



# Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Port McNeill, British Columbia

March 2020

**ROGER BROOKS** >  
International



## Destination Assessment

### INTRODUCTION

In March of 2020, a Destination Assessment of Port McNeill, British Columbia, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of Port McNeill—how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public washrooms, overall appeal, and the community’s ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the Destination Assessment, we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project. The town and surrounding area were “secretly shopped.” Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

Once potential visitors find information about your area, are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Assessment, we reviewed your visitor website and print marketing materials.

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)

- 2) Websites
- 3) Brochures and printed materials
- 4) Publicity (articles)
- 5) Word of mouth—the most effective means

We searched the internet for activities, requested and reviewed printed materials, and looked for articles and third-party information. As we prepared for travel to your community, we searched both commercial and organizational websites promoting the area, tourism websites, and read travel articles and guidebooks.

The marketing assessment determined how effective the marketing was in convincing a potential visitor that the area would be worth a special trip, a stop, or an overnight stay. The key to the marketing assessment is to see if you have a primary lure that makes you worth a special trip of a one-hour drive, or from further away. The question on most visitors’ minds is: What do you have that I can’t get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities falter is when they merely provide “lists” of what the community has, whether it’s truly “unique” or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation, historic downtowns, scenic vistas, etc. Of course, nearly every visitor can do these things closer to home. So, what makes Port McNeill worth the trip?

Always promote your primary lure first—what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or “complementary” activities.

Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm mind that Disneyland gets all the glory? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with those secondary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities benefit as well.

In a nutshell, the marketing assessment looks for what makes your community worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. We look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the area, looking at enticements from the highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public washrooms, visitor information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friendliness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

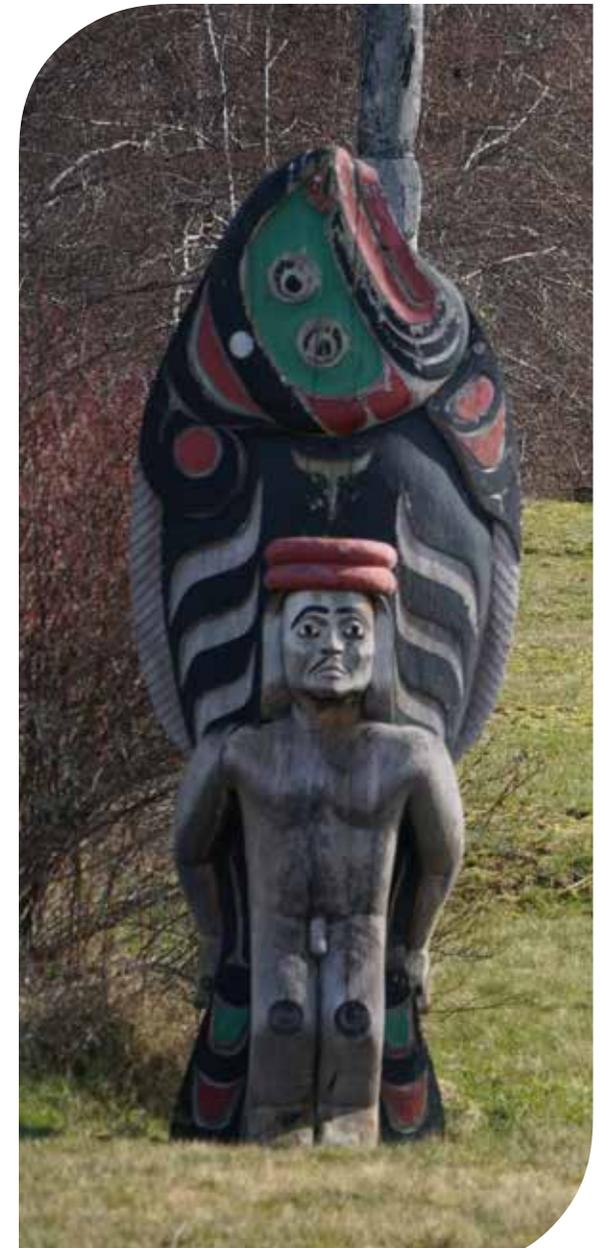
The area benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the On-site Assessment includes a candid look at private businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we provide a low-cost "suggestion," where possible, on how the challenge can be corrected or overcome. The suggestions are not termed "recommendations," as they were developed without consulting the community first about possible constraints, future plans, or reasons why the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the community, leading people to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It's important to note that to increase the town's tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly successful impact on the town's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a region-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and provincial agencies, where appropriate. Every local organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) will not be successful if the tourism effort is not region-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are aware of but can't mention or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.



While marketing efforts are important, product development is the most important factor of a successful tourism industry. Visitors want activities, not just things to look at. How much time can a visitor spend enjoying activities—that cater to their interests—in your area? Does your community have truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises, otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they don't have a sustainable tourism industry, or they simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several days reviewing marketing materials and assessing the community, we have looked at all of these issues, and have developed some suggestions and ideas the community can discuss and possibly implement to help increase tourism spending locally.

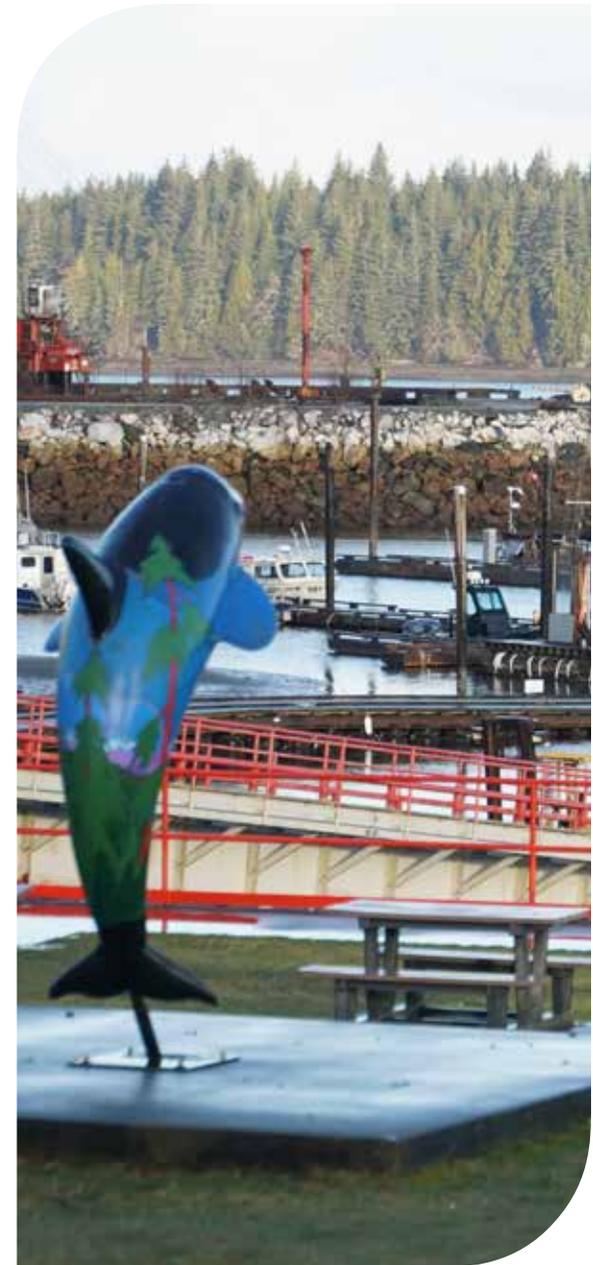
### **SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH**

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash—often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services. Visitors come, spend money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive "balance of trade." Communities with successful tourism

programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors—providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the cost of those services.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and, of course, you do want your visitors to do these—but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, and hotels, ultimately opening their wallets to make purchases. That is what helps your local economy, your small merchants, your hoteliers, and your tax coffers.

To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it—you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.



## THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

### 1. Visiting friends and family

The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and/or family. If you did nothing to promote tourism, you would still have tourism in your community. However, when friends and family come to visit, do your residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding signage, gateways and advertising.

