known to clear the snow from the driveway of our 22-bay kennel facility!

Port Alberni is often described as "a town that cares" and we've certainly found that to be the case. Our local Bosley's offers an incredible amount of support. They collect donations, talk enthusiastically about our pups and organize adoption events. Thanks to the contributions of PA manufacturer DBA Silencing and the benevolence of DBA's owners, Archie and Shirley Cardinal, our kennel facility has been fully renovated. Local theatre club Portal Players has held fundraisers for us. Members of the general public, meanwhile, have bolstered our efforts in a variety of ways, including sharing our Facebook posts about specific dogs in need of an adoptive or foster home.

## The Scoop On Fostering

Fostering a dog isn't just providing a temporary residence for a homeless hound. It's much more transformative than that. Fostering can be life-changing. Allow us to explain. Our rescue headquarters is located at the former Dogwood Boarding Kennel out Beaver Creek. It has undergone major upgrades and is now a safe and comfortable decompression area for the dogs who come into our care. Although FERN's base of operations is a pleasant place for pooches, we strive to move dogs into foster homes as swiftly as possible following intake and vet clearance. Many of the fidos who come to us need some TLC before they're ready to relocate. In an ideal

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world, these foster families would be readily available, making a dog's stay at the kennel short and sweet. And you can help with that!

Whether you have the space and time for a lively puppy or for a mellow couch potato adult, fostering can be immensely meaningful for both parties. The dog feels secure and loved as they adjust to all the changes they're encountering. And the humans experience the joy and satisfaction of making life better for another being. A lot of our fosters tell us that making a difference in this manner is more rewarding than anything else they do. We make things as easy as pawsible for our wonderful foster families by providing them with food, equipment, support and anything else they may need.

### The Skinny On Adoption

Are you ready to permanently add a floofy family member to your household? Adopting a rescue dog means choosing love, while receiving a whole lot of wagging tails in return! Every dog in FERN's care receives a veterinary health exam, vaccinations, dewormer treatment, flea and tick preventatives and a microchip

for identification. Our adoption fee also covers spay or neuter surgery, which we consider a must. This is because, in reality, BC is facing a crisis. Shelters and rescues are full to overflowing with sweet-natured dogs who would make tremendous pets. Similarly, surrender wait lists are lengthy and ever-expanding. Now, rescue dogs can have their quirks and challenges. But that's true of every dog. If you're in a position to adopt a diamond in the ruff, you're officially a part of the solution.

### Final Woof

Here at Furever Endeavour Rescue Network, we're always looking for new friends. If you're passionate about helping animals, we invite you to become a part of this FERNY journey! You can foster, adopt, volunteer, donate, or follow our socials and share our posts. All contributions are welcome. If you'd like more information, please visit fureverendeavour.ca. You can also check out our Facebook page or give us a jingle at (250) 736-0788. At FERN, we strongly believe that - if enough of us work together - we can create a world where every dog is happy and loved.

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The Port Alberni Association for Community Living (PAACL) has been a registered non-profit society incorporated under the Society Act of BC, since 1957. PAACL has a long and highly respected reputation in the community for advocacy and service to people with developmental disabilities and their families and friends, our employees, and other concerned citizens for 68 years. PAACL is accredited by CARF, an independent accrediting body that assists us in enhancing the quality of our services and meeting internationally recognized organizational and program standards.

Providing quality, person-centered support and services enabling individuals to thrive.

The Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce hosted a wonderful evening celebrating the Excellence Awards. We were thrilled to present the Inclusive Employer Award to Antidote Distilling Co. The Inclusive Employer Award recognizes organizations that lead the way in creating exemplary workplace environments.



CONTACT US  
Port Alberni Association for Community Living  
3008 2nd Avenue  
Port Alberni V9Y 1Y9  
Phone: 250-724-7155  
Email: [admin@paacl.ca](mailto:admin@paacl.ca)



DID YOU KNOW?

High above Comox Glacier

**Gliders have no engine - but can stay aloft for hours.**  
Gliders are gracefully designed to stay aloft by harnessing rising air currents, such as thermals, ridge lift, and wave lift. With skillful piloting, a glider can remain in the air for hours and cover hundreds of kilometres. Alberni glider pilots often fly the length of the valley, from Mt. Arrowsmith to Comox Glacier and beyond.

**Warm rising air is the secret to long-distance gliding.**  
Thermals are columns of warm air that rise as a result of heating from the Earth's surface. A glider circling in the core of a thermal can climb at rates of 500 to 1,000 feet per minute. Most sailplanes have a glide ratio of 30:1 or better, meaning that if you were at 7,000 feet (2,134 meters) above Mt. Arrowsmith, you could potentially glide over 64 km in a straight line. The key is finding the next thermal along the way and "refilling the tanks" for the next leg of the flight!

**Gliders are towed into the air.**  
Since gliders don't have an engine, they need a launch method. A common method is an aerotow behind a powered airplane until reaching a height where reliable lift can be found. In the Alberni Valley, gliders typically release between 3,000 and 5,000 feet near the Beaufort Ridge, where warm air rises off the hot rocks, providing the necessary lift.

**Gliding is more accessible than you think.**  
Compared to powered flight, gliding is an affordable and accessible sport for a wide range of ages. Some people begin as teenagers, while others take it up later in life. If you've ever dreamed of flying, gliding is one of the best ways to make that dream a reality. Many career pilots and astronauts got their start in gliders, as the sport offers invaluable 'hands and feet' piloting experience and sharpens decision-making skills. Earning a gliding licence can take just a few months with dedication, or you can choose a more relaxed pace. The Alberni Valley Soaring Association boasts members ranging from 13 years-old to well into their 80s. Once you earn your license, you can rent club gliders at a very affordable rate and fly whenever you wish. Plus, you'll become part of a global community of passionate glider pilots.

Whether you're looking for a 30-minute to 1.5-hour scenic flight as a passenger or aiming to fulfill your dream of learning to fly, we are here to help make it happen!  
**Call or book online to begin the next chapter of your life's adventure!**



Ridge surfing above the Beaufort Range



Herb, 89, and Keanna, 19, earned their glider licenses in 2024. Age is not a limitation!

