

TIDES & *Trades* 20 26

Official publication of the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce

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reborn, one
business at
a time**

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A message from the president of the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce

GINA GARON



I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we live, work, and play is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Tsimshian and Sm'algayx speaking people.

As president of the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce, I am proud to reflect on a year defined by resilience, collaboration, and continued opportunity for our business community.

Prince Rupert holds a unique and vital position in Canada's economic landscape. As a gateway to global trade and a hub for industry, tourism, and entrepreneurship, our community continues to demonstrate strength and adaptability in a changing world

Our local businesses—from long-standing enterprises to new and emerging ventures—remain the backbone of our economy.

Over the past year, the chamber has remained committed to supporting our members through advocacy, networking opportunities, and initiatives designed to strengthen our local economy. We have

worked to ensure that the voices of Prince Rupert businesses are heard at all levels, while also fostering meaningful connections within our community.

We have also seen encouraging momentum in key sectors, including port activity, tourism, and small business development. These successes are a testament to the determination and innovation of our members, as well as the strong partnerships that exist throughout our region.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on sustainable growth, economic diversification, and creating an environment where businesses can thrive. We will continue to advocate for infrastructure investment, workforce development, and policies that support both local enterprise and regional prosperity.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our members, board of directors, volunteers, and community partners. Your ongoing commitment and leadership are what make this chamber, and our community, so strong.

Together, we will continue to build a vibrant and prosperous future for Prince Rupert. 🌄



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A message from the past president of the
Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce

ANDY ENNS



My name is Andy Enns and I was the president of the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce up until May of this year.

I moved to Prince Rupert from Greater Vancouver 26 years ago to grow my career and to be able to spend more time with my family instead of spending time commuting. Over the years, I've been able to participate in local sports, theatre, and many other volunteer activities. Opportunities have always been here for those who wanted them but now Prince Rupert is a city that is rebounding strongly after a couple decades of economic downturn. The port industries are in constant

development with several massive construction projects underway that will greatly change the local job market. The next step is to work with the retail sector to assist growth and to help new businesses get established here.

As chamber past president, the board and I have worked to encourage and promote entrepreneurial investment and to help new businesses get established. I look forward to seeing a thriving local retail industry here in Prince Rupert with businesses and stores providing quality goods and exceptional services to residents and visitors alike. 🌱

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A message from the executive director of the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce

DEVIKA R. BABU



When I moved to the North Coast in November 2023, I quickly realized something that many locals know to be true: I didn't choose Prince Rupert, Prince Rupert chose me.

Stepping into the role of executive director for the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce has been an incredible journey. For me, the chamber is more than just an organization; it is a vital platform for connection, advocacy, and growth. I am truly delighted to be a part of this community and to lead an organization that sits at the heart of our local economy.

In my time here, my goal has been to lead with a focus on momentum. By blending my background in technical

systems and organizational management with a passion for community engagement, we have worked hard to revitalize our presence. From hosting high-profile provincial speakers and community luncheons to celebrating our local stars at the Business Excellence Awards, my focus remains on ensuring the chamber is a proactive, modern, and inclusive advocate for every member.

I believe that a strong business community is the foundation of a thriving city.

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly and for allowing me the honour of leading this organization. I look forward to everything we will achieve together. 🌊



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Message from the Mayor of Port Edward

KNUT BJØRNDAL

Port Edward the jewel of the North Coast.

Port Edward is a small town of under 600 people located 15 kilometres south of Prince Rupert. It is blessed with natural attributes, a scenic harbour and mountain views, grassy boulevards, and quiet and serene streets. It is charming and a perfect place to raise a family, complete with a new elementary school.

The town was incorporated in 1966 and the fishing industry was a mainstay of the economy along with a pulp mill for the first 30 years. The fishing industry has diminished over time and is now a shadow of its former past and the pulp mill closed 25 years ago. New industries relying on exports of petroleum and other products from a port located on Ridley Island, just across Porpoise Harbour, have rejuvenated the town and brought renewed prosperity. Port Edward is located on the CN Rail mainline that services the major industries on Ridley Island.

The natural beauty of Port Edward, a regional park, and many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors are everywhere. Port Edward is also blessed with the great access to salt water. We are the hub for many sports fishing companies and have a boat launch for boats up to over 35 feet. There is also ample parking for boats and trailers.

We have attracted many new businesses in the past six years from custom fish processing companies to a large trailer rental and repair facility. Economic opportunities exist along the main highway corridor with many acres of developable land, close to the port activities. Other business development opportunities are available in areas around town.

Port Edward is on the cusp of commercial and residential development in the next few years. Come and visit the town and surrounding area for a firsthand experience. 🌿

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Message from the Mayor of Prince Rupert

HERB POND

These are exciting times in Prince Rupert! With roughly \$3 billion in investment underway in the port complex, the community is racing to keep up. We are seeing the biggest infrastructure projects in our history, multiple new housing projects underway, and investments in new retail space in the pipeline.

These are also serious times that require focused leadership. The Prince Rupert Port Authority anticipates that as new terminals come online, hundreds of new

workers will be needed to meet growing demand.

Prince Rupert City Council is doing everything possible to encourage investment in the community, particularly in the downtown core. Zero development cost charges. Zero building permit fees. Scaled tax incentives. There has never been a better time to invest in Prince Rupert.

It is my pleasure to congratulate the chamber of commerce on their successful launch of this new publication. The timing couldn't be better. 🌊



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*Business owner in
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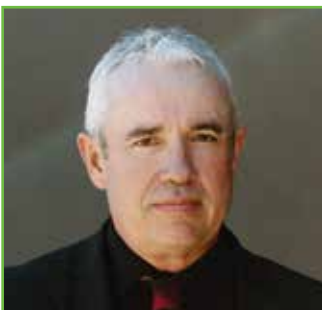
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the Prince Rupert and
District Chamber of
Commerce*



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Why should I join the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce?

