



Sunshine Coast Tourism

2013 End of Year Update

December 5, 2013

To: Nicholas Simons, City of Powell River, District of Sechelt, Town of Gibsons, Powell River Regional District, Sunshine Coast Regional District, Sechelt Indian Government District

Please accept this report as a summary of Sunshine Coast Tourism's activities in 2013. Anecdotal reports point to the fact that this was a good year for the region's tourism sector. Year to date ferry passenger arrivals are up slightly to Powell River while passenger arrivals from Horseshoe Bay are off 1% similar to the previous year. However it is impossible to decipher visitors versus local traffic within those numbers.

In our discussions at the beginning of 2012, Sunshine Coast Tourism listed 4 top priorities for 2012-2013:

- 1) Organizational restructuring and funding
- 2) Position the destination based on our Unique Selling Propositions
- 3) Promote and develop product and experiences
- 4) Provide leadership to the industry

Organizational restructuring and funding

Strategic planning sessions and a 2011 Community Tourism Foundation Revisit resulted in a strategic plan that centered on applying for and implementing the 2% Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT). The [MRDT](#) is a tax that operators of hotels, motels, resorts and other eligible lodgings with four or more rooms collect from guests on the purchase price of accommodation. The resulting stable funds enable destination marketing organizations to generate significant revenues to use in marketing their communities to visitors. The MRDT is projected to generate \$250,000 per year in our region, which would augment SCT's existing modest budget.

While this objective has not been met, plans are underway to submit a new application in 2014. Four accommodation owners are taking the lead in restarting the conversation with our accommodation sector.

In the meantime, other objectives in this category have been achieved. In 2012, the board completed Tourism BC's Governing for Success - Enhancing Board Performance workshop. New bylaws were approved at the October 2012 AGM and a new board was elected in 2013 under its guidelines. The board now has eleven members with both regional representation and sector representation. Four seats are reserved for the MRDT collecting accommodation sector, the arts culture & heritage sector and recreation sector each have a reserved seat, the Sunshine Coast Bed & Breakfast Cottage Owners Association has a seat, and there are four members at large of which two are from each half of the region.

Tourism Powell River and Sunshine Coast Tourism are working very well together as complementary organizations. A Director of Marketing is funded by the City of Powell River who splits time evenly between local and regional marketing efforts. There is regular communication between the two boards of directors. Tourism Powell River operates the Powell River Visitor Centre and handles specific projects such as community outreach at the Lund Shellfish Festival, BC Bike Race, and Blackberry Festival. Tourism Powell River has developed partnerships with the Townsite Heritage Society in developing tours and signage. Sunshine Coast Tourism focuses on regional marketing campaigns, media relations, and other regional priorities described in this report.

A corporate communications plan is in place allowing monthly email updates to members and stakeholders. This is reinforced via facebook and twitter communications as well as an improved [member benefits area](#) on our website. The media packet is currently under review with new content expected in early 2014.

Position the destination based on our Unique Selling Propositions

Unique Selling Propositions – qualities and products that set the Sunshine Coast region apart from other regions such as Vancouver Island, the Okanagan, or Whistler

The marketing team has spent much time on this aspect over the past year or so. The January 2012 Revisit report challenged us to go beyond our orange corporate branding and collateral development to focus on differentiating the region on the basis of unique selling propositions.

Three Unique Selling Propositions have been defined and considerable effort is made so that all marketing and media relations efforts tie back to those three points.