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ARTICLE WRITTEN BY HEATHER THOMSON

## PADDLING ON SPROAT LAKE

### SPROAT LAKE IS KNOWN AS THE BEST LAKE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, AND IT'S IN OUR BACKYARD.

If you love being out on the water and you are looking for something fun to do on the lake, why not think about paddling. The Alberni Valley is home to two paddling groups. The Sproat Lake Canoe Club paddles outrigger canoes all year, with paddling opportunities almost every day of the week. The West Coast Dragon Boat Society hits the water in April and paddles only in the summer months. Both are excellent ways to explore Sproat Lake, get some great exercise, and meet amazing people.

Many of the paddlers participate in both types of paddling, because they are quite close in paddling style and technique. It is a sport for anyone – our paddles range in age from 20s to 92 in age. Dragon boating uses large boats with up to 22 paddlers. Outrigging is a bit smaller, and the club has six-person, four-person, and two-person outriggers.

Once you try it, you'll love it. There is nothing more peaceful than paddling on Sproat Lake in a canoe. Everyone has a special, personal reason for loving the sport. Some you wouldn't think of like the bird life. Another great thing is that it's affordable. The clubs charge modest fees, and all your equipment is supplied, if you don't have your own. Both canoe styles are quite fascinating when you dig into their past. Outrigger canoes have been used in the Pacific Rim for around 30,000 years as a means of transportation and sport. Dragon boating dates back approximately 2,000 years as an ancient Chinese tradition, full of ritual and pride.

The West Coast Dragon Boat Society was founded in the fall of 1999 by a group of determined individuals. The idea came after Donna James watched her son paddle in Vancouver. She was smitten by the dragon



and came back to the Valley determined to start a club at home. When the first team emerged – the Alberni Wave Riders – they didn’t let the fact that they had no dragon boat hold them back. They practiced on kindergarten chairs using sticks for paddles. After a lot of fundraising, the Society purchased three dragon boats. This allows the two teams – the Die-Hard Dragons and the Sproat Ness Dragons – to practice two times a week and host regattas. The Die-Hards go out on Monday and Wednesdays, while the Sproat Ness Dragons are on the water on Monday and Thursdays. Although both teams race in the local dragon boat festival at Sproat Lake Provincial Park, the Sproat Ness Dragons also compete in festivals across Vancouver Island. Keep your eyes open for details on an upcoming open house or just come out to try it beginning in mid-April. For more information, email [westcoastdragonboatsociety@gmail.com](mailto:westcoastdragonboatsociety@gmail.com).

The Sproat Lake Canoe Club (SLCC) has been paddling, practicing, and racing on Sproat Lake for more than 20 years. The club first originated when a group of inexperienced, but eager, paddlers reached out to some larger clubs in Victoria for advice on starting up. After purchasing two outrigger canoes and practicing with other clubs, SLCC was formed.

Outrigger canoeing is a fantastic way to get exercise, enjoy the outdoors, experience the camaraderie of your teammates, and enjoy yearly races with other clubs. Anyone interested in learning more or finding out about an upcoming event is encouraged to email Lindy James at [roy.james54@gmail.com](mailto:roy.james54@gmail.com) or call 250.731.7740. The cost isn’t much, and again all the equipment is supplied.



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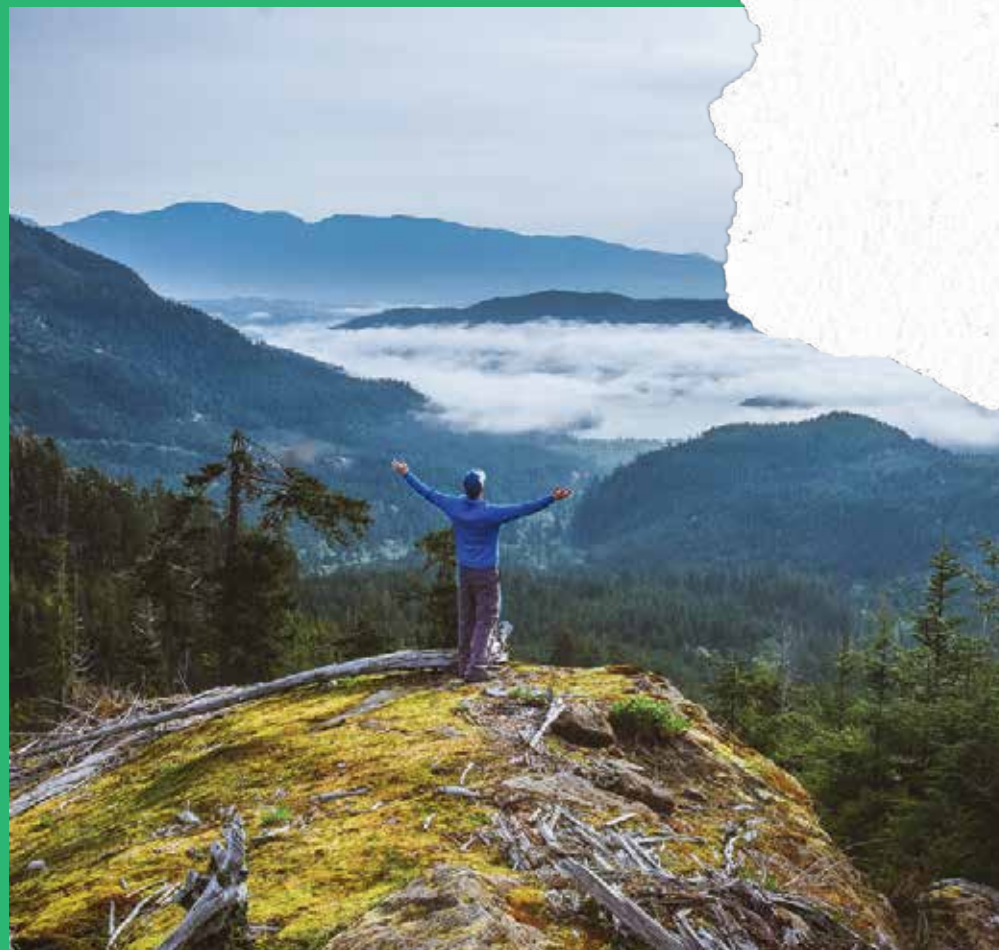
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[albernivalleytourism.com](http://albernivalleytourism.com)