For more than 110 years, businesses have depended on the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce to help them connect, grow, and be the voice of business for the North Coast on public policy issues. We provide networking, publicity, promotion, education, cost-savings and government advocacy amongst our offerings.

By joining the chamber, not only will you benefit your business, but you will benefit the whole North Coast region. While you are busy running your business, the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce is working behind the scenes to ensure our region remains a vibrant and prosperous community with ongoing options to live, work, and play.

Showcase your business

Include your business in our online member directory (rupertchamber.ca/member-directory).

Each active member receives a free listing in a searchable, multimedia business directory.

Stand out from the crowd with an enhanced online directory profile by adding your logo, photos, video, and additional links and descriptions.

Share your news

Do you have a major product, employee, or event announcement? Share it to executivedirector@rupertchamber.ca to us to help get the word out.

Connect

Build your business network, that's why many join the chamber. We host several events each year that focus on helping you build your business relationships and connect with like-minded business owners.

Be in the know

Enjoy the newsletter for busy people. Learn about upcoming chamber and community events, policy and advocacy, new chamber members, and so much more with our curated newsletter.

Become an event partner

Each year, chamber events bring business and community leaders together. Let's explore creative investment opportunities that promote your organization to your target market. Host or sponsor one of the more than 15 regular events each year.

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EVENTS *Recap*

Mark your calendars!

Whether you're looking to grow your network, sharpen your skills, or celebrate local business excellence, there's always something happening at the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce.

Regular Events

Trade Talks

The Prince Rupert Port Authority (PRPA) and the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce are pleased to present Trade Talks, a new series that provides insight into port operations and growth, featuring updates from various port businesses.

The next one is May 25th but details to be announced. This event happens every couple of months.

Lunch and Learn

Presented by the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce + Hecate Strait Employment Development Society.

The event is a dynamic lineup of professional development workshops designed to inspire leadership, improve workplace culture, and strengthen teams.

Previous topics include Telecommuting and the Modern Age, Office Politics Best Practices, and Effective Time Management.

Business After Business

The Business After Business mixer is the best way to make connections within the Prince Rupert and District business community. Bring your business cards and be ready to network with your fellow members.

These events are hosted by our members throughout the area. Hosts are provided the opportunity to meet and greet dozens of members and showcase their individual business. Food and refreshments are provided by the host for chamber members and guests. Hosts are encouraged to personalize the event however they like and truly make it a time to shine.

If you are interested in hosting, please contact executivedirector@rupertchamber.ca.

Previous hosts of Business After Business and chamber luncheons/breakfasts have included Hecate Strait Employment Development Society, Prince Rupert Gymnastics Association, Museum of Northern BC, Community Futures, Swingsmith Cages, Chances Convention Centre, Highliner Hotel and Conference Centre, MLA Tamara Davidson, Prince Rupert Port Authority, Ambipar, Workforce Development, City of Prince Rupert, North Coast Transition Society, and ICBC and Coast Mountain College.

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Business Excellence Awards

Every year, the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce, residents, employees, and business owners

join together to honour and celebrate business excellence. These awards publicly recognize outstanding businesses, organizations, and individuals that demonstrate excellence in business and a passion for the community.

We host a variety of events throughout the year, including our annual Holiday Business Social, Industry Roundtables featuring discussions with sector leaders, All-Candidate Forums during election years, and an ongoing Speaker Series. Recent roundtable participants have included AltaGas, Trigon, CN, and Pembina, with topics spanning Prince Rupert's propane and LNG movement. 🌊



Celebrating *excellence*

Prince Rupert and District Business Excellence Awards recap

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us on March 6, 2026 at the Lester Centre for the celebration of the Business Excellence Awards. Your energy, support, and stories made the night truly special.

A heartfelt shout out to our volunteers and the incredible team behind the scenes—you're the heartbeat of this community. Congratulations to all the award recipients and nominees.

We're grateful for our amazing sponsors for helping us shine: Prince Rupert Port Authority, Trigon Pacific Terminals, OV Burger Bar, Pembina Pipeline Corporation, Ambipar, District of Port Edward, Community Futures Prince Rupert, MLA Tamara Davidson, Doane Grant Thornton LLP, Rainbow Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram Ltd., CFNR

Network, Port Ed Holdings Ltd., Bandstra, Northern Savings Credit Union, AltaGas, Gitxaala Enterprises, Coast FM, Visit Prince Rupert, WSG, Prince Rupert Grain, and DP World.

Thank you to our entertainment, the Kwe Unglis Haida Dancers, Dance Academy of Prince Rupert, Kristabel Eriyae, Evan Onyenweaku, North Coast Indo Canadian Arts Club, Ray Leonard, and the Good Times Pirates.

Thank you to our planning committee, including Devika Babu, Andy Enns, Austin Eriyae, Leanne Enns, Good Times Games, the Lester Centre team, and Hannah Madill at Studio by the Bay.

Thank you to our reception catering: Cloudberry Catering Co., Fukasaku,

Chef Willy/Saltwater Bakery, Chef Neup/Mami Temaki, African Community, and Sourdough YPR.

We would also like to extend a special thanks to the Lester Centre staff and volunteers for their support and assistance throughout the event, Stuck On Designs for their guidance and support through the process, Rupert Cleaners for providing the red carpets and table linens, Ocean Pearl Promotions & Event Planning for event coordination and decor support, Poppy Design Co., Sandra Olaksew, Myphuon Delima (Event De'Cor), and Highliner Hotel for their assistance with lobby decor.