### 2. Business travel

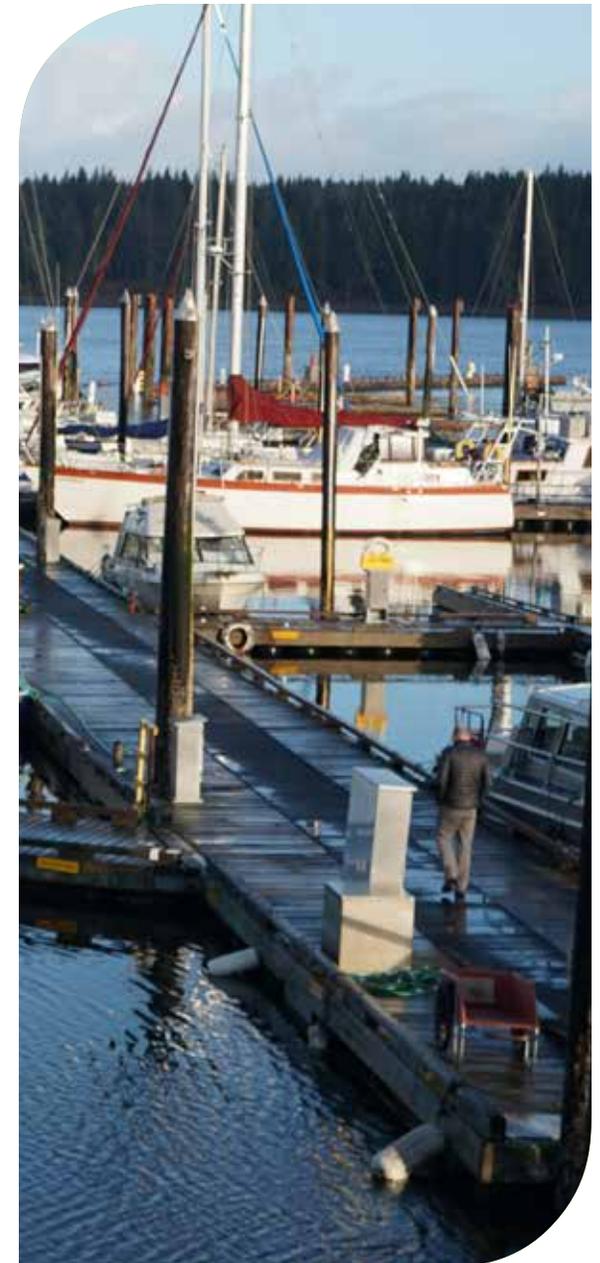
The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do “after hours” while in the area. The most successful convention and trade show towns are the result of their secondary activities or “diversions,” not simply because of their convention and exhibition facilities. Think Disneyworld, Disneyland, San Antonio’s River Walk, Banff, to name a few.

### 3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative of all types of visitors, is the leisure traveler. They have no personal connections to the community, but are coming purely to enjoy themselves. They stay in commercial lodging establishments, eat virtually all their meals in local restaurants, and their top diversionary

activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities—things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the “live music-theater capital of the world.” This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary “lure” is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about





four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

### THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

#### 1. Status quo

If you take no action to develop the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, simply because some travelers will pull off local highways or freeways for gas, food, or lodging, as well as the fact that the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have some tourism.

#### 2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community—buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

If there's a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which nearly always translates to additional spending.

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

#### 3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. And those attractions

must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend four times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

### THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes) If a visitor has to drive an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

The more you have to offer, collectively, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, and of course, the more they will spend. This is why it is so important for communities to market more than just their immediate geographic areas. By marketing neighboring activities and attractions, you present much more for a visitor to do, and you make the visit worth the trip.

Visitors don't care about city limits or county lines – so market the broader package and you'll be able to keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some more shopping, and hopefully, an overnight stay.

### SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors couldn't care less about those boundaries. They are looking for activities that cater to their interests, and location is second to the experience. ALWAYS promote the primary lure first, then the location. People by the millions head to Disneyland, Disneyworld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity—the experience—THEN the location.

### LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

Too often communities promote the list of diversions that nearly every community has. The primary lure is the activity that a visitor can't find closer to home.

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had "something for everyone?" Of course not—you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance—they are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. It's what's in the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance, but don't translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An agricultural center? A county historical museum? Heritage must be outstanding and pervasive throughout the community to be a primary lure, such as Plimoth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the "capital" of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capital of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capital. Modesto is the tomato capital. Gridley is the kiwi capital. Oxnard is the strawberry capital. Fallbrook is the avocado capital. But here's the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capital of a fruit or vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. For local heritage to be a major attraction, it needs to combine activities with ambiance, and it needs to be pervasive throughout the area.

### BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

Why should a visitor come to your community if they can enjoy the same activities closer to home? Too many communities promote "outdoor recreation" as their primary draw. Unfortunately, that is the same attraction promoted by nearly every community in North America.

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best, then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

If you have great hiking trails, then market their unique qualities. Be specific and paint the image





of how wonderful they are in the minds of your potential visitors. If you have one fantastic restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began its Shakespeare Festival, which now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and produces dozens of Bavarian events every year. Some now say the town looks more genuinely Bavarian than towns in Bavaria. It is now one of the primary tourist destinations in Washington state, hosting more than 2.5 million visitors annually. They offer a different experience, an experience that is pervasive throughout town.

Okanogan County, Washington is an outdoor recreational paradise—just like 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. Like, “Pinch yourself, you’re in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent.” This, and other quotes like it, make it worth the drive to visit Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

Set yourself apart from everyone else, and you’ll see that by being unique, you’ll be a greater attraction.



## CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

Although it may not be the primary reason why visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors. Besides lodging, it is also how visitors spend the most amount of money.

Do you have a pedestrian-friendly shopping district? If not, can you create one? Many communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian “village” including visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, washrooms, etc., all in an attractive, landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all over town) is 10+10+10: Ten destination retail shops, which includes galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing arts), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical

mass—the opportunity to have multiple choices, multiple experiences, all in a convenient and attractive setting.

**TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is one of the world’s fastest growing industries, and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market, and it creates a basis for a unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists, crafts, etc. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors, key in revitalizing a community’s downtown. And a tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others—new businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride, encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.



## NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report will provide many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing the tourism industry and other economic development efforts, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the community should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

Developing a detailed plan would help to build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today.

Consider taking the findings and suggestions from this Destination Assessment and using them to build an action plan. Add research, local input, and some professional guidance to create a written action plan that will give you the solutions and actionable steps to help your community become more economically vibrant and increase quality of life.

Your plan should be an “action plan” as opposed to a “strategic plan.” You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your town to be successful in

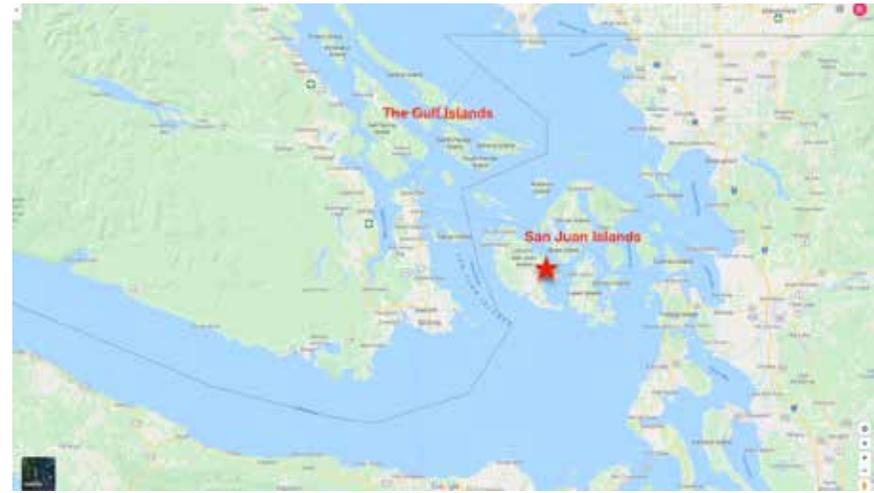
attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become more attractive and enjoyable for both visitors and citizens.

A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together, building the town’s unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment in which to live, work, and visit.





## Findings & Suggestions



**IMPORTANT STATISTIC #2**

**Shift happens:**  
For the first time in Canadian history,  
quality of life is leading economic development.

Jobs are going where the talent is,  
or wants to be.