# ALBERNI EATS

## ALBERNI BREWING CO.

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**4630 Adelaide St • Port Alberni**

**778-744-8010 • [albernibrewingcompany.ca](http://albernibrewingcompany.ca)**

**Sun 11:30 - 8:00 | Mon - Tues 11:30 - 9:00 | Wed - Thurs 11:30 - 10:00 | Fri - Sat 11:30 - 11:00**



## ALBERNI GOLF EAGLES NEST

Enjoy weekly specials and check out our tempting menu on the Club website! For reservations please call 778-421-8794. Now Booking functions for groups up to 100 people!

**6449 Cherry Creek Road • Port Alberni**

**250-723-5422 • [albernigolf.com](http://albernigolf.com)**

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## ALL MEX'D UP

All Mex'd Up in Port Alberni, BC, offers a vibrant and flavourful Mexican dining experience. Known for its fresh, made-to-order dishes, the restaurant serves a variety of tacos, burritos, and other traditional favorites with bold, authentic flavours. Friendly service and a cozy atmosphere make it a local favorite!

**5440 Argyle St. • Port Alberni**

**250 723-8226 • [allmexdup.ca](http://allmexdup.ca)**

**Open Tuesday to Saturday 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm**



## ANTIDOTE DISTILLING COMPANY

We are a craft distillery and restaurant, who brings you artisanal spirits from the heart of Vancouver Island .We ferment and distill the 'Spirit of Alberni' with locally sourced grains and fruit, while crafting our products with the 'wild-at-heart' in mind. We serve local beers, unique cocktails and amazing food – Check out our Happy hours from 4PM!

**4721 Johnston Rd • Port Alberni**

**250 736-0761 • [www.antidotedistillingco.com](http://www.antidotedistillingco.com)**

**Wednesday to Saturday 4:00 pm to 11:00 pm**



## BARE BONES FISHHOUSE & SMOKERY

We celebrate the old in new ways at Bare Bones Fish House & Smokery. A contemporary restaurant offering an innovative seafood and smoked meat driven menu. 100% gluten free kitchen. Now with a heated patio year round!

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**Port Alberni • [barebonesfishhouse.ca](http://barebonesfishhouse.ca)**

**250.720.0900**



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Bombers Cafe and Creperie is a local restaurant just off the Harbour Quay, offering both sweet and savoury crepes to tantalize your taste buds. Open 7 days a week, we're always happy to have you, whether it's for a big family brunch, or a cup of coffee and a good book.

**5262 Argyle St • Port Alberni**

**888-736-7431 • [bombers-cafe.com](http://bombers-cafe.com)**

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**4905 Cherry Creek Road •778-421-4712**

**[freshcoastmarket.ca](http://freshcoastmarket.ca)**

**Open Mon to Fri 10 am to 5:30 pm, Saturdays 10 am - 2 pm**



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**4561 Gertrude St • Port Alberni**

**250-724-1813 • Find us on facebook!**

**Tuesday to Saturday 7:30 am - 6:00 pm**



## ORESTES GREEK

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**4505 Gertrude St • Port Alberni**

**778-421-3010 • Find us on facebook!**

**Tuesday to Saturday 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm**





## PANAGO PIZZA

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**4487 Gertrude St • Port Alberni**

**310-0001 • panago.com**

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# PANAGO PIZZA



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**4277 Stamp Ave, • Port Alberni**

**250-724-7171 • Find us on facebook!**

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**778.421.2222**



## TIFFIN THAI

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**3981 10th Ave • Port Alberni**

**778-419-2799 • tiffinthairestaurant.com**

**TIFFIN THAI  
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**5405 Argyle St • Port Alberni**

**778-419-7542 • Find us on facebook!**



## WESCO FOODS

Come visit our community space, located in the heart of uptown, we provide access to locally grown and produced foods. Our goal is to provide a unique shopping experience, as well as offer, food share programs through our Good Food Boxes. For more information come by the shop or visit us online. With our recent addition to our space, License to Grill, a local Vietnamese take out restaurant located inside Wesco Foods.

**Open Wednesday to Sunday 10 am to 5 pm**

**2960 3rd Ave • Port Alberni**

**250-735-6532 • www.wescofoods.ca**



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# LET'S GROW!

## Springtime in the Alberni Valley

Article submitted by Anna Lewis, manager of the Alberni Valley Food Security Society

There's a buzz in the air, a little more sunshine each day, and that unmistakable scent of earth awakening from its winter slumber. Spring is here, and for us in the Alberni Valley, it's the perfect time to start thinking about what we can grow!

It's not just about getting the best taste or filling your plate with fresh produce. Growing your food in the Alberni Valley means you are participating in something bigger: a movement toward sustainability, local food security, and environmental stewardship. It's about growing not only food but a sense of community and connection to the land. So, let's dive in and explore how you can make the most of this season.

### What to Grow in the Alberni Valley: Veggies That Love Spring

The cool, temperate climate in the Alberni Valley is ideal for many cool-weather crops. Whether you have a large plot or a few raised beds, these vegetables thrive here:

**Lettuce and Greens:** These cold-hardy crops love our temperate spring weather. Lettuce, spinach, and arugula are perfect for early planting. You can enjoy fresh salads all spring and early summer with a little care and attention. Plus, they grow quickly, so you'll eat your homegrown greens in no time!

**Peas:** If you've ever grown peas, you know the excitement of watching those little pods fill out. In the Alberni Valley, our mild spring climate makes peas a perfect candidate. They grow early in the season and can handle some frost, so don't be afraid to get them started.

**Radishes:** These little root vegetables are a gardener's dream. Radish loves the cooler spring weather and can be harvested in a few weeks. They're perfect for beginners and offer a nice crunch to any spring dish. You'll be surprised how easy they are to grow—and even more surprised by how tasty they are.