Finally, thank you to Mike Ambach of From the Treehouse Photography for photographing the evening.





Winners

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Community Involvement

Good Times Games and Electronics

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Home-Based Business Excellence

Sourdough YPR

Sponsored by Rainbow Chrysler

Indigenous Peoples Entrepreneurship Award

Sweat Rebel Fitness

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Individual Customer Service Excellence

Rob Gruber, Good Times Games and Electronics

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Industry and Manufacturing Excellence

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Not for Profit of the Year

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Professional Excellence

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Retail Excellence

Eddie's News

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Rookie Business of the Year

Line & Label Boutique

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Tourism and Accommodation Excellence

Olde Time Trolley Company Ltd.

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Young Entrepreneur of the Year

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Chamber Member of the Year

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A downtown reborn, one business at a time

In Prince Rupert, independent entrepreneurs are quietly defying the odds, filling storefronts, building community, and rewriting the story of a city's core

*Photo courtesy of the
City of Prince Rupert.*

By Shayna Wiwierski

On a drizzly Tuesday afternoon on Third Avenue, the kind of grey afternoon this northwestern port city knows well, the door to Harris & Wick Goldsmiths swings open to reveal something that surprised even its new owners: a steady stream of walk-in customers.

Kate Nel and her business partner Shauna Chandler purchased Harris & Wick – a custom jewelry shop with two working goldsmiths – just last year. Their move downtown was not exactly planned. When the landlord at their previous Cow Bay location signaled she had other plans for

the building, the two women found themselves searching for a new home.

"It wasn't really our intention to move downtown, but it was just kind of the only option we could see working," says Nel. "And it ended up being for the best. We're very, very happy with how things turned out."

Since opening on November 1, 2025, the shop has been busier than they anticipated. What they once feared might be a quiet, foot-traffic-starved stretch has instead become a place where new faces wander in; customers who didn't even know the business existed.

Their experience reflects something broader happening in Prince Rupert's downtown core: a slow, organic, business-by-business revitalization that is beginning to shift the energy of a city that has long anchored itself around one of the busiest ports on the Pacific Coast.

A few blocks away on Fraser Street, a different kind of gathering place has taken root. Port City Spirits, a craft distillery and lounge, opened its doors with a vision born partly out of the pandemic; a recognition that Prince Rupert needed somewhere for people to come together again.

Right: Harris & Wick Goldsmiths moved from Cow Bay to downtown Prince Rupert in 2025.
Far right: Harris & Wick Goldsmiths co-owners Kate Nel (left) and Shauna Chandler.



John Farrell, a partner in Port City Spirits and the executive director of Community Futures Prince Rupert, describes the distillery's founding philosophy in simple terms: there weren't enough places to go. So, they built one.

"We wanted to create a space where people could gather and be social again," says Farrell. "There weren't a lot of places to go in and try a new cocktail and see a band or sing karaoke."

The distillery, which produces spirits using locally foraged ingredients, such as wild juniper, yellow cedar, spruce tips, and honey sourced from hives in Smithers, has become more than a bar. On Sundays, it hosts game nights in partnership with Good Times Games and clothes swaps. It has started fielding requests for weddings. A residential concert society called Home Routes recently held one of its intimate shows there. Comedy bookings are coming in June.

"We're always surprised that people come in and say, 'my God, this is my first time, I didn't even know you were here,'" says Farrell. "So that tells us

a lot about how social the town is becoming again."

Fraser Street, which Farrell describes as having been "left to its own demise", has quietly become a micro-economy. Alongside the distillery, a batting cage has opened at one end, a spa and wellness centre has moved in next door, and a new development is underway a couple of doors down.

Providing the connective tissue between these new storefronts and the community at large is Alexandra

Magliocchi, owner of Poppy Design Co. Events. As a local event planner, and through her involvement with the Prince Rupert Special Events Society, Magliocchi has spent years activating downtown spaces: organizing Seafest on Third Avenue, Canada Day in Mariners Park, and Winterfest on the Courthouse Lawn.

She has watched the downtown's energy shift over time and acknowledges the work still ahead. Seafest, once spread across both Second and Third Avenues, has had



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Port City Spirits, a craft distillery and lounge, opened its doors with a vision born partly out of the pandemic; a recognition that Prince Rupert needed somewhere for people to come together again.
Photo Credit: Trevor Sowers Photography.



Port City Spirits, which produces spirits using locally foraged ingredients, such as wild juniper, yellow cedar, spruce tips, and honey sourced from hives in Smithers, has become more than a bar.
Photo Credit: Trevor Sowers Photography.

to condense its footprint due to a shortage of volunteers. Fewer active businesses along Third Avenue can make the street feel quieter than it once did.

"Events still play an important role in bringing life back into those areas, even if temporarily, and highlight the potential of what those spaces can be," says Magliocchi.

But she is cautiously optimistic.

"Thoughtful event design creates a reason for people to gather, linger, and connect in spaces they might otherwise pass through," she says. "When people associate downtown with positive experiences – celebrations, creativity, connection – it helps reshape how they engage with those spaces over time."

Magliocchi describes the current momentum as gradual but real; a shared desire to see downtown thrive, even if the path there still requires continued collaboration, investment, and consistency.

Back at Harris & Wick, Nel reflects on the reaction the shop received when it first opened its downtown doors. She wasn't prepared for it.

"People would just come in one after the other, just to poke their head in the door to say congratulations," says Nel. "And specifically, people were very grateful that we were occupying a building downtown. Like, people actually went out of their way to specify that."