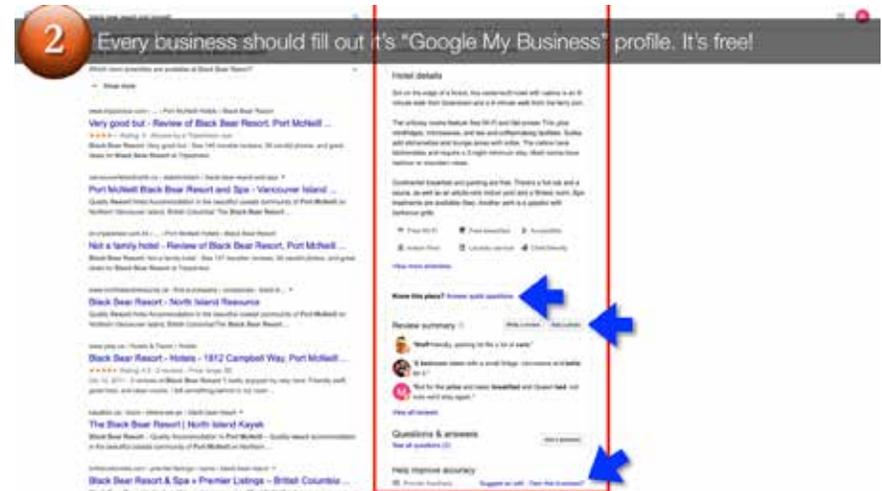
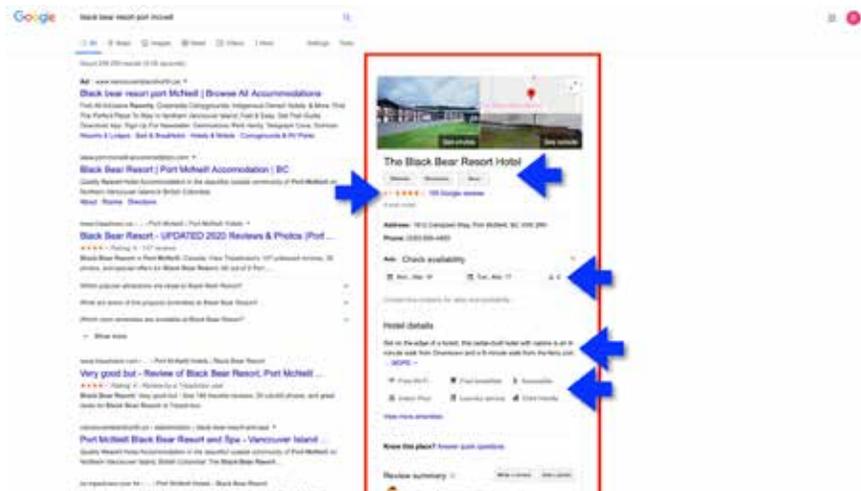
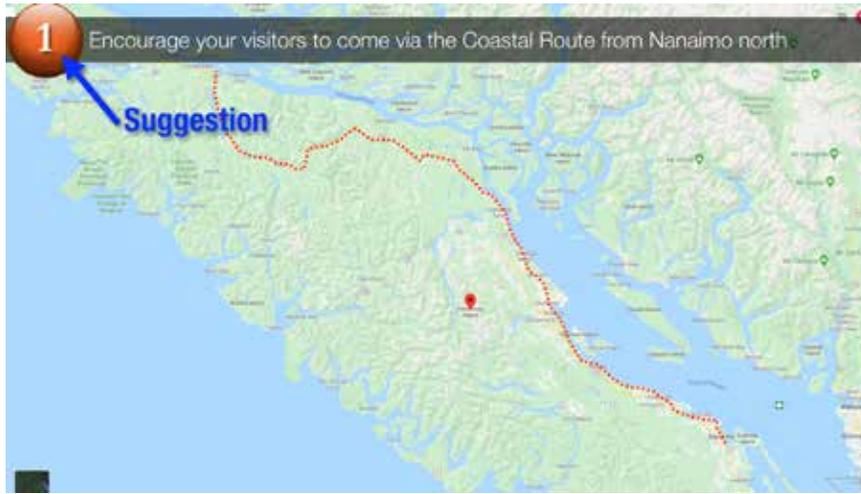
Our assessment process included reviewing Port McNeill’s marketing materials, plus looking at your online presence, reviews on TripAdvisor and other information sites, as well as performing the “secret-shopping” on-site assessment. We looked at signage and wayfinding (how easy was it to find your attractions and amenities?), appeal, critical mass (were there places in the city to spend money?), your attractions, amenities, customer service, and more. We have a list of 60 key elements we review, and so far, we have worked in nearly 2,000 communities in North America, Scandinavia, and Europe.

We’ve worked in many communities in British Columbia, including Whistler, North Vancouver, Squamish, Grand Forks, Terrace, Dawson Creek, Port Alberni,

Comox Valley, Osoyoos, Nelson, Castlegar, and more. I had grown up in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island, so I’ve been very familiar with Vancouver Island, but I had never explored North Vancouver Island.

Our entire focus during the assessment was to find what else can be done to make Port McNeill an even better, stronger, year-round destination. We looked at Port McNeill as a place to live and raise a family, as a place to work, invest in, or bring a business, and as a visitor destination.

Important Statistic #1: Tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development. #2: Quality of life is leading economic development.

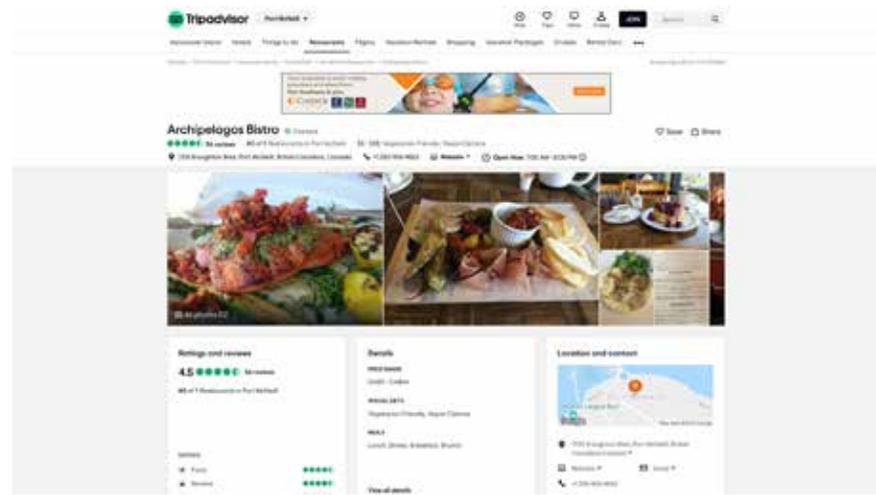
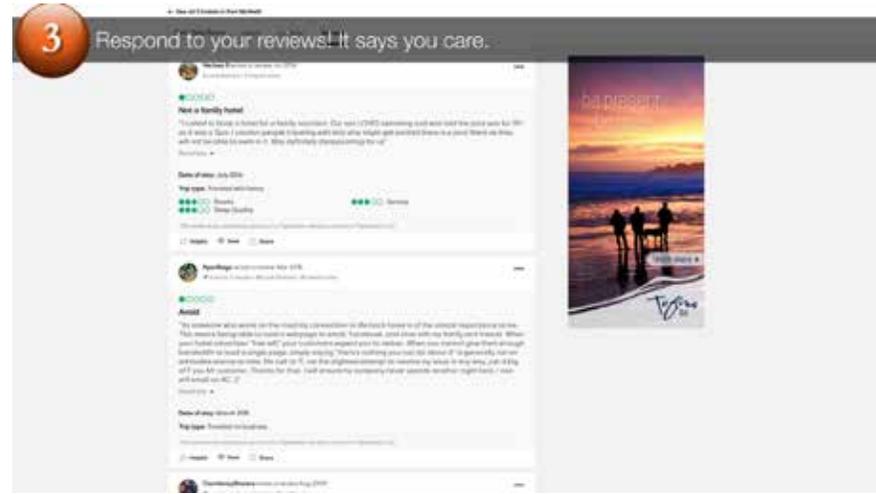
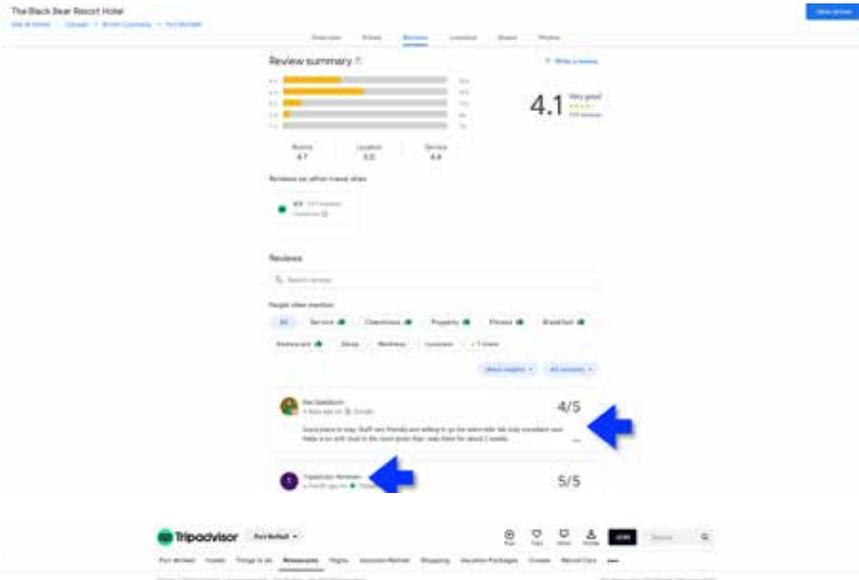