**Carrots:** Carrots love the cooler soil temperatures of



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spring. If you've got good, loose soil in your garden, this is the perfect time to sow those carrot seeds. Give them room to stretch their roots, and you'll have a great crop of sweet, fresh carrots come summer.

**Beets:** Beets are another great spring crop, and in the Alberni Valley, they love our soil. The bonus is that both the beetroot and the greens are edible, making them a double treat. Plus, they add a pop of colour to your garden!

### Sustainable Growing Practices: Let's Keep It Local

From our forested mountains to our rich agricultural heritage, we have a responsibility to care for the land that sustains us. So, why not make your garden as green as possible by embracing eco-friendly practices? Here are some simple but effective ways to make your veggie garden both sustainable and productive:

**1. Composting: The Heart of Healthy Soil**  
Soil will always benefit from a little extra love. One of the easiest and most sustainable ways to improve soil health is by composting. It's like turning your kitchen scraps into garden gold! Not only will compost feed your plants with the nutrients they need, but it also reduces waste.

**2. Mulch to Keep the Moisture**  
Spring can sometimes bring a little rain, and then a lot of sunshine, so mulching is key to maintaining consistent soil moisture. Mulch helps prevent evaporation, keeps weeds at bay, and keeps the soil temperature just right for your plants. Whether you use leaves, straw, or even grass clippings, mulching is a win-win!

**3. Rainwater Harvesting: A Smart Water Solution**  
In our temperate climate, rain is a regular visitor, especially in spring. Harvesting rainwater is an easy and sustainable way to keep your plants hydrated. A rain barrel or two can be a game-changer, especially as we move into warmer months. You can conserve water and reduce your reliance on the local water system. It's a small step that has a big environmental impact!



**4. Companion Planting: Let Plants Help Each Other**  
Companion planting is a technique where you plant certain vegetables together because they have a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, plant basil next to your tomatoes to help deter pests, or plant marigolds around your veggie garden to attract pollinators. Not only does it make your garden healthier, but it also adds a bit of natural beauty.

**5. Support Local Pollinators**  
Living in the Alberni Valley means living among a thriving ecosystem, and pollinators like bees, butterflies, and even hummingbirds are crucial to our gardens. To help them thrive, consider planting native flowers and herbs like lavender, bee balm, and sunflowers. These plants look beautiful and help create a welcoming environment for these essential creatures.

### Growing with the Community: A Valley That Cares

Gardening in the Alberni Valley isn't just an individual effort—it's a community one. We've got a network of local growers, from farmers' markets to community garden groups, where people share knowledge, swap seeds, and help each other out. Getting involved in

these local initiatives is an awesome way to support sustainable food systems while connecting with like-minded people. By growing your vegetables, you're not just feeding yourself, you're also helping to reduce the carbon footprint associated with transporting food long distances. And the more we embrace local, seasonal, and sustainable practices, the more we'll strengthen our community's food security.

### Let's Dig In!

There's no better time than spring to start growing your food, and in the Alberni Valley, we have the perfect conditions to make it happen. Whether you're dreaming of a full vegetable garden or just a few pots on the balcony, there's room for everyone to get involved. So, grab your tools, get planting, and enjoy the thrill of nurturing something from seed to harvest.

Not only will you have delicious, homegrown food on your table, but you'll be contributing to a greener, more sustainable future for all of us. Happy gardening, Alberni Valley!



# City of Port Alberni Embarks on Long-Term Strategic Master Planning

Your participation will help shape a bright and resilient future!

We are mapping a vision for the future and we want your input!

The Master Planning initiative focuses on mapping out the future of our city’s infrastructure, including transportation networks, public utilities, parks and recreation facilities, and more.

A cornerstone of the Master Planning process is community engagement. With a clear strategy, strong community input, and a focus on long-term resilience, Port Alberni is poised to create a city that is not only well-equipped to meet the demands of today’s residents but also prepared for the needs of tomorrow’s generations.

Learn more by visiting [LetsConnectPA.ca/master-planning](https://LetsConnectPA.ca/master-planning)

“We’re committed to ensuring that Port Alberni remains a vibrant, sustainable community. This plan isn’t just about improving what we have; it’s about building a foundation that will support our city’s growth and quality of life for the next 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years.”

Sharie Minions,  
Mayor of Port Alberni

Register and Sign Up For Updates Today!

**LetsConnectPA.ca**

## PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE MASTER PLAN

This plan sets the stage for how our city invests in Parks, Recreation, and Culture services over the coming decade.

Last fall, the community shared many great ideas for recreation facilities, parks, cultural experiences, trails, and programs in Port Alberni. Now this information is being used to develop draft planning directions.

## TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

This plan will establish the long-term vision for our city’s transportation network to create a comprehensive roadmap for maintaining, enhancing, and expanding Port Alberni’s transportation infrastructure.

We look forward to achieving a multimodal network that is safe and accessible for all users and meets the needs of residents and visitors alike for years to come!

## FIRE SERVICES MASTER PLAN

This plan addresses everything from our fire hall and equipment to training, fire prevention programs, and wildfire risk management to keep our community safe.

The Final Fire Services Master Plan was presented to City Council, and will be published for public information.

## STORMWATER & CSO MASTER PLAN

This plan will help manage stormwater and reduce sewer overflows in the receiving environment, improving how we handle rainwater, drainage, and flooding to protect homes, roads, and the environment.