The shop has also deepened Nel's sense of what makes Prince Rupert distinctive as a place to do business. The North, she has found, has a particular appetite for the handmade and the personal. Customers come not just from Prince Rupert, but from Terrace and Smithers. People here, she says, want something special.

"I don't know if we would have that same amount of success in a bigger city centre," says Nel. "It seems like people in the North are really appreciative of handmade things."

Harris & Wick has also begun weaving itself into the broader fabric of the local business community. For their grand opening, they partnered with Port City Spirits, which bartended the event and created a gold-laden signature cocktail for the occasion called the Harris & Wick. Future collaborations with Hailey Apparel and

a home-based business are already in the works.

It is the kind of informal, mutually reinforcing ecosystem that those who study urban revitalization often describe as the real engine of a downtown's recovery – not a single anchor tenant or a government program, but a critical mass of independent businesses choosing to invest in one another and in a place.

"I think that having our neighbours... we see everybody in the grocery store, and that money kind of stays within our community, within our families," says Nel. "It creates inspiration. And I think creativity is very important."

For Farrell, whose dual role at Community Futures gives him a broad view of the local economy, the signals are broadly positive, though the work is far from finished. He notes new developments on multiple fronts: a new A&W opening at one end of downtown, Northern Savings Credit Union building a new office at the corner of McBride and Third, a new barbershop and a women's fashion boutique both having opened in the past two years.



Above left: : Providing the connective tissue between these new storefronts and the community at large is Alexandra Magliocchi, owner of Poppy Design Co. Events. Right: As a local event planner, and through her involvement with the Prince Rupert Special Events Society, Magliocchi has spent years activating downtown spaces: organizing Seafest on Third Avenue, Canada Day in Mariners Park, and Winterfest on the Courthouse Lawn.

At Community Futures, he sees entrepreneurs circling and testing the waters, asking questions and coming in for coaching. The spring, he has noticed, tends to bring them out.

What downtown still needs most, he believes, is people willing to take the leap.

"I think it needs more people to take the risk and take on their dreams and

open a business," says Farrell.

Nel would agree. She knows what it felt like to stand at that precipice. Buying a business, losing a location, moving into an uncertain stretch of downtown with no guarantee of success. She came out the other side.

Her advice to anyone else weighing a similar decision is the same advice she wishes someone had given her.

"It's going to be very scary. It was very nerve-wracking, but definitely worth it. Prince Rupert really supports its small businesses, and you are going to get support from the community members," says Nel. "People want to see you succeed and they're going to try their best to help you out. It's scary, but it's definitely worth it." 🌊

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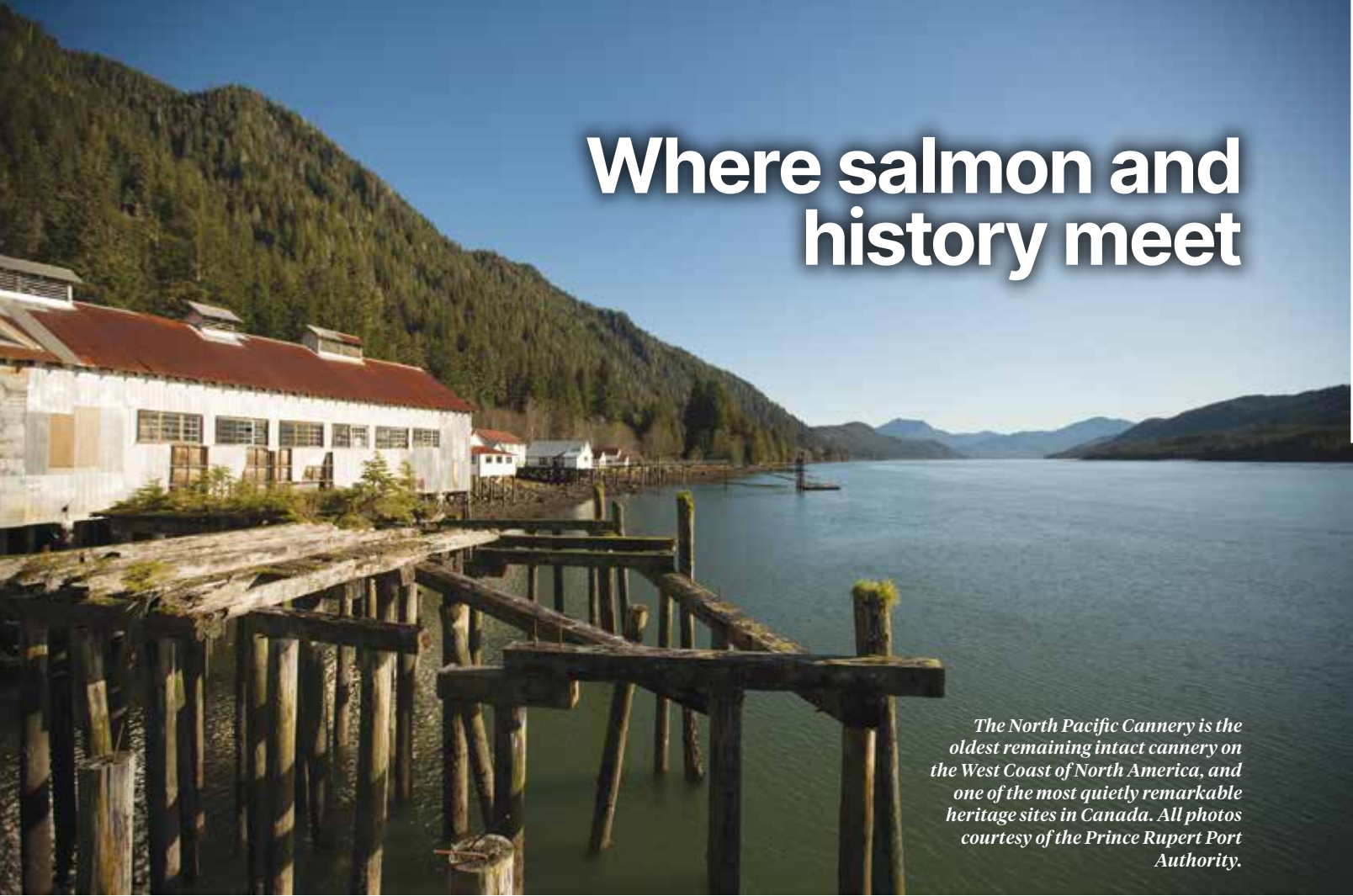
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Where salmon and history meet