Throughout this assessment report, you'll see some numbered suggestions. These are suggestions--not recommendations--because we don't know all the circumstances and constraints involved. In making these suggestions, we encourage you to analyze them and implement them if they are appropriate. If they are something you are already working on, then you've been validated.

When we planned our journey to Port McNeill, we flew from Phoenix, Arizona, to Seattle, then drove to Tsawwassen to catch the ferry. From Nanaimo, we drove up to Port McNeill (top left). We suggest you always encourage visitors to take the coastal route, as we did, because it is such a beautiful drive. The

drive is part of the visitor experience and should be promoted as such. We stayed at the Black Bear Resort (top right) which was great. Part of the reason we chose the Black Bear was the TripAdvisor and Google reviews were quite good.

You can see that when searching for lodging online for Port McNeill (bottom left), a box shows up that gives tons of good information about Black Bear. We strongly suggest that every business sign up for this feature--"Google my business." It's free and provides a great, easily accessible summary.



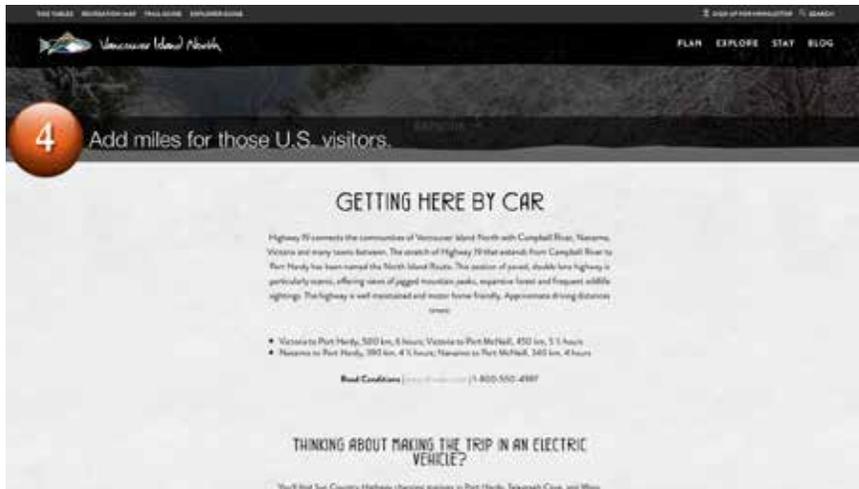
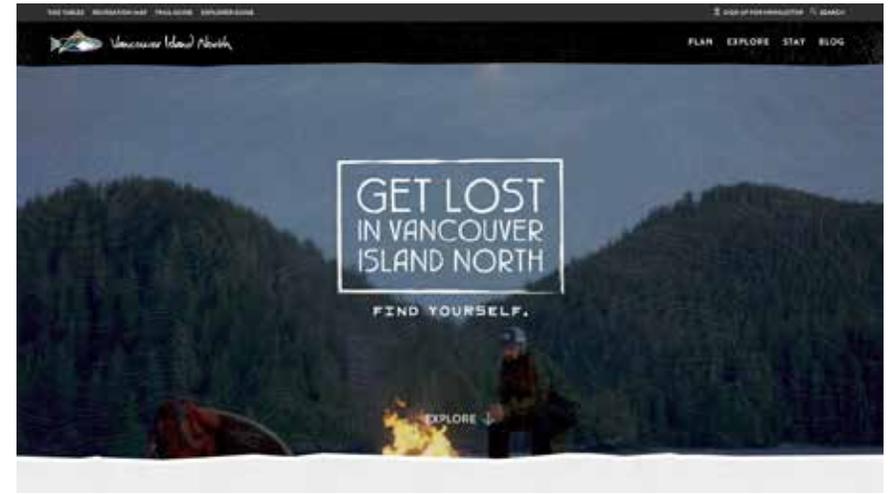
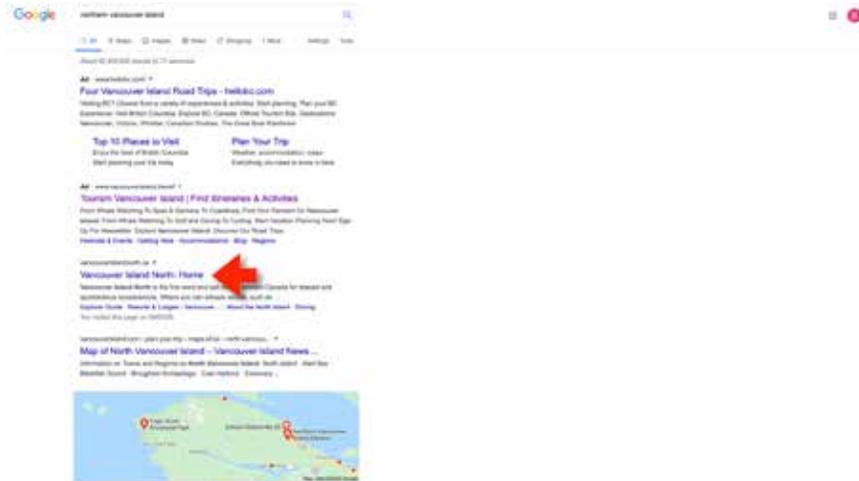
Most visitors immediately take a look at the reviews online for lodging, restaurants, and shops (top left). We could see that most of the reviews for the Black Bear were good, so we felt comfortable staying there.

TripAdvisor and Google reviews are highly visited. It's very important for all merchants and businesses to be aware of the reviews their customers leave, and it's critical to respond to those reviews. Responding shows your potential customers that you care.

If you receive a negative review, respond to the complaint politely. Show that

you appreciate that the customer reached out to you, and that you are doing whatever you can to fix the problem. People tend to read the bad reviews, so responding to them can go a long way to help alleviate concerns. We found very few businesses in Port McNeill responded to online reviews, and that is something everyone could do to help their businesses.

Visitors use TripAdvisor to help them decide where to eat as well. We always check out the reviews of restaurants when we're out of town. Be sure to read what your customers are saying and respond to them. A dialogue with your customers is great and helps build customer loyalty.