Stay tuned for information about these projects starting in 2025:

## DRINKING WATER MASTER PLAN

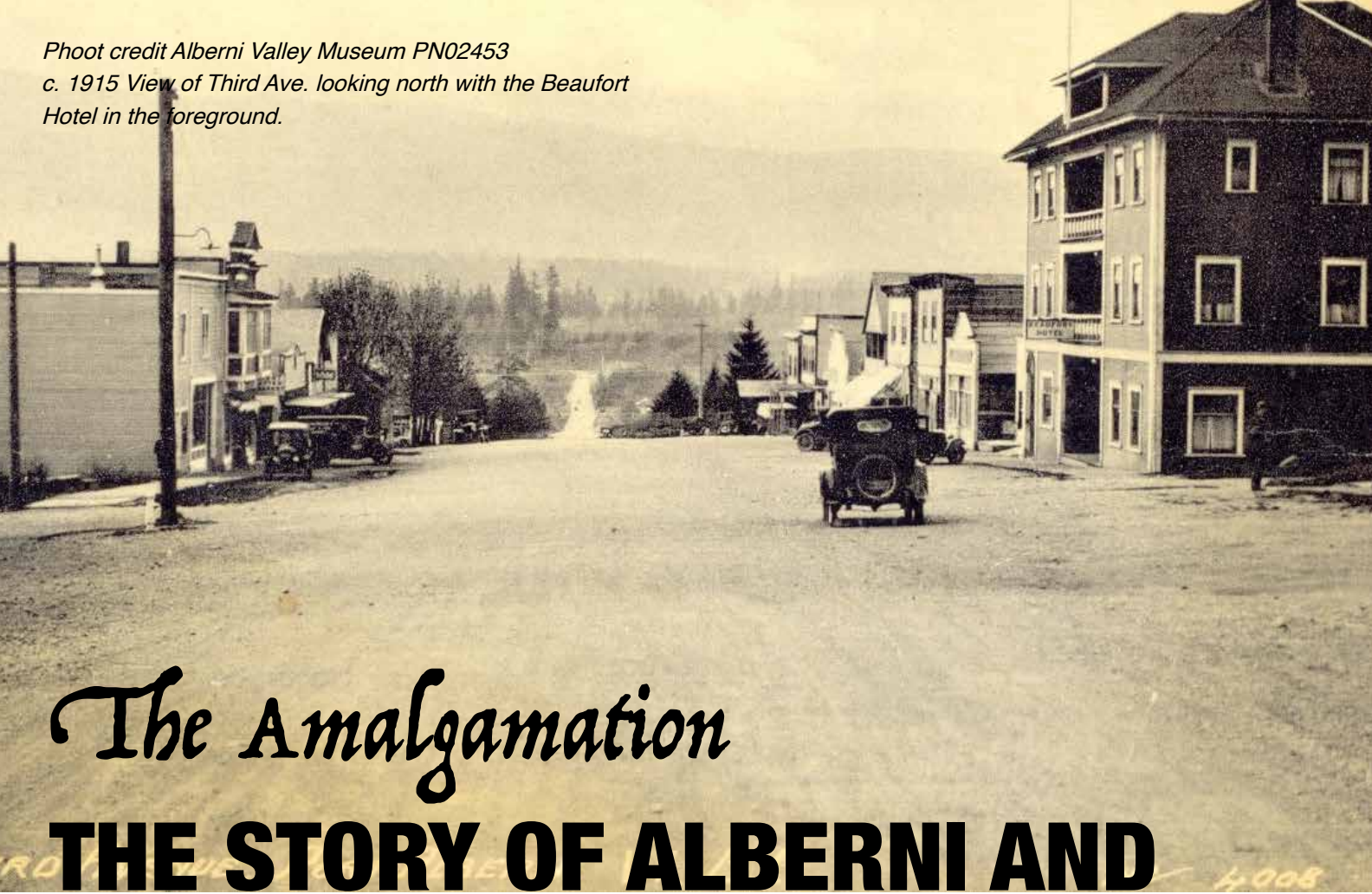
## WASTEWATER MASTER PLAN

## GREENHOUSE GAS MANAGEMENT PLAN

## WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN



Photo credit Alberni Valley Museum PN02453  
c. 1915 View of Third Ave. looking north with the Beaufort Hotel in the foreground.



# The Amalgamation

## THE STORY OF ALBERNI AND PORT ALBERNI BECOMING ONE

Most of us drive across the Rogers Creek bridge on Gertrude without ever thinking of the divide it once made between two cities – Port Alberni and Alberni. We make jokes about whether NoPo or SoPo is better, forgetting that not so long ago that argument was what kept the Twin Cities independent of each other. The story of how these two came together is an interesting one, so let’s start from the beginning.

Vancouver Island was settled by the Spanish in around 1770. From there, many Europeans laid claim to the land that rightfully belonged to the First Nations. It was not until the mid-1800s that the Alberni Valley started to be populated to any degree by Europeans. In 1856, Adam Horne was tasked with creating a land route from Qualicum to the Alberni Valley. Later known as the Horne Lake Connector, this route brought more settlers to the Valley. Soon the two communities started to take

shape as sawmills were built, farms established, fishing grounds discovered, and mines explored.

One of the largest of the companies established in the area was Anderson Land Company. They operated the largest mill and owned large parcels of the land on the north and south side of Rogers Creek. In the early 1880s, Anderson Land Company started subdividing land on the north side of Rogers Creek. As people heard that the land was available, a townsite began to take shape, and in 1886 it became known as Alberni.

Over the next decade people continued to settle here, and Anderson Land Company was subdividing on both sides. In 1896, a new community started to grow on the south side. When rail arrived in about 1910, this southern development became known as New Alberni, and later Port Alberni.

Agriculture and fishing drove the economy in Alberni, where Port Alberni was more industrial with mills, mines, and the port. The two towns remained distinct communities with their own personalities and strengths. And so it continued for more than 50 years, until on Good Friday in 1964 an earthquake in Alaska triggered a tsunami that built up in the Pacific Ocean, funnelled down the Alberni Inlet, and devastated many parts of Port Alberni and Alberni. The two communities suffered great losses, including the destruction of 55 homes.

With so much damage in both communities, it was impossible to recover without each other’s support. Many believe this was the beginning of the story of Port Alberni and Alberni’s amalgamation. It is merely the beginning of the end of the story of amalgamation. Discussions on the subject date back to as early as the turn of the century. The first was around the time the two cities incorporated. Port Alberni incorporated in 1912. In 1913, Alberni incorporated. Amalgamation talks did not get far as it was decided at that time the two cities were too different to join together.