The North Pacific Cannery is the oldest remaining intact cannery on the West Coast of North America, and one of the most quietly remarkable heritage sites in Canada. All photos courtesy of the Prince Rupert Port Authority.

A cannery preserves the soul of British Columbia's northwest coast

On the tidal flats of the Skeena River estuary, a cluster of weathered wooden buildings rises improbably from the water on thousands of wooden pilings, connected by a network of elevated boardwalks. Fog drifts in from Inverness Passage. A bald eagle watches from a rusted rooftop. Time, here, moves differently.

This is the North Pacific Cannery, the oldest remaining intact cannery on the West Coast of North America, and one of the most quietly remarkable heritage sites in Canada. Founded in 1888 by Angus Rutherford Johnston, John Alexander Carthew, and Alexander Gilmore McCandless, the plant operated for nearly a century before falling silent, and might have vanished entirely into the rain and rot of the North Coast had it not been for a determined group of local citizens who refused to let it go.

The North Pacific Canning Company was first established in 1889, and John Carthew later sold the cannery to Henry

Bell-Irving in 1891, who operated it as the Anglo-British Columbia Packing Company. Under Bell-Irving's direction, the company rose to astonishing heights: by the mid-1890s, the company was the foremost packer of sockeye salmon in the world. At the time, about 200 canneries existed along Canada's West Coast, with more than 50 in the Prince Rupert area alone. Of those, North Pacific is now among the last still standing.

The complex was the site of numerous activities over the decades, including a salmon cannery from the 1890s through the 1950s, a cure plant, a can-making factory built after the First World War, a cold storage plant, and a herring reduction plant. The buildings that remain tell the full arc of that industrial life, not just the machinery of production, but the deeply human story of those who made it run.

That human story is complicated, and the cannery does not look away from it. The design and layout of workers'



The complex was the site of numerous activities over the decades, including a salmon cannery from the 1890s through the 1950s, a cure plant, a can-making factory built after the First World War, a cold storage plant, and a herring reduction plant.



A five-year, \$2.3 million restoration effort eventually included the rebuilding of the cannery's original working dock.

housing reflects the multicultural workforce and the ethnic segregation in living and work areas. Chinese, Japanese, First Nations, and European workers lived and laboured side by side, but apart. Workers stayed in clapboard bunkhouses and triplexes, while officials had their own cabins. Separate housing blocks, segregated work assignments, and divided communal spaces were the architecture of a racial hierarchy embedded in wood and nails. Touring the site today means reckoning with both the industry's economic power and the inequalities that sustained it.

Because of physical isolation, northern canneries had to be self-sufficient communities that included housing for employees who would live on site through the season. Canneries also had to be built near the fishing grounds so the catch could be processed quickly to prevent spoilage in the days before refrigeration. That isolation, which is impractical by modern standards, is precisely what preserved North Pacific. Remote from the development pressures that consumed canneries closer to urban centres, it survived largely intact.

In 1979, five local Port Edward community members formed the North Coast Marine Museum Society in order to save the North Pacific Cannery. Their effort was a race against time and the elements. North Coast weather and age had contributed to the degradation of 29 buildings and supporting infrastructure, much of which has been repaired or restored through various projects since 2009. A five-year, \$2.3 million restoration effort eventually included the

rebuilding of the cannery's original working dock.

Today, the site is stewarded by the Port Edward Historical Society, which operates it as a living museum. Recognizing the site's significance on a national and global scale, the society has begun the process of having the site



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North Pacific welcomes over 10,000 guests each season, drawn by guided tours, the restored cannery machinery, and an atmosphere that no reconstruction or replica could replicate – the authentic grain and creak of the original.

designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. North Pacific welcomes over 10,000 guests each season, drawn by guided tours, the restored cannery machinery, and an atmosphere that no reconstruction or replica could replicate – the authentic grain and creak of the original.

Exhibits, guided tours, original architecture, historically-inspired cuisine, and the pristine wilderness surroundings tell the story of an industry that played an integral role in British Columbia's economic, cultural, and natural development over the last century. The old Mess House, once the communal dining hall for cannery workers of every background, now serves house-made salmon chowder to visitors who have just walked through bunkhouses where Japanese fishermen once slept six to a room.

The cannery's importance to Prince Rupert, which is now the third largest port in Canada, reaches beyond tourism and nostalgia. Many members of the local community today

are former cannery workers, descended from cannery workers, or even born in the North Pacific village. For them, the site is not a museum in any detached sense. It is a living memory.

Unfortunately, like 87 per cent of National Historic Sites in British Columbia, North Pacific Cannery is not federally funded, which is a circumstance that makes its survival all the more remarkable, and its future all the more dependent on the community's will to sustain it.