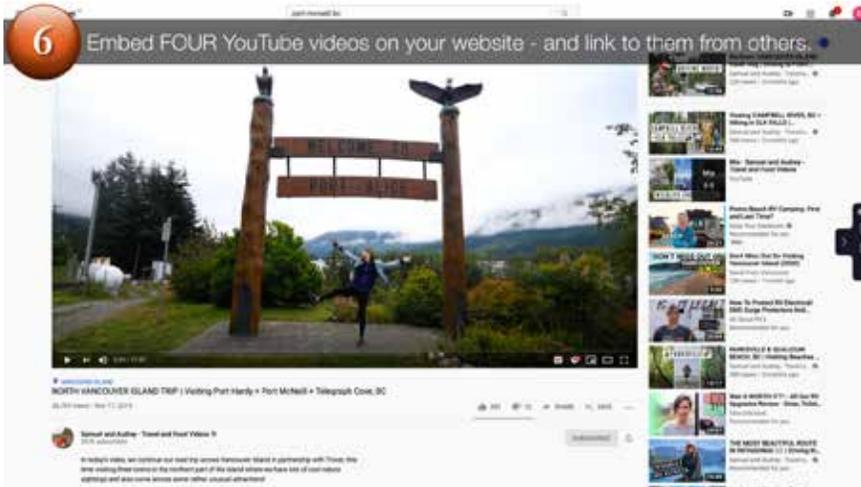
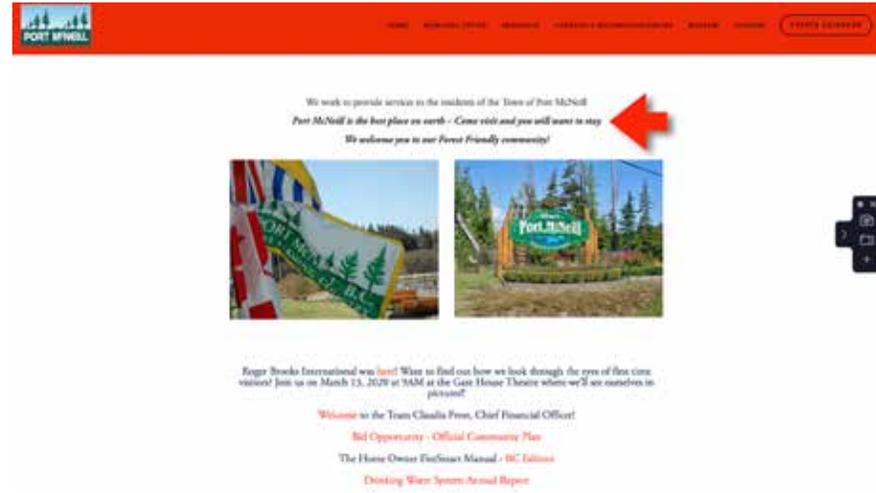
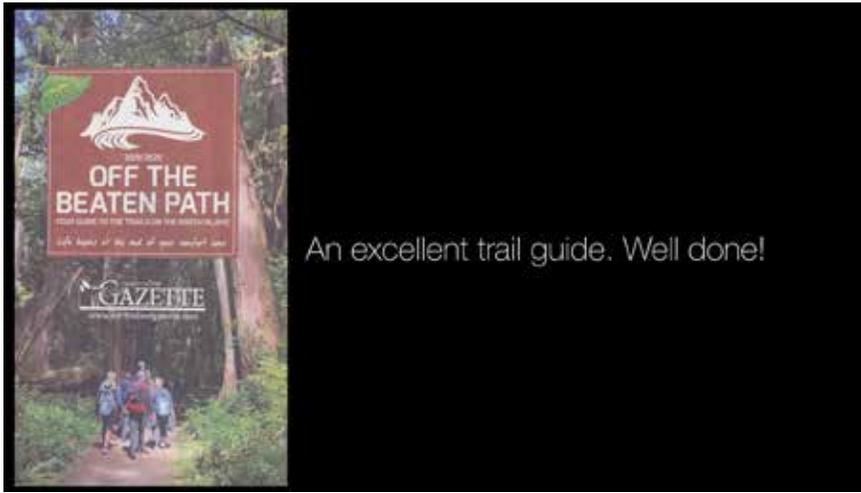
Many people who are thinking about visiting North Vancouver Island aren't searching online for Port McNeill; they search for information about North Vancouver Island. That is what we did (top left), and we found the Vancouver Island North website (top right). It is one of the best tourism websites we have ever seen!

It is filled with very helpful information, plus it is "visual first"--filling your entire screen with a lot of great photography. It is attractive and has real, useful content as well, which is critical.

The website provides kilometres for driving distances--suggestion: add miles

as well. Seattle is a big market for B.C. and north Vancouver Island. Make it easy for U.S. neighbors to plan a trip and spend some of their dollars in your community.

One of Port McNeill's top priorities should be to expand your tourism season, with the goal of being an eight-month destination. You can start by promoting activities by season. We downloaded the guide (bottom right), and it is great. Consider reformatting some of the information into a "Pick your season--pick your passion" format. We visited in March, and it was great! Trails are open and accessible, the ferries are running, and there is plenty to enjoy. Encourage visitors to come throughout the year.



Important statistic #3: When people are planning their trip, they use hard-copy brochures and materials only 32% of the time. Their primary source of information is the internet. However, once visitors have arrived, they use brochures 81% of the time to plan their activities. So brochures and printed marketing materials are still important. Visitors like something they can look through while they are dining or in their hotel rooms.

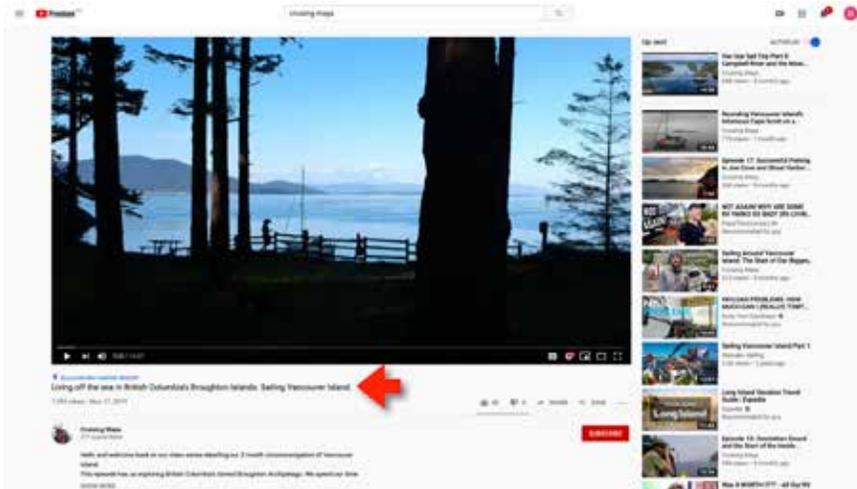
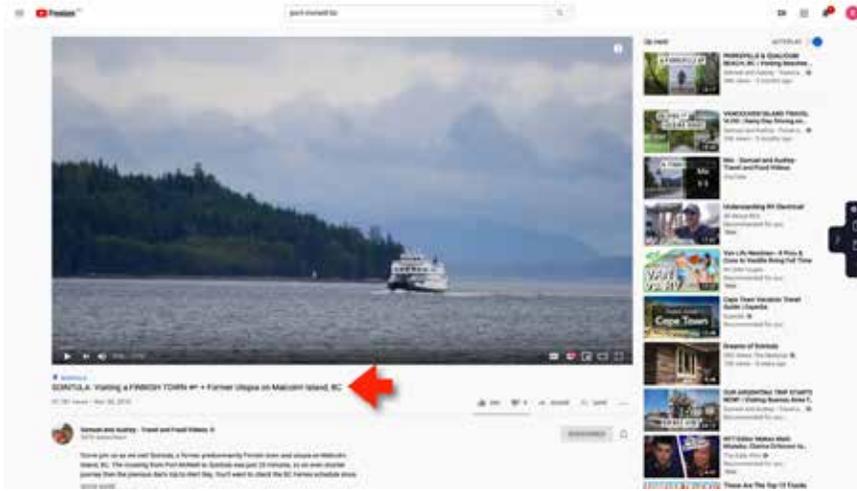
We found the “Off the Beaten Path” trail guide (top left) after we arrived, and it is an excellent brochure. It gives detailed information, and it has photos, so it encourages people to find a lot of activities, encouraging them to want to

make a return visit.

We found the Town of Port McNeill’s website (top right). Port McNeill can also take advantage of Google’s feature “google my business” and include more information on the search page.

We liked that the Town of Port McNeill’s website portrays such a positive image of community pride (top right).

Suggestion: Embed YouTube videos on your town’s website, and link to them from others.