1. A string of rural, ocean-side communities
 - a. This is not a metropolitan area. Slow down & escape from the city.
 - b. There are many communities to explore, each with their own character.
 - c. The Pacific Ocean is here on your doorstep
2. Outdoor Adventure
 - a. Nature is our attraction, not a supermall or a structured venue
 - b. Hike, bike, sail, paddle, golf, dive, swim, climb, ski, ride...you're adventure starts here surrounded in natural beauty
 - c. A partnership of land and water activities and natural attractions
3. Arts, Culture & Heritage
 - a. Home to three First Nations who have an amazing story to tell & continue to develop
 - b. Historic Townsite – national heritage district as well as our forestry and fishing heritage
 - c. An amazing concentration of artists in all genres who live and work and are inspired by place
 - d. Festivals and events celebrating a range of interests all year long

Our main website, www.sunshinecoastcanada.com was relaunched in June 2012 incorporating the three unique selling propositions above. Winter content was developed to celebrate year-round visitor opportunities. Member packages and promotions are regularly featured. The site is strongly supported by a coordinated social media strategy involving a regular blog, facebook, twitter, youtube, and pinterest.

Improved traffic results are impressive, though continuous improvement is always a priority. Website visits are on track to be 90,000 for 2013. Our social media strategy involves creating daily opportunities for conversation with potential visitors. Our facebook audience has tripled this year to over 4,200 and our twitter audience has increase to over 3,600. Our accommodation members reflect high referral traffic from

SCT's site to their own sites. Tour operators and attractions could use improvement and that is the top priority for the next phase of website development.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Our proactive media relation strategy continues to be our most successful strategy with more than 130 published articles and blog posts year to date, up 10% from 2012. Coverage from April 2012 – March 2013 had an advertising equivalency value of more than \$700,000. The goal for the current year is to break \$1,000,000. Newspaper and magazine articles, blog posts, and other forms of journalism are more meaningful and believable to the general public than straight advertisements. Our goal is to allow journalists to have a rich Sunshine Coast experience and to then share with their readers. SCT members contribute accommodation, dining and recreational experiences as examples of what the region has to offer. If you want to follow future articles as they appear, follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

We've welcomed 27 journalists to experience the Sunshine Coast this year, many in partnership with Destination BC and Vancouver, Coast & Mountains. All require the partnership of our members to provide accommodation, food, activities, and most importantly their stories.

Our formal press trip was themed to the LGBT market bringing five of the top North American LGBT publications to the region in June. Following a weekend in the city coordinated by Tourism Vancouver, the group experienced the hospitality of our luxury resorts, took a boat tour in Pender Harbour, learned how sustainable caviar is produced, and relaxed in coastal scenery. Two articles have already been published and we await more in the coming year.

- Seattle Gay News – Your New Place in the Sun
- Out Traveler – [North by Northwest: Adventures in Vancouver](#)

Our fall 2012 "Tasty Tour on the Sunshine Coast" press trip, which produced five stories in 2012, continued to see results this year with seven more articles.

- Up Magazine – [Northern Divine introduces Canada to sustainable organic caviar](#)
- Epicure & Culture – [The Local Food Chain: Sustainable Connections on BC's Sunshine Coast](#)
- We Blog the World – [A Taste of British Columbia's Sunshine Coast](#)
- Jessie on a Journey – [Organic Caviar Tasting on British Columbia's Sunshine Coast](#)
- We Blog the World – [Want Organic Caviar? Head to Canada's British Columbia Coast](#)
- TasteReport.com – [Taste the World](#)
- Epicure & Culture – [How One Couple is Using Cereal to Help the Community](#)

We've had international success on television and video this year with film crews from The Netherlands, Spain and Canada.

- 3 op Reis – a top Dutch travel program visited Lund and Desolation Sound – [Season 7 Episode 2](#)
- [Freek in het Wild](#) – a Dutch youth nature show aired 3 episodes at the end of November
- CTV Morning Live featured Mark Smith following his visit – [Great local trips for the Labour Day long weekend](#)
- underExposed, an APTN outdoor adventure show filmed at Coast Gravity Park in November
- Bike Magazine filmed ["The Escape"](#) with the Sunshine Coast featured on days 3, 4, 5 and 13.
- Espanoles en el Mundo featured a day in the life on the Sunshine Coast on its recent episode [Espanoles en Vancouver](#)
- Real Housewives of Vancouver – [Quiet Retreats & Loud Attacks](#)

Remy Scalza was hosted for an individual visit over Easter with an itinerary to explore the Coast. His story was published 4 times, just before Victoria Day, Canada Day, and again in September in major newspapers.