On the boardwalk, as the tide rises beneath the floorboards and the Skeena rolls past toward the sea, it is easy to understand what is at stake. This is not merely a collection of old buildings. It is the story of how a coast was settled, how an industry was built on the labour of many cultures, and how a community chose, generation after generation, to remember. 🌊

The heartbeat behind the festival: Celebrating Seafest's unsung volunteers



Seafest is built — piece by piece — by a dedicated group of special events volunteers who give countless hours to make it possible year after year.

Every community has a heartbeat — a moment each year when neighbours reconnect, laughter carries down the waterfront, and pride in place is unmistakable. In Prince Rupert, that heartbeat is Seafest.

For decades, Seafest has brought our community together to celebrate our coastal culture, maritime history, and the people who call this place home. From bustling vendor markets and lively entertainment to family-friendly activities and waterfront traditions, Seafest has become more than just a weekend event, it is a shared experience, woven into the fabric of summer.

But what many festival-goers may not see is the extraordinary effort happening behind the scenes. Seafest does not simply “happen”. It is built — piece by piece — by a dedicated group of special events volunteers who give countless hours to make it possible year after year.

And in recent years, that commitment has meant more than ever.

Like many organizations across the country, volunteer numbers have declined. Life is busier, work schedules are heavier, and many long-time volunteers have stepped back after years of service. The reality

is that the same — or even greater — workload is being carried by fewer hands. Tasks that once were shared among many now fall to a core group who step up again and again because they believe Seafest matters.

Beyond staffing challenges, the event landscape itself has grown more complex. Permitting requirements have increased, safety plans are more detailed, and coordination with multiple agencies demands careful attention. Road closures, emergency planning, insurance documentation, food vendor regulations, marine safety considerations — all must be meticulously organized well in advance. What was once a simpler checklist has become a comprehensive operational undertaking. And still, the volunteers adapt.

Managing community expectations can be one of the most delicate challenges of all. Seafest carries nostalgia and tradition. Families have favourite events. Longtime attendees remember “how it used to be”. At the same time, new generations bring fresh ideas and new hopes for what the festival can become. Volunteers must balance honouring tradition with embracing change, all while working



For decades, Seafest has brought our community together to celebrate our coastal culture, maritime history, and the people who call this place home.

Seafest is a celebration of our community. But it is also a testament to the resilience, generosity, and determination of the volunteers behind it.

within realistic limits of budget, manpower, and regulations. It is not always easy.

Yet year after year, the docks are full, the stages are set, the parade goes on, and the community gathers once more.

That is the power of volunteerism.

Special events volunteers are planners, negotiators, labourers, marketers, coordinators, and ambassadors. They

are the early arrivals and the last to leave. They lift barricades, string banners, coordinate performers, check electrical hookups, and still find time to greet attendees with a smile.

They do this not for recognition or reward, but because they believe in what Seafest represents — connection, celebration, and civic pride.

Community festivals are often

described as “traditions”, but traditions do not sustain themselves. They require people willing to invest time, energy, and heart. In an era where many organizations struggle to maintain volunteer bases, the dedication shown by special events volunteers is something truly worth celebrating.

As attendees stroll through the festivities this year, perhaps the greatest tribute we can offer is appreciation — a thank-you to the individuals who make it all possible. Better yet, consider joining them. Whether it’s a few hours during the event or involvement in planning committees throughout the year, new volunteers ensure that Seafest can continue to thrive.

Seafest is a celebration of our community. But it is also a testament to the resilience, generosity, and determination of the volunteers behind it.

And that, in many ways, is the greatest celebration of all. 🌊

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From basement bunker to train station

How Wheelhouse Brewing became Prince Rupert's living room

By Shayna Wiwierski



Wheelhouse Brewing first opened its doors in 2013 in the basement of a building a local entrepreneur had just purchased from the city.



The original location of Wheelhouse Brewing – windowless, intimate, beloved – developed a cult following.

On a clear day at Wheelhouse Brewing, you can watch the whales.

From a sunlit room in Prince Rupert's beautifully restored historic train station, customers sit with pints in hand and binoculars within reach, looking out over the harbour as trains rumble past and sea life moves through the channel below. It is the kind of scene that makes a beer taste better simply by existing.

That view is a long way from where Wheelhouse began. When Kent Orton and his two partners, Craig Outhet and James Witzke, arrived in Prince Rupert in the mid-2000s, the city's port had not yet expanded into the commercial powerhouse it would become. The three men, drawn north by opportunity and a sense

of adventure, were homebrewers first and businessmen second. They pooled their equipment, swapped recipes, and ordered grain shipped up from Vancouver. The craft beer boom was just beginning in British Columbia, and they were paying close attention.

"We started to get together and pool our resources," recalls Orton, who also serves as the company's director of finance and administration. "We kind of got to a point where we were spending so much money on stainless steel, we figured we could make the jump into a commercial business."

That jump, as it turned out, was well-timed. The trio put together a business plan over Wednesday evening meetings, caught a sale on equipment from a shuttered

brewery, acquired a cold room from another, and found their first home in the basement of a building a local entrepreneur had just purchased from the city. With its wooden beams, concrete walls, and golden light filtered through amber bottles, the space had what Orton calls "a vibe". Wheelhouse Brewing opened its doors in 2013.

Prince Rupert, Orton notes with evident affection, has a saying: it is "a quaint little drinking town with a fishing problem". It is the kind of place where community runs deep, where laborers, fishermen, and longtime locals have always known how to unwind together after a long day on the water or the docks. For three passionate homebrewers with



First day open product list.



Wheelhouse brewing owners James Witzke (left), Kent Orton (middle), and Craig Outhet.

a shoestring budget and a basement full of equipment, it felt like home from the start.