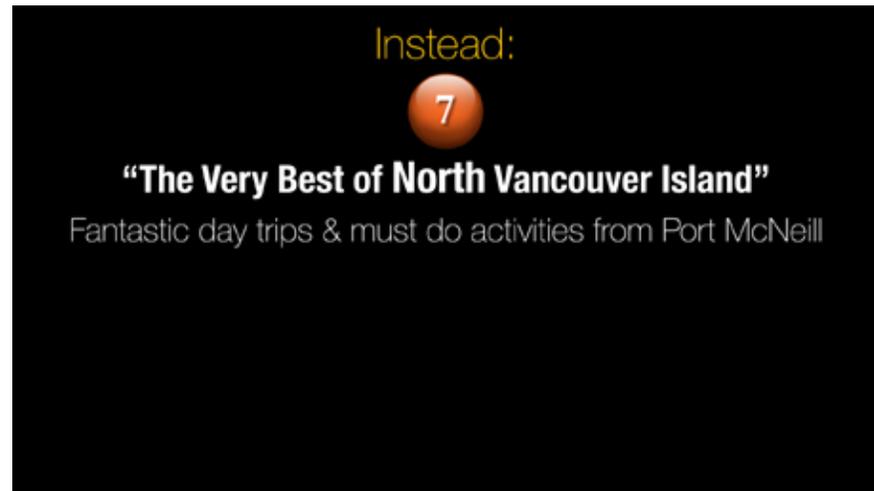
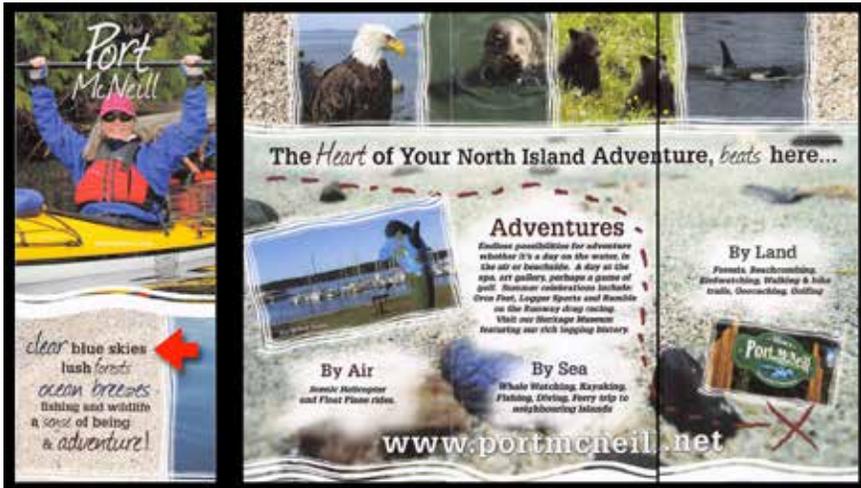


We found some wonderful entertaining videos about visiting north Vancouver Island on YouTube. Many YouTube videos give permission to allow them to be posted on third-party websites--just check on the "share" feature to see if you are able to "embed" the video.

We suggest you embed some of these YouTube videos on your website. We found some great ones produced by "Samuel & Audrey," and they do a very good job promoting things to do in the Port McNeill area, including day trips by ferry to both of the islands. There is also one about "Living off the sea in British Columbia's Broughton Islands" by Cruising Maya, which is excellent.

As a general rule, your marketing budget should be spent as shown bottom right. Digital marketing includes your websites, and public relations includes social media. So, basically, your internet budget should be about 65% of your total marketing budget. Your collateral materials are still important, though, as visitors still enjoy having printed brochures and materials, especially once they arrive.

Your digital marketing includes your website, which should have updates every two weeks; search engine optimization; pay-per-click marketing; e-newsletters; online advertising; blogs, vlogs, content; digital brochures; and apps.

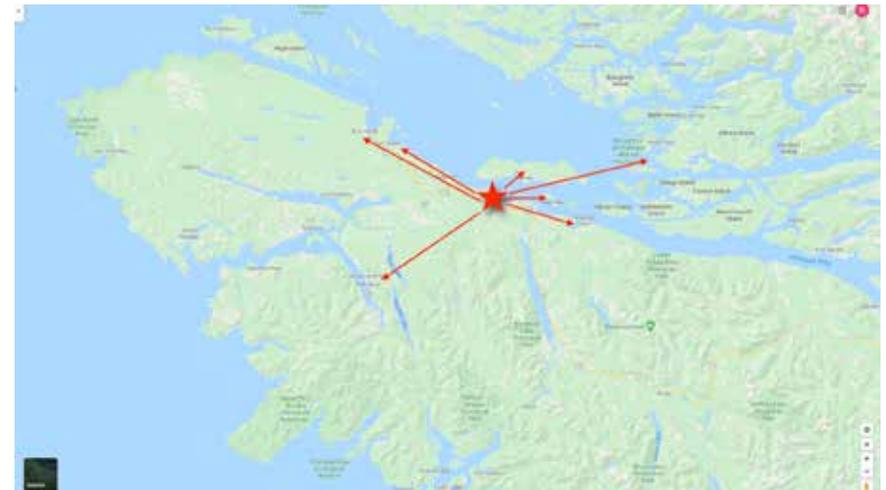


Based on the information we found, we developed a plan for our time in Port McNeill: Monday we planned to take a look at Port Hardy; to check out your competition. If the weather was nice, we planned to walk on the ferry to Alert Bay, and then drive out to Telegraph Cove. Tuesday we planned to take the ferry to Sointula, and then Wednesday and Thursday, we planned to really concentrate on Port McNeill.

When we arrived, we were able to take a look at the Port McNeill brochure (top left). It is attractive, but doesn't have a lot of useful information. If you substituted "Port Hardy" for "Port McNeill," it would still ring true, so it's a pretty

generic statement. Instead of this brochure, we suggest you create "The Very Best of North Vancouver Island--Fantastic day trips and must-do activities from Port McNeill." Highlighting specific, best-of activities throughout all of North Vancouver Island, with Port McNeill as a "base-camp" is a great way to promote the area.

This "best-of" brochure (bottom left and right) was created by Bracebridge, Ontario. It highlights their top activities, restaurants, and shops. People love finding out what the very best activities are; that's why customer reviews and ratings websites are so popular. We'll give you some ideas for your "best-ofs."



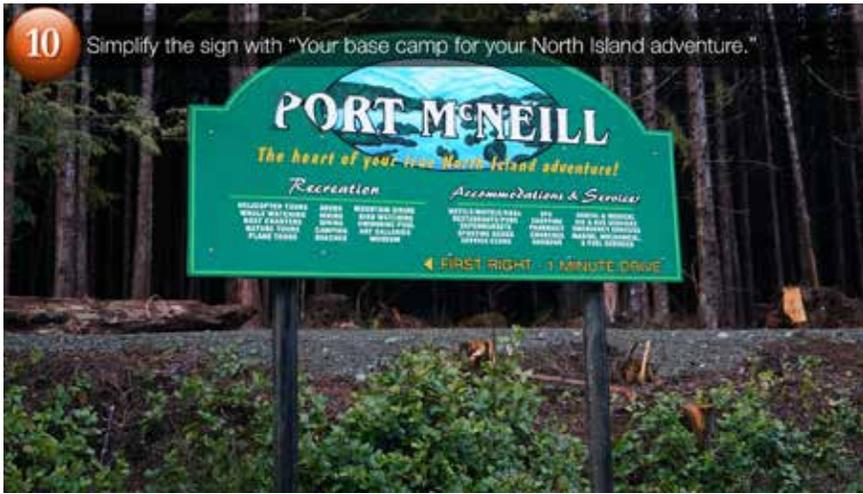
Looking at the Port McNeill brand, or focus, we suggest presenting the town as the "base camp" for experiencing North Vancouver Island. Base camp may come across as too much of a logging place, but that does tie in with the history of the area. Also, base camp is where people spend the night, and that's what you want visitors to do--spend the night in Port McNeill. Then you can send them out for day trips. Overnight visitors spend three times more than day visitors. When visitors spend the night in Port McNeill, besides lodging, you get them for breakfast and dinner.

You could easily suggest day trips to Port Hardy, Sointula, Alert Bay, Telegraph Cove, the Broughton Islands, and Alice Lake. Then, the visitors return to Port

McNeill for the night. Day trips should normally be only a 45-minute drive away, at the most. You want to present Port McNeill as the hub, but not as a gateway. A gateway is something you go through to get someplace else.

Sunday we explored, and we loved all the monument gateway signs. The sign for Port Alice was very enticing: "A beautiful scenic drive away." We didn't have time to go there, but the sign was enough to make us want to (bottom left).

The welcome sign for Port McNeill is very attractive (bottom right). Suggestion: Add a hashtag to encourage people to take selfies in front of the sign and/or post about their experiences online.



10 Simplify the sign with "Your base camp for your North Island adventure."



11 This is much better: Freshen it up - it's looking pretty tired and worn out.



12 Include this in your other marketing: websites, brochures don't match the signage.



13 All of these need to be in brochures, websites, videos. Clean up the trash!

This Port McNeill sign (top left) needs to be refreshed and repainted. This is along the highway, so it's impossible to read the lists of recreation and accommodations without stopping. It would be better to simplify the sign. Instead of claiming to be "The heart of your true North Island adventure," claim to be the "base camp." "Heart" is overused and not as effective.