Although the Twin Cities were connected by a single road – Stamp Avenue/Gertrude Street – with Rogers Creek dividing them, the close neighbours were rivals. People often fought over which city was better. The largest of these was the ongoing debate over which city could claim the “First City” status. In 1943, amalgamation discussions started again, this time centred around water and utilities. It was also thought it would halt the confusion around two cities who shared such similar names. Finally, it was decided that those were not strong enough reasons to give up their independence, and talks died.

In 1960, with both communities facing similar infrastructure challenges, the question of amalgamating surfaced again. But it was tax dollars that ultimately ended talks this time. Port Alberni was prospering because big businesses settled there. Port Alberni had a population almost three times that of Alberni. Politicians in Port Alberni were not in favour of joining with Alberni and sharing their tax revenue. The main



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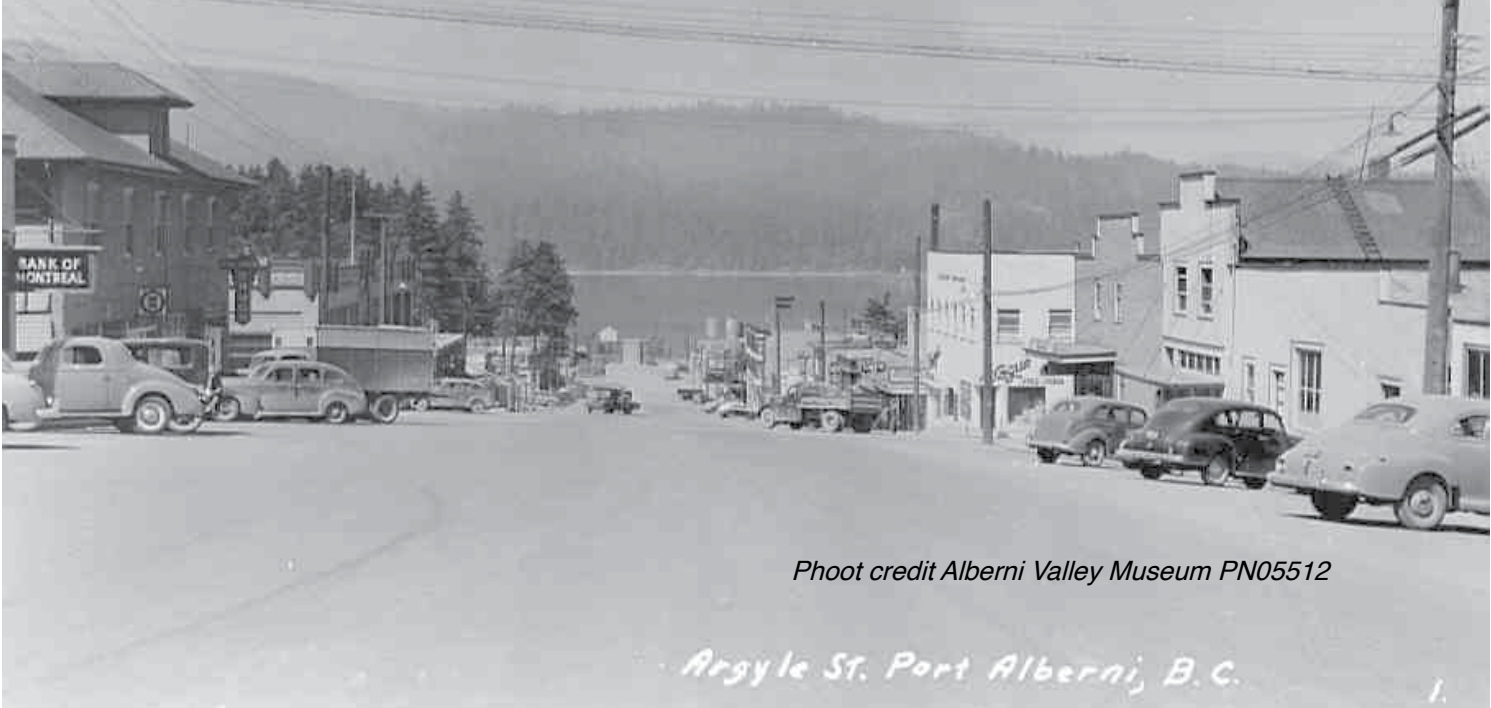


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push to amalgamate was coming from Alberni, where agriculture was not as strong, and most of the residents worked in Port Alberni. Port Alberni was sitting on properties with increasing assessments that would create growing tax revenues. The agricultural community of Alberni just could not compare. Many residents of Alberni believed the division of wealth was unfair. They drove over Rogers Creek to work at the businesses feeding this prosperity, and yet their community did not see the benefits. In the end, with strong opposition from Port Alberni’s mayor, the amalgamation attempt failed.

In 1963, an election brought a change in leadership to Port Alberni with Les Hammer winning the mayor’s seat. He was pro-amalgamation, so with two mayors supporting it, joining the cities was back on the table.

Then the 1964 tsunami hit. The damage it caused was estimated to be more than \$5 million for both towns. The recovery efforts brought the two communities together, both economically and functionally. Mayor Les Hammer was quoted as saying that if the two communities could work together in adversity, they should in the good times.

With the two mayors and the province pushing for amalgamation, things started moving fast. On October 17, 1964, just a few months after the tsunami, an amalgamation referendum was passed. It was not even

close, with 72.5 per cent in favour in Port Alberni, and in Alberni 93.6 percent voted yes. It was believed the referendum received such impressive support because residents were told economically they would be better off as one.

And so the Two Cities were officially one on October 28, 1967 – keeping the name Port Alberni. Former Alberni Mayor Fred Bishop was the first elected mayor of the newly formed City of Port Alberni after defeating Mayor Hammer.

After his victory, Bishop told a reporter, “If I have any advice for other areas planning amalgamation, it is this. Take it easy, lay your groundwork well and plan amalgamation between two and three years after your people have decided that is what they want.” The Alberni Valley Times referred to the process as “the most natural civic marriage in British Columbia.”

