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TURNING TIDES

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OUR 28TH YEAR



BUSINESS EXAMINER

Vancouver Island



TOFINO

Tofino chamber recognized provincially

Business association receives 2013 Honourable Mention Award

BY GOODY NIOSI

The Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce membership is flying high. On May 25 at the BC Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting, it received the 2013 Chamber of the Year Honourable Mention Award. The chamber's executive director, **Gord Johns**, said he was beyond happy.

"This is really exciting for a chamber of our size. Out of 130 chambers of commerce in British Columbia we are probably one of the smallest."

The B.C. chamber has 31,500 members. The Tofino chamber contributes less than 1% to that total. However, the real story is that in a town with a population of under 2,000, the membership is 330 strong. Johns said that proportionate to population,

the Tofino chamber should really have only 30 members.

"I don't believe you will find a town of our size anywhere in North America with a chamber with over 300 members."

John Winter, president and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce, summed up the district's achievement this way: "The Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce is an inspiring example of a small chamber punching above its weight and helping to tangibly lead its community forward."

The membership reflects the community and the spirit of the business owners, Johns said. Tofino's backbone is made up of small and locally owned businesses. Even the large resorts are mainly locally owned.

The buildup to this year's



John Turner, manager government relations, Spectra Energy, presents **Gord Johns** of the Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce with the Honourable Mention Award

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VANCOUVER ISLAND

Climate Smart makes a difference

49th Parallel Grocery finds savings in reducing greenhouse emissions

BY GOODY NIOSI

Reducing a company's carbon footprint is about much more than saving money, according to **Peter Richmond**, president of 49th Parallel Grocery.

"We wanted to learn more about reducing our carbon footprint. It's part of being a good corporate citizen in the community."

49th Parallel operates stores in Cedar, Ladysmith, Chemainus and Duncan in the mid-Vancouver Island area. Richmond and his operations manager, **Gerry Parent**, attended their first Climate Smart information session in late 2010.

Richmond said that they had participated in energy improvement initiatives through BC Hydro over the years, but Climate

Smart provided a comprehensive overview.

"As we got into it, we learned more and more," he said. Some things you do are just small decisions but they can make a significant difference over time."

The stores installed turn-off switches everywhere; they changed the type of paper they used in the office and they began to do double-sided printing.

"Just little things," Richmond said. "But after a year, when you crunch the math, they can make big improvements."

A key change for 49th Parallel was reducing the amount of waste going to the landfill by increasing recycling and making blue bins more readily available. Because employees travel frequently

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TOFINO CHAMBER

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award began in 2010 when Johns was appointed executive director. He took over from Michael Tilitzky, whom he credits with laying a strong foundation.

"He built an incredible framework for our organization. They hired me to grow the membership. They wanted to bring in more young people and they really wanted to raise the profile of the organization."

Johns, with experience as a business owner and member of the district council, had the enthusiasm and expertise to steer the chamber in a dynamic direction. In 2010, the chamber created its first strategic plan. This year, that plan came to fruition. In the past three years, the chamber membership has grown from 190 to 330, including 41 non-profit groups. Its budget doubled. It created a unique ambassador training program in co-operation with eight financial partners. The chamber also lobbied local government to set aside money to create an **Economic Development Commission** to diversify the economy.

The chamber also hosted the Minister of Advanced Education and the presidents of **Vancouver Island University** and **North Island College**, and the vice president of **Royal Roads University** to discuss creating a



Dorothy Baert of Tofino Sea Kayaking is a longtime member of the chamber

destination higher learning centre in Tofino.

"We can be a satellite campus one day and diversify our economy," Johns said.

Dorothy Baert, owner of **Tofino Sea Kayaking**, council member and former president of the chamber, quipped that the district is like "the little engine that could."

"It's a small community but it's very engaged. There's lots of resolve to address needs in the community," she said. "The board is elevating the whole sense of what's possible."

She added that she is particularly impressed with the chamber's willingness to advocate for the community and for the business people in Tofino.

Johns said that he is proud that more young people are involved in the chamber. In fact, the president and all but one board member are under 40.