What followed was more than a decade of steady, sometimes scrappy, growth. The original location – windowless, intimate, beloved – developed a cult following. Laborers arriving for major port projects became regulars. The brewery drew military personnel, including members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, who once called asking for 100 cases of beer to commemorate their regiment's centennial. Wheelhouse packaged every last drop. The regimental colonel came personally to present a plaque, which still hangs on the building.

But growth required more space, and in 2023, Wheelhouse relocated to Prince Rupert's historic train station after partnering with the City on a build-to-suit agreement. The brewery went from 1,500 square feet to 7,000, from 40 seats to 150, and from a subterranean hideout to one of the

most striking hospitality spaces on the North Coast. A hand-crafted Italian pizza oven – made by a single family in Italy and shipped over – anchors a full kitchen. The sunroom, warm with natural light, looks directly onto the harbour.

The lineup today runs seven core offerings, including a pale ale, golden ale, brown ale, and the enormously popular Foggy Harbor IPA, which is a hazy, oat-forward northeast-style IPA that has quietly become a year-round institution. Five rotating taps, a non-alcoholic ginger beer, house-made seltzer, and a boozy tea round out a menu designed to have something for everyone.

But Wheelhouse's identity has always extended beyond what is on tap. The brewery now seats 150, hosts vinyl nights, knitting clubs, book clubs, gear swaps, and movie screenings. During its first slow winter in the new location, the team launched a campaign called "When It Rains, We Pour", a live harbour camera tracks

rainfall into a pint glass outside, and as the glass fills, the price of a pint drops. The promotion was designed to draw midweek crowds on rainy evenings. In Prince Rupert, that is most evenings, which is rather the point.

The brewery has grown from its three founders to a staff of 45. Orton handles the finances, Outhet manages day-to-day operations, and Witzke leads marketing. Together, they have built something that looks less like a bar and more like a neighbourhood institution, a place where teenagers play board games across from rugby teams, where the military mingles with the knitting club, where a family can spend a Saturday afternoon watching for whales over a pizza.

For Orton, that last image is the one that matters most.

"Every Saturday I go down there at noon with my kids, and we just play some board games and have some food and look out on the water," he says. "That's really satisfying for me." 🌊

Banking on the North

For 86 years, Northern Savings Credit Union has bet on communities that bigger banks passed by, and the region is richer for it

By Shayna Wiwerski



Branch manager, Meghan Barton, providing a donation to Lax Kxeen Society.

In the small, isolated communities that fringe British Columbia's northern coastline, places where mountains meet the Pacific and the nearest chartered bank branch might be hours away, Northern Savings Credit Union has spent more than eight decades quietly doing something the big financial institutions rarely bother with: staying.

Founded 86 years ago and now serving more than 17,000 members across the North Coast, Haida Gwaii, and the Skeena region, Northern Savings operates not as a profit-extraction machine but as a financial cooperative, a distinction that,

in practice, means the money its members deposit and the interest they pay on loans doesn't flow south to Bay Street shareholders. It stays in the North.

That difference is more than philosophical. In 2025, Northern Savings contributed approximately \$180,000 in donations and sponsorships to more than 100 local causes. In 2026, that figure rises to more than \$200,000. Through its INSPIRE Fund, which directs two per cent of annual net profit toward long-standing, high-impact community projects, the credit union has distributed \$285,000 to local groups

and organizations since the fund's launch in 2022. This year, the INSPIRE Fund alone will contribute \$109,000, up from \$85,000 in 2025, a growth that reflects a strong financial year: total revenue exceeded \$29 million, with net profit surpassing \$5.5 million.

The engine behind those numbers is, in large part, northern business. Northern Savings serves nearly 2,000 local businesses, and in 2025 alone it provided 50 new business lending solutions. Its commercial lenders are based in Prince Rupert and Terrace, not in a hub hundreds of kilometres away in Prince George or the Interior, as is often the case with the chartered banks.

Stefan Delloch, the credit union's president and CEO, is direct about what that proximity means.

"Our commercial lenders are based in Prince Rupert and Terrace, bringing deep understanding of the local market," he says. "Chartered banks often have this service in a hub out of Prince George or the Interior to service clients on the North Coast. That local expertise has enabled us to finance construction, multi-unit housing, and other critical development projects, often when larger chartered banks chose not to,



Far left: CEO, Stefan Delloch at the Bears Lair Dream Camp. Left: Walking in the 2025 Seafest parade.

due to unfamiliarity with the market and perceived risk."

That willingness to lend where others won't has shaped the physical fabric of northern communities. Construction projects, multi-unit residential buildings, commercial developments... these are the kinds of capital-intensive endeavours that require a lender who understands both the opportunity and the complexity of doing business in a resource-driven, geographically remote economy. For businesses in Prince Rupert, Terrace, or on Haida Gwaii, having a financial partner that knows the territory – literally and figuratively – is not a luxury. It is a necessity.

Northern Savings has also worked to make its business relationships visible. Since 2016, its Business of the Month program has spotlighted local entrepreneurs across its website, social media channels, and in-branch displays. To date, 115 businesses have been featured. In 2025, the program celebrated the likes of Sidewalkers Boutique in Terrace, Costa Yoga in Prince Rupert, 3Bird Leather Co.

also in Terrace, and Harris & Wick Goldsmiths Ltd. in Prince Rupert, among others spread across Haida Gwaii and the region. It is, in its quiet way, an act of civic boosterism that no head-office-driven bank would think to replicate.