Although the amalgamation was passed easily in the referendum, before that it was a very contentious issue with many residents opposing the idea. For almost four years prior to amalgamation, councillors from both cities met in secret on the other side of the Hump for fear that those opposing would get wind of their plan. With that ground work done, the transition was relatively

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seamless. The two councils had worked out how they would combine their services and merged their union contracts. Five new buildings were constructed in preparation for amalgamation – a community centre, pool, city works yard and building, a public safety building, and a fire hall.

The community centre and swimming pool was a project the Twin Cities had been working on together for many years prior to amalgamation. It was fitting that their first success to celebrate together as one city was the official opening of Echo '67 Community Centre. The celebration continued for a week with lots of activities, public ceremonies, fireworks, a parade, and the arrival of HMCS Qu'Appell.

At the time of amalgamation, Port Alberni's combined population was approximately 18,000 people. Port Alberni was the largest city north of the Malahat. It was the third largest city on Vancouver Island. It did not hold that title long, as neighbouring cities began to grow, Port

Alberni's population remained pretty much the same.

Today, people still argue over which side is best, although now it is more in jest. There are still people in Port Alberni who remember living on one side or the other prior to amalgamation, and they aren't afraid to tell you a story about that time or which side they think was best. Some may even throw in an opinion of whether the two should have stayed independent.

As was the spirit of the Twin Cities, Port Alberni remains strong and resilient. One thing has not changed through the years – the belief that together we are stronger. Now, with neighbouring communities of Cherry Creek, Beaver Creek, Beaufort, Hupacasath and Tseshaht First Nations, and Sproat and Great Central Lakes, this Community with a Heart continues to come together to battle adversity and celebrate successes.

Written by Heather Thomson

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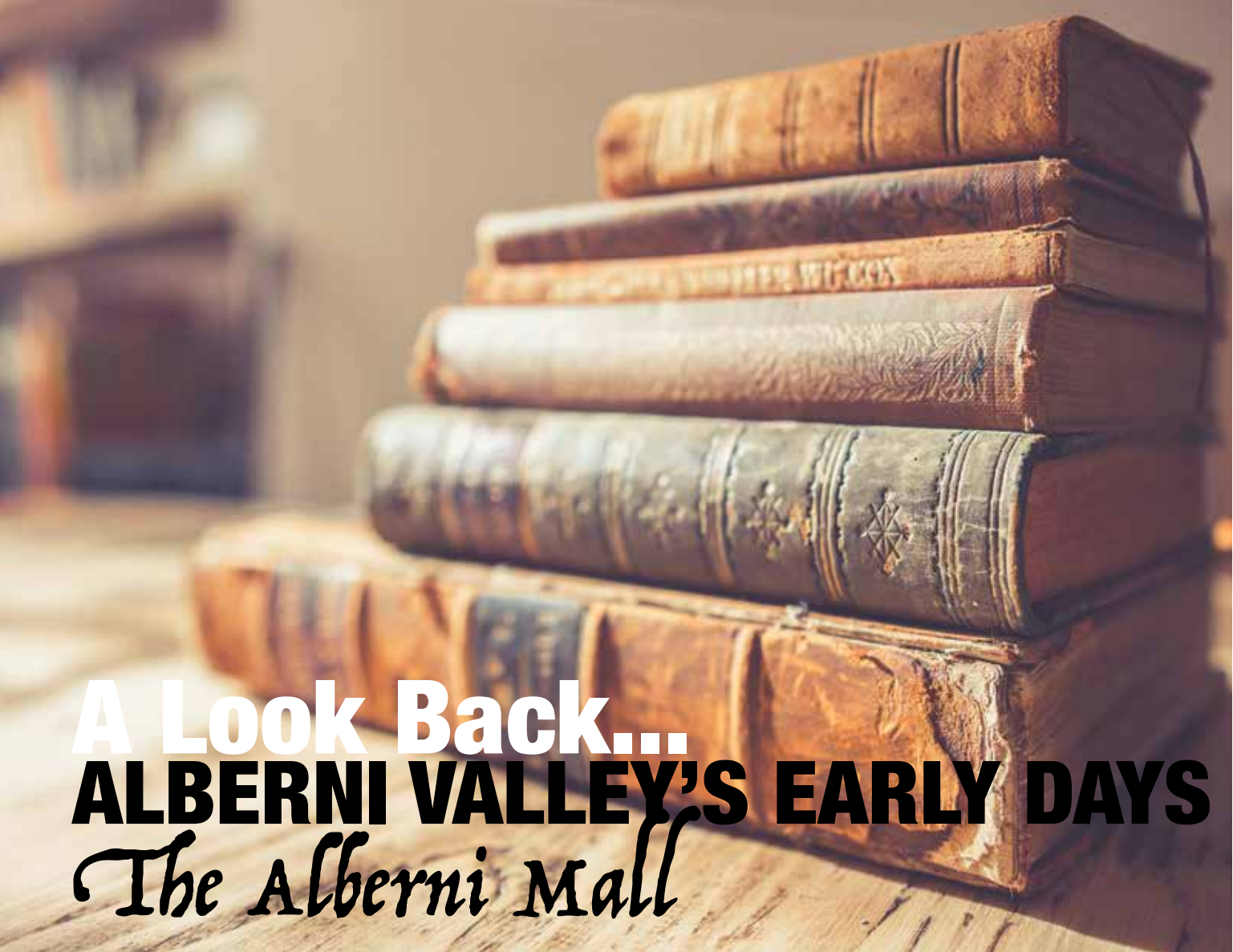


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# A Look Back... ALBERNI VALLEY'S EARLY DAYS *The Alberni Mall*

By Diane Dobson, Dir., ADHS  
All research courtesy of the ADHS Archives.

Who remembers Kmart's blue light special, those yummy Orange Julius drinks, coffee with friends at Solda's and those bargains at Liquidation World? This was the Alberni Mall where a myriad of businesses thrived. Just as important was the Centre Court where the community gathered.

It was 1977 when Mayor Jim Robertson and council, along with the Regional District, were looking at Port Alberni's potential growth. It was one of the few larger towns in the province that did not have an indoor mall. A proposal was drawn up, and Royal Oak Holdings, that had recently opened Ironwood Mall in Campbell River, was approached.