- Vancouver Sun – [Sunshine Coast lives up to its name](#)
- Edmonton Journal – [BC's Sunshine Coast lives up to its name](#)
- Calgary Herald - [BC's Sunshine Coast lives up to its name](#)
- Canada.com – [BC's Sunshine Coast lives up to its name](#)

Carolyn Ali of the Georgia Straight took us up on a Historic Townsite visit following a rest in Egmont. Her first article appeared in November and another focused on the outdoors is expected in spring 2014.

- Georgia Straight – [Craft beer tops up the appeal of Powell River Townsite](#)

This is one of many stories which featured Historic Townsite this year. The Patricia Theatre, The Old Courthouse Inn, and Townsite Brewing have been awesome in hosting and telling their stories.

- VanEast Beer Blog – [How a Craft Brewery Inspired a Small Town](#)
- Beer Me BC – [A Small Town Brewery with a Rapidly Growing Footprint](#)
- British Columbia Magazine – [Powell River Personality](#)
- 604 Foodtography – [POWtoberfest with CAMRA Vancouver/Powell River](#)
- Western Investor – [Happy Times Returning to Powell River](#)
- Reuters – [The last theatre in town](#)

As a Reuters story, this gained worldwide audience with versions published by CBC, The Guardian (UK), Paris Match (France), The Atlantic (USA), Tempo (Indonesia), MSN (UK), The Independent (UK), and Naftemporiki (Greece). Literally photos shown around the world.

Not every visit comes directly from our efforts, but our staff is always ready to help and pitches story ideas at various media and industry events. Outdoor adventure has clearly been a good storyline.

- Impact Magazine – [Go There Do That: Coasting along the Sunshine Coast](#)
- Pique News Magazine – [Surf's up on Skookumchuck](#)
- Hello BC Blog – [Exploring BC's Discovery Islands by Zodiac](#)
- Dirt Magazine – [Coast Gravity Park Coming in 2014!](#)
- Canadian Golfer – [Sunshine Coast, BC – 2 Jewels in One Amazing Crown](#)
- Daily Courier – [Desolation Sound anything but desolate](#)
- Coast & Kayak Magazine – [Where Trail Meets Water](#)
- BBC Travel – [Journey to Canada's secret Sunshine Coast](#)

Some of our members also have active media relation strategies and SCT often assists in hosting to provide a broader travel experience.

- RTW Girl – [Serious Nature on BC's Sunshine Coast](#) (part of a 4 post series)
- Sip Northwest Magazine – Best of the Northwest – Travel 2013
- Pangcover – Sunshine Coast – [2 Day Getaway](#)
- Stimuli Magazine – [Weekend at Painted Boat Resort](#)
- 30 Day Adventures – [Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous](#) (part of a 6 post series)
- Bike Pirate – [Exploring Powell River's extensive mountain bike trail network](#)
- Bike Pirate – [A year-round mountain bike playland: Sunshine Coast](#)
- CBC The National – [Canadian Caviar](#)
- Vancouver Magazine – 36 Hours in [Halfmoon Bay and Secret Cove](#)

SCT media relations activities are coordinated by Andrea Wickham-Foxwell, Communications Director.

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

In order to maximize effectiveness of message, all our marketing efforts are executed as targeted campaigns spanning print and online outlets. We kicked off 2013 with a winter campaign featuring an outdoor snowy playground at Dakota Ridge, the Powell River Film Festival at the Historic Patricia Theatre and great offseason accommodation deals and packages. "The art of living well" and "Go Coastal" were used in all messaging.

The winter campaign used primarily online outlets and e-newsletters which directed visitors to special winter content on our website and in some cases facebook to increase our social media reach. Almost 13,000 visitors found our website December-March which was almost 13 times the traffic during the same period the prior year. We added over 600 facebook likes during the campaign.