"The energy is amazing and they help drive the membership."

Perhaps one of the most exciting things that has come out of the chamber's strategic plan is the West Coast chapter of the Leadership Vancouver Island program. The program has been delivered for nine years on the East Coast of the island; the first eight-month program in Tofino begins in September. The program is in partnership with the chamber in Ucluelet.

"I have to say that the Tofino chamber wouldn't be successful without its incredible relationship with Ucluelet and without its incredible relationship with the First Nations in the region," Johns said. He also credited the B.C. chamber network as well as the chambers in Whistler and Victoria.

"We are a very unique chamber," he said. "We have a different voice. For us to get honoured with this award is significant to Vancouver Island. It really does represent the true voice of Tofino. We may be only 1,800 people but our voice is much bigger than that." ■



The 49th "family": Peter, Kathy, Wayne and Harmina Richmond

CLIMATE SMART

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between stores, 49th also invested in more energy efficient vehicles. Night curtains in front of store coolers, to keep cold air in, also made a significant difference.

"We're closed 10 or 11 hours a day," Richmond said. "This reduces energy consumption. It's almost impossible to calculate but BC Hydro has done some studies and there can be significant changes."

When 49th renovated and expanded its Ladysmith store, it also changed all the lighting to energy-efficient bulbs. Richmond pointed out that just changing exit signs to LED lights brought energy consumption down to 1% of what it was previously. He said that 49th is not perfect – there is still work to be done but there is a strong willingness to do what it takes.

"There are always more opportunities to improve. You have to be open to ideas from either Climate Smart or your employees or the community. There's a lot that we can improve on."

Climate Smart client adviser manager **Lyle Perry** said that his organization, in partnership with 49th Parallel, took an innovative approach when first assessing ways for the company to save money and reduce its carbon footprint.

"We took their four stores and looked at each of their emission sources and broke down each into emissions per square foot. Because it was weird – their largest store was performing pretty well and there was a store of considerably less size that was performing almost the same as some of the larger locations. So we wanted to know, when you remove size of the store, which one is performing better? That way, they were able to focus their efforts and their money. They decided to put their money where it was needed most."

The company initially measured its carbon emissions for the year 2010. Last year, it measured 2011 and recorded a 26% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

"It's amazing actually that they were able to do that," Perry said. "They reduced or were flat in every single area."

The reductions broke down as follows: electricity and natural gas use, 10%; waste, 5%; and company fleet, 5%.

Perry said he attributes a large part of the company's success to looking at reductions on a per-square-foot basis – but equally significant is making a plan and sticking to it.

Perry says the most important area is one unique to businesses like grocery stores that work with refrigerants. Chemicals used in many refrigerants are 1,500 times more damaging to the environment than CO₂. Inspecting for leaks is crucial.

"They had already cut down on waste a lot by making sure that the recycling program they had already implemented was being followed," Perry said. "Now they're going to dig deeper. They're going to make sure with the things that are still in the waste stream, that there is no home for them somewhere else."

Encouraging efficiencies

Other business in the mid-Vancouver Island area that participated in Climate Smart's program:

Paradise Island Foods sells and distributes domestic and imported cheeses from its state-of-the-art facility in Nanaimo. The company started working with Climate Smart in 2011 and is currently working on their 2013 certification.

It has been a pioneer in efficient trucking practices, testing hybrid mobile refrigeration units, installing efficient truck engines, installing aerodynamic devices on its vehicles, and implementing a shared savings model to split fuel savings with its drivers to encourage efficient driving behaviours.

Jamie's Whaling Station holds the title of the first whale watching company on the West Coast and was also one of the first companies to work with Climate Smart in 2008. Because the majority of its emissions and operating costs come from the fuel used on its vessels, the company looked at ways to reduce that expense without sacrificing the experience of its guests.

Among other initiatives, it purchased new propellers that yield a lower per-hour fuel consumption, as well as a longer shelf life for its motors. This small investment led to a 10% fuel saving and reduced the company's greenhouse gas emissions by 24 tonnes. The new propellers paid for themselves in eight months and will save the company \$10,000 annually in fuel costs. ■

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