Alert Bay's sign along the highway (top right) is easy to read and has good information, but it should be freshened up as well.

All the information on these signs (bottom left) should be included on your websites and brochures.

The information about the Alice Lake Recreational Loop and the Broughton Archipelago is great (bottom right). Be sure this detailed information can be found on websites and brochures as well. People don't usually carry a clipboard to write things down when they're traveling.

Be sure to keep the area along highways and near your signs free of litter (bottom right). First impressions are important.



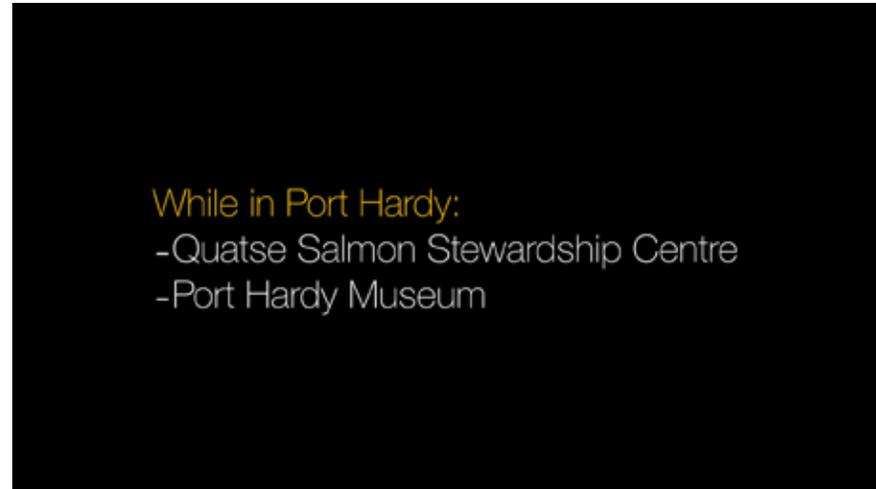
We saw this sign (top left) right at the wonderful new trail outside Port McNeill. The trail is a great amenity for the community and visitors--great job! We're finding so much good information on signs after we arrive, but it's important to include all this information on your website and in your brochures.

These signs (top right) have even more information--about Coal Harbor, Telegraph Cove, and more. Be sure to include this information in your marketing materials.

We're going to offer some suggestions for attractions and activities you can include in "The Very Best of North Vancouver Island" brochure. First, include the Alice Lake Recreational Loop, if it is a really exceptional drive. We haven't driven it, but we have heard that it is beautiful.

Also, kayaking and boating the Broughton Archipelago. We have heard such fantastic reviews about that experience. Each of these activities could be one panel of your "very best-of" brochure. Showing these exceptional activities lets visitors know that there are days and days worth of fun in the north island.

Sunday evening we ate at Archipelago Bistro (bottom right), and the food was great. We thanked them for being open Sunday! This hotel/restaurant complex was confusing, and was lacking in curb appeal. Add some landscaping and potted plants. Change the banner for a permanent sign for the restaurant. Curb appeal is critical to attract customers! The "Beer & Wine" banner doesn't make this look like a great hotel. It was confusing.

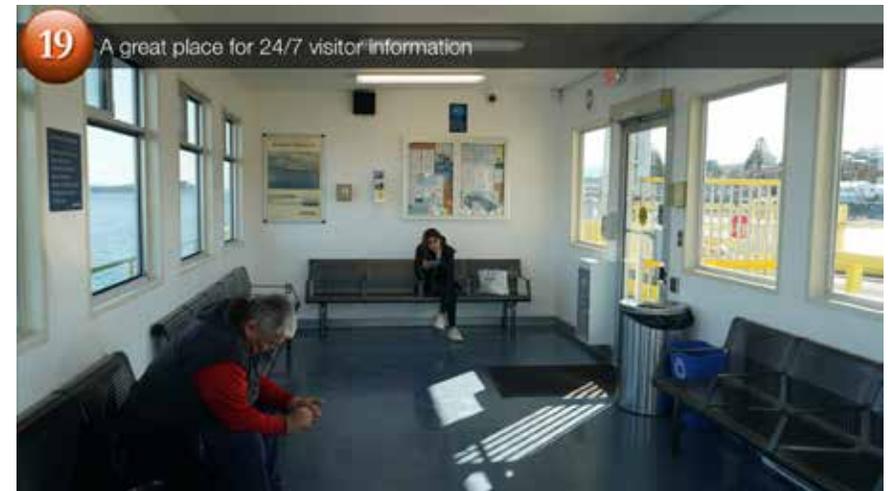


The sign (top left) is hard to read--we thought it said the "Datewood Inn," and were surprised to learn it's the "Dalewood Inn." There is a readerboard also--if you have it, use it! Promote what you have to offer that is your best feature. Don't leave it empty.

Monday morning we headed out to see Port Hardy--we wanted to see your immediate neighbor. All the communities in the North Island have very attractive gateway signs (top right). However, "Live the adventure" is too generic a slogan to be effective. It doesn't say anything special about Port Hardy--there are many places where people can live the adventure.

Port Hardy has a nice downtown core with some retail shops, as well as an attractive clock tower (bottom left). The downtown didn't have much visitor-oriented retail. It had a few things that Port McNeill doesn't, but we didn't think it was a more desirable place to spend time than Port McNeill.

If you promote Port Hardy as a day-trip, we suggest you choose a few of their special attractions to highlight, such as the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre and the Port Hardy Museum.



After Port Hardy, we decided that since it was such a beautiful day, we would walk on the ferry to see Alert Bay. We were surprised we had to pay for a full day of parking; consider offering shorter-term parking as well—perhaps four to six hours. But \$5 wasn't a lot, so we paid the parking fee and walked onto the ferry.

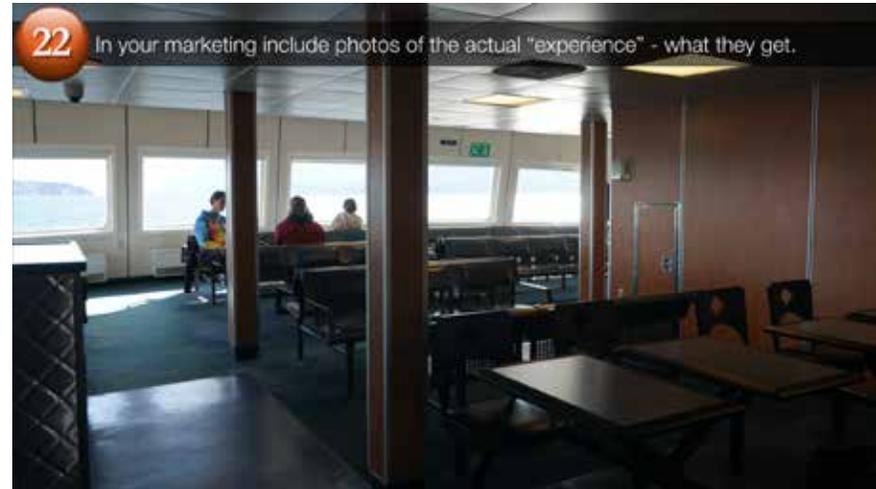
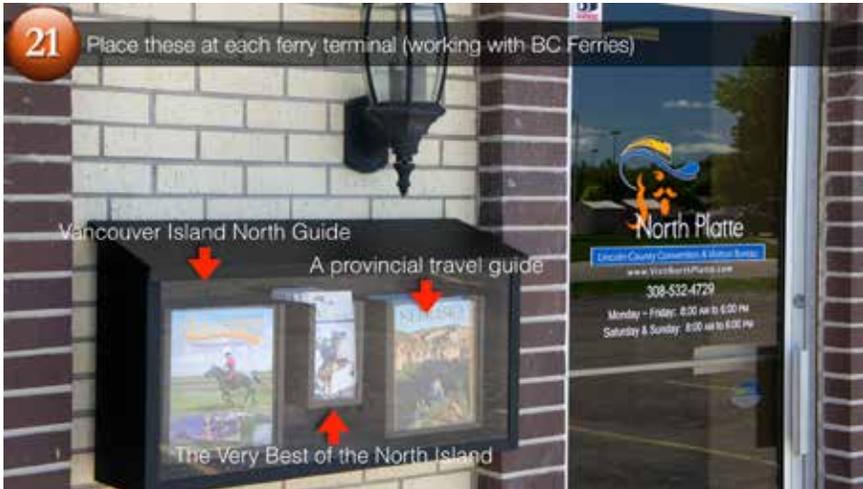
Suggestion: Consider making the parking signs (top right) decorative; after all, your customers are frequently visitors. Don't be heavy-handed. You could simply say, "Parking Rules Strictly Enforced," rather than "Violators will be towed." This is about hospitality.