Impact Magazine is a popular personal fitness and sport publication in Western Canada. We placed online leaderboards targeting outdoor enthusiasts in Alberta and BC with over 225,000 impressions.
<insert picture here>

British Columbia Magazine is well read across the province, but is out of our price range. Instead we advertised in its February e-newsletter sent to more than 10,000 subscribers.
<insert picture here>

YoyoMama sent 40,000 dedicated Dakota Ridge and family getaway emails to its Lower Mainland database and ran website ads in the two weeks leading up to BC's first Family Day and Valentine's Day. It also included Dakota Ridge in its facebook and twitter messaging. Vitamin V sent a "steals and deals" email blast to 26,500 subscribers in the week prior to Family Day and Valentine's Day.

To promote the Powell River Film Festival, we partnered with BC Living to create a contest including tickets and accommodation for the festival. This included website ads and a feature in three subscription e-newsletters. Contest participants were added to our own consumer email subscriptions. The winners were so thrilled with their experience, they blogged about the trip.
<http://outonthebiglimb.blogspot.ca/2013/02/weekend-in-powellywood.html>
Radio ads featured the festival on Jet FM and Coast FM on Vancouver Island.

In March we attended the Vancouver Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show, speaking directly to outdoor enthusiasts. Lure brochures, maps and partner collateral were distributed and thousands of conversations spoke to interest in Sunshine Coast activities. Consumer contact information was gathered for our subscriber emails by featuring a contest for one of two packages to the Sunshine Coast. Social media efforts promoted both the contest and our appearance at the show.

Our fall marketing campaign's goal continues to brand the season as a time to celebrate local artists, fall culinary experiences and jumpstart the holiday shopping season. Our "*the art of living well*" campaign focused on travel in late September and October...key shoulder month season for our members. The 4th Annual Sunshine Coast Art Crawl and the Sechelt Arts Festival were the signature events, but it also spanned a number of festivals including the Sunshine Coast Mushroom Fest and a variety of fall fairs.

The Sunshine Coast Art Crawl, organized by Coast Cultural Alliance, continues to grow. Studio and gallery participation increased by 10% to 122 participants representing more than 300 individual artists spread along the entire Sunshine Coast. Powell River participation expanded to 22 studios and coastwide there were 47 new venues from last year keeping interest high. Studios and galleries hosted more than 20,000 visits over 3 days resulting in more than \$135,000 in sales which was an increase of almost 30%. A special Travel Ambassador volunteer manned 2 sailings each on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning and distributed information to more than 200 passengers specifically interested in the Art Crawl. Artists reported an increase in the number of off-Coast visitors attending, specifically visiting to attend the Crawl. Guests were identified from communities across the Lower Mainland, Victoria, Nanaimo, Comox Valley, many Gulf Islands, Fraser Valley, and Sea to Sky. Other Crawlers were as far away as Toronto, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg, Ft Saskatchewan, Edmonton, Whitehorse, Bellingham WA, Los Angeles CA, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, and UK. SCT has developed a very successful relationship with CCA to collaborate on promoting the Art Crawl in off-coast markets.

The Sechelt Arts Festival reported their “most successful festival to date”. Attendance was up 5% reaching almost 2,600 with a definite increase in off-Coast visitors. Online tickets sales were available for the first time with 30% of those sold in the Lower Mainland and other parts of BC.



Vancouver Sun
The Province
Georgia Straight

A consumer email was sent to 1,000 individuals highlighting festivals and events.

Marketing and online activities are coordinated by Paul Kamon and we recently welcomed Annie Schroeder to the team replacing new mum, Karla Donovan.