Did you know that a twin movie theatre and two banks

were included in the original proposal? Those plans were dropped, At any rate, Royal Oak Holdings was on board and things moved along quickly.

The mall site, a then wooded area along upper Johnston Road, was cleared in the summer of '78 and construction began. The mall was completed and opened its doors on May 30, 1979 with 42 stores and services. Safeway and Kmart were the mall's original anchors. Other major retailers included Fields, Boots Drugstore and People's Jewellers.

When the \$9 million, 180,000 square foot Alberni Mall opened, the AV Times printed a special supplement. It noted, "Alberni Valley shoppers will have one of the most modern shopping centres in BC." Expected to be the valley's retail heart, the centre provided parking for 900 vehicles.

The supplement also spouted about the opening, reporting, "A grand prize of a trip for two to Disneyland.... free coffee and donuts... [and] balloons for the kids." Boots Drugstore offered a rose to the first 100 customers, Toys 'n Stuff had a free draw for an electronic TV game and Safeway was giving away free chickens.

Most likely, each of you had your favourite store or stores. In 1981, for instance, you could drop into Safeway while the kids spent their allowance at the Video Arcade and Orange Julius (if they could get away with it!); you could have a film developed at Photo Express; or go to Archie's Place for terrific ice cream. The mall also had a bakery with its heavenly aroma that drew you in, travel agent, post office - and much more.

To be honest my favourite place was the Centre Court with its never-ending activities. The Community Craft and Bake sale was typical. All clubs, churches and schools were invited to join in. As with other events held there, locals came out in droves. The same enthusiasm occurred once a year during Scout and Guide Week. Scout troops, Guides, Cubs and Beavers were among those demonstrating skills and activities.

Christmas was always a busy, exciting time in the Court. With a twinkle in his eye, Santa was there welcoming little ones for a visit and photo. Older folk weren't forgotten. The Kinsmen Club and mall merchants sponsored an evening just for them. Entertainment included Christmas carols by the Folk Song Circle and Sam McKimm's Troubadours.

The Alberni Mall prospered throughout the 80's and well into the mid-90's but hard times began in 1996 when Safeway closed. Even though the very popular Liquidation World took over the lease, the writing was on the wall.

Further decline occurred with the construction of the Pacific Rim Shopping Centre across Johnston Road with Walmart and Extra Foods as anchors. This was in 2005. From the high of about 45 stores and services in the 80's, Alberni Mall reached 'dead mall' status near the end of that year, and with that, its function as an indoor venue. The tenant list dropped to just four businesses - Canadian Tire, The Source, Mark's Work



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Warehouse and Solda’s Restaurant.

By 2006, the mall began undergoing complete redevelopment. Tenants changed through these years with less but larger businesses like the Brick and Home Hardware joining Canadian Tire, Mark’s Work Warehouse and others. This redevelopment scrapped the Centre Court, something, I believe will always be missed.

**Included here are a few favourite memories from locals of the mall. Enjoy!**

BECCA MILES PRICHARD - I started working at Thimbleberry’s (now Salmonberry’s) in 1995. I remember having Christmas staff parties for the entire mall in the Center court. Lots of good food and dancing on those nights.

I remember going to Solda’s for coffee and fries. Always was the meeting place for a bunch of my friends. We could still smoke indoors at the time and just hanging out. The mall was always the meeting place for friends

and family. My grandpa would ride his scooter over. Always lots of visits. I definitely miss that about the small town.

SHAWN DOBSON - Friday nights in the 80’s ... my friend, Rob, and I would have a burger and fries at Kmart before going to the Arcade with a pocketful of quarters.

GLENDA NOILES - The Mall had other things, not always held in the center court. My son, Kyle, was less than a year old when there was a free Child Ident program, probably in partnership with the RCMP. We had the boys ID’d. They also held bike safety programs for the kids in the parking lot.

Other memories ... sausage rolls from the bakery were a big hit; near Christmas, the stores would stay open late with lots of great specials.

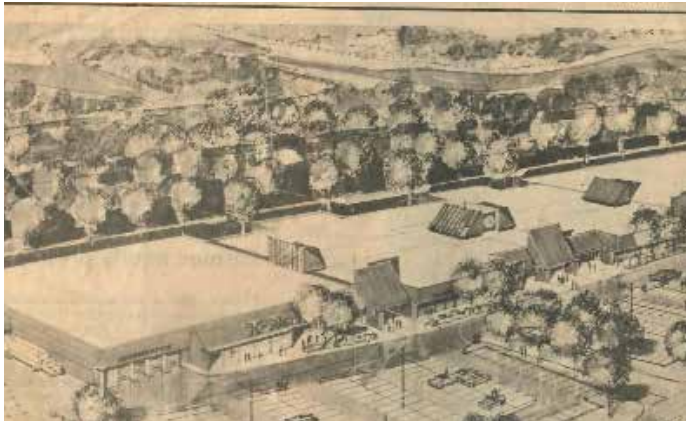
MARY TILLEY - Once a week when Leanne was 3 years old, we would have a date at the Alberni Mall to check out all the little stores. On one particular day, something special was going on in the Center court. Of course, we

had to check it out. It was a contest to find the most photogenic baby. The photographer, Lisa, wanted to take Leanne’s photo. Once Leanne warmed up to her, she agreed to sit in the little wicker chair. And there you have it - Leanne’s day in the sun. She went on to win ‘Little Miss Alberni Mall’ two years in a row.

KATY LEKICH – On opening day, Safeway was offering a free chicken to their customers. The lines were really long but people were in a festive mood. I got my chicken and it shared space with my son Peter in his buggy as we walked home.

LISA THOMSOIN – “Loved the Mall.... especially at Christmas time...the big tree in the centre with the Santa Shop...the kids singings in the middle of the Mall. Dry, warm, shopping, you could run into so many people, like a very welcoming place to just hang out. Oh, and Solda’s restaurant, shopping, and their pizza yum. All the great stores that were in there. Mostly miss seeing the entertainments that was always happening there. Was such a friendly place... ” (re-printed by permission).

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