



Mayor's Report

May, 2016



Our sincere condolences go to the family of Chief Cyril Livingstone. Cyril was Chief of Lake Cowichan First Nations for 38 years and in that time provided a great service to his community and family. It was a very proud day when our respective councils signed our protocol agreement during the Heritage Days celebrations in 2013. We will always be appreciative of the support Lake Cowichan First Nations has provided the Town for many of our endeavors. You will be missed Chief.

Tourism is one of B.C.'s leading sustainable industries and I would like to acknowledge that May 29 to June 4 is National Tourism Week. The B.C. visitor economy comprises more than 19,200 tourism-related businesses that employ more than 127,000 people. Our Lake Cowichan Visitor Centre experienced over 40,000 visitors in 2015 and those numbers should be shattered in 2016.

Tourism - by the numbers

- Globally, tourism accounts for 1 out of every 11 jobs and generates \$1.5 trillion in exports.
- In Canada, tourism generated \$ 88.5 billion in economic activity and fostered 628,000 jobs in 2013.
- Tourism in B.C. contributed \$ 7.1 billion in GDP in 2014 to the provincial economy, a 4.5% increase over 2013. Tourism GDP grew more rapidly than that of the whole B.C. economy, which grew 2.8% in 2014.
- In 2014, the B.C. tourism industry generated \$14.6 billion in revenue, a 5.1% increase over 2013, and a 37.7% increase from 2004.
- In 2014, tourism contributed more GDP than the forestry, agriculture and fish primary resource industries.
- In 2014, 127,500 people were employed in B.C. tourism-related businesses, a 2.2% increase over 2013 and an 18.4% increase over 2004. B.C. is home to over 19,000 tourism businesses.
- A total of 4.9 million international visitors came to B.C. In 2015 - 359,750 more people compared to 2014, up 7.9% over 2014.
- British Columbia experienced increases in visitation from all markets in 2015.

Tourism is a key economic driver in B.C. Tourism is a growing industry - there has been an increase in visitors; in number of businesses and number of people employed in tourism. Tourism has the ability to connect different parts of a community, relying on the cooperation of local government, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations and private citizens alike. Working together to offer a positive experience to visitors usually includes steps to beautify a community and often leads to increased community pride. Tourism and economic development go hand in hand. Tourism depends upon and grows the same essential ingredients that make our communities desirable. Things like quality of life and extended infrastructure. Tourism talks the same talk with economic development efforts to attract investment, stimulate jobs, draw new residents and showcases our region to others. Tourism links directly to sectors and industries such as agriculture, construction and transportation.

After reading these key points try and relate them to Lake Cowichan to understand the importance, and economic value tourism has to our community. With the Laketown Ranch set to open for Sunfest July 28-31, 2016 you can only imagine the economic opportunities the increase in tourism will be providing Lake Cowichan now and its future.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the Heritage Days Celebrations. Our community has a rich history and you do a great job in keeping that history alive.

The Cowichan Lake Sports Arena did a great job hosting the Female U18 Invitational Selection Camp May 18-22. With 80 girls attending this camp, the benefits of having their families here supporting them was great for our local economy. The response from these visitors, who came from all throughout BC, was very positive for the arena and town. Events like this are great for our community.

A dryer than normal spring is causing concern regarding the lake levels and subsequent lowering of the river flow. On May 17, 2016 the lake level was at 51% of storage capacity. This level wasn't been reached until July 3rd in 2015! With "Emergency Authorization" flow reductions will decrease by .5 cubic metres per second each day until it reaches 4.5 cms flow on May 28, 2016. Stewardship of the fish and fish habitat is crucial with these flow reductions and many volunteers have been working to salvage fish fry. The conservation of water is most critical during this low flow period.

Ross Forrest, Mayor