But Northern Savings' investment in the North extends well beyond business banking. The credit union distributed \$12,000 in bursaries and awards to local students in 2025, and its youth programming reflects a genuine commitment to the next generation of northerners. In October,

Northern Savings partnered with community organizations to host the Bears' Lair Dream Camp in Prince Rupert — a four-day gathering that brought together 32 youth to explore entrepreneurship, celebrate community, and dream about their futures, timed deliberately just ahead of Truth and Reconciliation Day.

Twelve northern youth were also featured in the WOW Kid program, which highlights young people making a difference in their communities.

The credit union's employees are, by design, embedded in those same communities. Through Northern Savings' GIVE program, staff contributed more than 2,500 volunteer hours in 2025, supporting more than 100 local groups and events. In March, which marked the credit union's 85th anniversary, the team pledged 85 hours of volunteerism for the month, and exceeded that goal, contributing more

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Team members volunteering at the Salvation Army Lunch program, where members from Northern Savings Credit Union volunteers to cook and serve lunch once a month.



Branch manager, Meghan Barton, presenting two Coast Mountain students with our Made in the North Bursary Awards.



Providing shampoo, conditioner, and gloves to the Transition Society in support of their Christmas Giving program.

than 100 hours. Across approximately 130 employees, that level of civic engagement represents something closer to a community ethos than a corporate policy.

The credit union is situated on the traditional unceded lands of the Haida Nation and the traditional territories of the Ts'msyen Nation, a geographical and cultural context that shapes how it understands its responsibilities. As larger financial institutions continue to withdraw branches from smaller communities across Canada, Northern Savings has moved in the opposite direction, offering a full suite of financial products and services, including what it described as one of the most competitive five-year fixed mortgage rates in the country in 2025. That year, it welcomed 431 new mortgages and achieved a 95 per cent renewal rate, a figure that

suggests members are not merely satisfied, but loyal. To accommodate demand, the credit union extended its lending services by introducing virtual Saturday appointments through its contact centre.

Nearly 1,000 members participated in the credit union's 2025 member survey, conducted in partnership with Sentis. The results were broadly positive: members highlighted community support and quality service as particular strengths, while also signalling a desire for expanded digital banking capabilities and extended hours — feedback that Northern Savings says it is actively addressing through investments in digital infrastructure and contact centre capacity.

Delloch sees those investments as part of a longer arc. The challenges

facing northern communities, including affordable housing, youth opportunity, and economic diversification, are structural, and they require long-term partners, not transactional ones.

"Looking ahead, northern communities need strong pathways for youth to build meaningful careers and earn living wages in an increasingly industrial economy," says Delloch. "That means access to the right financial tools, advice, and confidence to manage opportunity as it grows. At the same time, housing, especially affordable housing, remains a critical need. We're positioned as a long-term partner, with the capital, liquidity, and construction financing expertise to support developers and community partners and help ensure growth translates into real, lasting opportunity for the North." 

Smart tax strategies to keep on your radar



By Jeremy Pierce



Tax planning should be a year-round priority—an ongoing way to protect your wealth and your family's future. For Prince Rupert and across B.C.'s North Coast, this planning is especially important given the concentration of family-owned fisheries and enterprises that form the backbone of the local economy.

Whether you operate a construction or contracting business, marine service company, logistics operation, or any other family-owned enterprise, thoughtful tax planning can play a meaningful role in your business's long-term health and sustainability.

Some areas to keep top of mind include keeping your will and estate plan up to date, designing a thoughtful succession plan, and managing capital gains and losses. As these strategies can be complex, an experienced Doane Grant Thornton LLP advisor can help you navigate important considerations.

Have you reviewed your will and estate plan?

Will and estate planning are frequently pushed down the line, but they're necessary for a smooth transition. Revisiting your plan often can help preserve wealth for

your family, successors, or any philanthropic goals you may have. Your will and estate plan should be continuously evolving, as it has significant tax consequences, especially if you own a local business. During your review, it's important to also consider family dynamics, the impact on your business if you have one, and the tax implications.

Are you thinking about retirement?

Succession planning for businesses and families is often overlooked. Whether your transition is years away or just around the corner, building a strategic tax plan proactively gives you more options and control.

This can be especially important for local businesses in Prince Rupert, where ownership transitions may involve family members, long-time employees, or trusted partners who understand the local industry and community.

Tax considerations for your succession plan may include the following:

- **Intergenerational business transfers:** If you plan to sell your business to a family member, there's rules that may provide a tax benefit and support your business'



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continuity across generations. These rules allow the transfer of certain shares to certain family members to be treated as if the transfer were to a third-party (i.e., as a capital gain instead of a tax dividend).

• **Intergenerational farm and fishing business transfers:**

There are also additional tax benefits specific to farming and fishing businesses to allow a seamless transition to the next generation. These rules allow the transfer of this type of business to occur on a tax-deferred basis, while also allowing the existing owner to utilize a specific capital gains exemption available for farming and fishing businesses.

- **Employee ownership trusts:** If you plan to make employees owners of your business, this type of trust could offer certain tax benefits. A sale to an employee ownership trust before the 2027 tax year could result in a tax exemption on up to \$10 million of capital gains realized, under certain conditions.

Are you actively managing your gains and losses?

If you hold a mix of investments, such as real estate and business assets, be sure to review your capital gains and losses throughout the year. This could allow you to act when markets move, not simply at year-end, helping to minimize your tax burden and optimize long-term returns.

Tailored tax solutions

These strategies are some of the foundational elements of smart tax planning. By staying proactive, Prince Rupert business owners can protect their wealth, prepare for the unexpected, and ensure their company's legacy remains strong.

Jeremy Pierce is Partner, Independent Business Group, at Doane Grant Thornton LLP. He can be reached at 778-374-0485 or by email at Jeremy.pierce@doane.gt.ca. 

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