Promote and develop product and experiences

Significant progress has been made over the past 5 years with the following assets coming into their own as prime visitor attractions:

- Sunshine Coast Trail – Canada’s longest hut to hut hiking trail
- Powell River Historic Townsite – national historic district seeing great rejuvenation & investment
- Dakota Ridge Winter Recreation Area – new trail opening Dec 2013 resulting in 20km groomed ski trails and 7km marked snowshoe trails
- Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden – new garden features in the works and regular programming
- Powell Forest Canoe Route – improved infrastructure 2012/13; 57km route covering 8 lakes and 5 portages

SCT has embraced these developments and seeks to structure marketing and media efforts around them. Marketing staff have partnered to develop collateral for the Sunshine Coast Trail and Historic Townsite. A full press trip was planned for this year around Historic Townsite. While it didn’t happen, multiple individual journalists were hosted instead using this itinerary which has resulted in a number of stories as listed earlier in this report. A winter press trip is planned for January 2014 which will include the Dakota Ridge trail expansion. SCT also encourages its members to partner together to create packages which are featured in a special section on the [website](#).

The next attractions with great potential to headline are Coast Gravity Park and a Craft Beer & Winery Tour featuring our two breweries and the new winery. SCT is speaking to the owners of these private ventures as to how these can be featured with supporting member business packages. They are already being requested as media visit venues.

SCT participated in Vancouver, Coast & Mountains’ motorcycle tourism campaign. In the first half of the year, <http://ride.vcmhc.com/> had received more than 17,000 page views and is promoted via online and print advertising specifically to motorcycle enthusiasts.

SCT is always happy to provide a letter of support for grant applications and to sit on various committees. Committee support was given to Armours Beach, Dakota Ridge Advisory Committee, Gibsons Economic Development Select Committee, and the Regional Trails Strategy Committees in both halves of the region. SCT participated in the Area Agricultural Plan sessions and is open to the development of agritourism opportunities. Letters of support were provided to the Gibsons Landing Jazz Festival, Davis Bay Wharf, and the Sechelt Airport expansion projects this year.

Provide leadership to the industry

Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region held its Regional Tourism Leaders Forum at West Coast Wilderness Lodge. SCT provided planning support for the event and welcomed over 100 tourism professionals to the region. SCT was honoured to be recognized with the Tourism Partnership Award. VCM staff selected SCT for the tremendous progress the region has made working together between all of our various Sunshine Coast communities. VCM highlighted SCT’s staff for how supportive they are of VCM programs including partnerships with press trips, various VCM marketing programs and always providing feedback and local knowledge for blogs and social media. Three of SCT’s board members also serve as VCM board members.

SCT participates on the Provincial Power and Sail Cruise Tourism steering committee. This initiative seeks to unite provincial stakeholders in large-scale marketing and product development activities around the recreational boating sector. Similar successful initiatives in BC are RV and Camping, Mountain Biking Tourism Association, and Alpine Skiing that have crossed geographical boundaries to create a united

message and cooperative marketing programs across the province. David Mailloux leads the project at the provincial level and was the keynote speaker at SCT's 2013 AGM to bring greater understanding of the project to our tourism operators.

SCT has partnered with the Mountain Biking Tourism Association to be sure that the entire Sunshine Coast is represented with its prime trails on <http://mountainbikingbc.ca/>. Mountain bike events and races will be listed here as well to broaden exposure of our local events.

SCT partnered with SCR D staff to hold a workshop and publish a [Zero Waste Guide](#) for the accommodation sector. The workshop also included a speaker from Green Tourism Canada. A number of operators both small and large participated and the guide was distributed to the region's accommodation sector.

SCT partnered with the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden to host a Tourism Spring Fling in May to provide networking opportunities for members and showcase the huge progress being made at the gardens. Kevan Ridgway, CEO of Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region, was the keynote speaker.

One of the ways to stretch a limited marketing budget is to provide cooperative marketing opportunities for our members. Our capabilities are improving in this area. Successful cooperative ads this year include BC Ferries' Onboard Magazine, Vancouver Island Visitor Guide , and The Province July Long Weekend Guide.

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Summary

Thank you for supporting Sunshine Coast Tourism and the tourism sector. This report is our attempt to deliver information and results more frequently and outside of the budget process. If you would like to have a discussion at one of your committee meetings, we would welcome the opportunity for dialogue.

Respectfully Submitted,

Celia Robben
President, Sunshine Coast Tourism