Chain-link fencing looks so industrial that it's not a good choice downtown

(bottom left). They make vinyl fencing that looks like wrought-iron, and it's much more attractive, so consider changing it, if possible. We love the local art on the fence!

The ferry waiting room and other facilities are great (bottom right), well-kept, pleasant and spotless. The whole ferry-riding experience was very good—it was easy to find a schedule, easy to understand, and the rides were spectacular.

The only visitor information we found in the ferry waiting room was for Sointula. This is a big missed opportunity. You should have brochures for Sointula, Alert Bay, as well as Port McNeill.



You should have brochure distribution here as well (top left). When it's outside, you're providing visitor information 24 hours a day, so visitors are able to get the information they need even if you're closed.

This brochure holder in North Platte, Nebraska (top right and bottom left) is a good example of round-the-clock visitor information. It contains a state guide, a local visitor's guide and 'Best Of' brochure. These are simple, inexpensive, and weather-proof. These would be excellent for holding your provincial travel guide, your Vancouver Island North guide, and the new "Very Best of the North Island" brochure.

Visitors don't only travel during business hours, so providing outdoor visitor information distribution is important.

Having these brochure holders in a variety of locations means you will reach a number of different visiting groups.

In your marketing, be sure to include photos of the actual experiences, such as what the ferries look like (bottom right).



23

This is a nice welcome, but can use some freshening up. It looks very neglected.



24

Same with this gateway sign.

When we were planning our trip to Alert Bay, we didn't know what type of ferry we were going to be riding. We thought it would most likely be an open-deck ferry, with no seating. We were very pleasantly surprised to find out the ferry has lots of indoor seating (top left). If you show photos of what visitors can expect, it helps entice them.

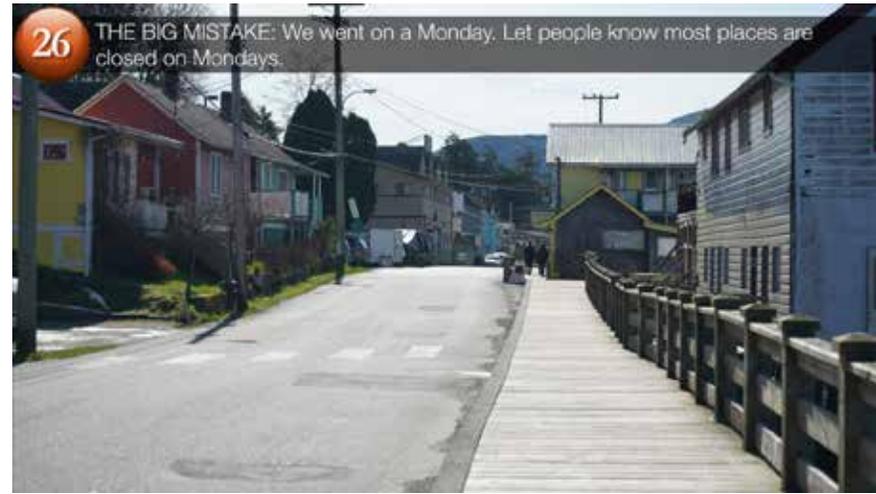
Now would be a great time to start promoting your brand-new ferry! Let people know about it.

Showing the experience of disembarking the ferry (top right) is helpful for visitors to see as well. They can see that there are public washrooms, and

they'll know what to expect.

We felt that it was very important to visit Alert Bay and Sointula because they are some of your best visitor activities. People have to come to Port McNeill to get to both islands.

We saw both of the beautiful welcome signs when we got off the ferry (bottom left and right). They both could use some freshening--new paint, cleaning. These provide visitors with their first impression of Alert Bay, and we all tend to "judge the book by its cover." So you want the first impression to be excellent.



**IMPORTANT STATISTIC #4**

**The top activity of visitors:**  
Shopping, dining & entertainment  
in a pedestrian-friendly intimate setting

This is where **80%** of the non-lodging spending takes place.



This informational sign (top left) is out of date and in poor shape. Update the information and replace the pieces so that it is fresh and attractive. If that's not feasible, then it would be best to take it down.

We loved the boardwalks! (top right) Our biggest mistake was that we went to Alert Bay on a Monday. We had no idea that almost everything would be closed. We suggest that you let people know on ferry schedules and in marketing materials that most shops and restaurants in Alert Bay are closed Mondays. Even in the ferry toll booth, if the attendant mentioned that to visitors, it would be helpful.

Statistic #4: The number one activity of visitors is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting. We were very disappointed that we couldn't go into the shops and the gallery while we were there, and we were afraid we wouldn't be able to find a place for lunch.

We would have loved to go into this gallery (bottom right), but it is only open four hours a day on Fridays and Saturdays. If this shop is open more hours and days during the summer season, it would be very helpful to post that information. Invite us back!



We saw Pass'n Thyme Inn (top left), and we thought how sad it was that it went out of business. The sign is so faded it's hard to read, and there are a lot of weeds in the yard. We went around the corner and saw the prominent "Closed" sign (top right), then we noticed the sign behind it that showed open hours and days (Tuesday through Saturday). Suggestion: Get rid of the "closed" sign. There's already the one behind it showing open hours. Signs that just say "closed" are like saying "Go away." That's not the message you want to send.

We saw this restaurant (bottom left), but it was closed too. We didn't know when it might be open. Always post your open hours so that you can invite people back. Add some pots outside on both sides of the door and bench.

Even visitor information was closed (bottom right). Add outdoor brochure distribution so that visitors can get the information they need even when you're not open.

Important Statistic #5: Curb appeal can account for 70% of first-time sales, especially at restaurants. Have you ever said, "That looks like a nice place to eat."? That's the power of curb appeal.

We didn't find many restaurants or shops that had good curb appeal in the north island area.



Finally, we found the Bayside Grill (top left), which was open. We thanked them for being open on a Monday, and we had a very nice lunch there.

This place (top right) was also open, but we weren't sure what it was because of the lack of signage. We thought this was probably a deli that was part of the grocery. Adding some pots along the storefront would make this store look very good.

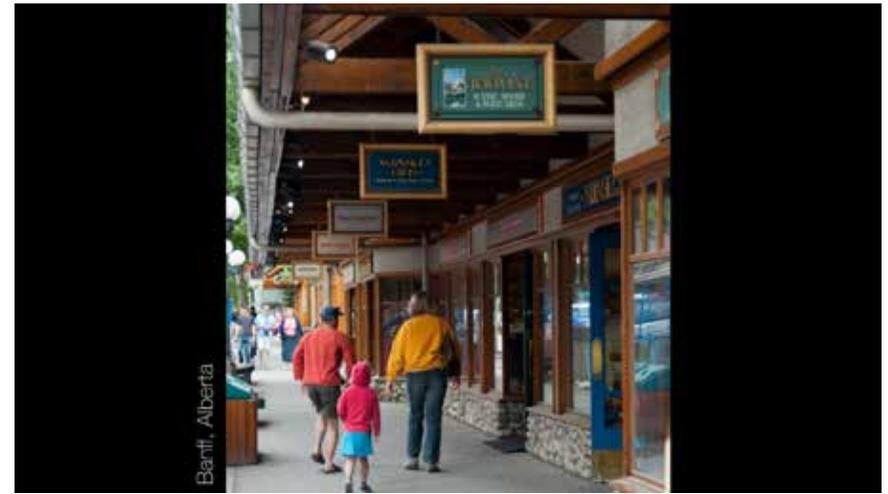
We couldn't understand why this sign with visitor information (bottom left) was placed behind a fence far from the road. People can't read it here at all. It should be moved across the street.

In an economically healthy downtown, merchants use blade signs. The right kind of signage can make or break a retail shop or restaurant. How will potential customers know what you're offering unless you tell them? When visitors drive (or walk) through downtown, signs that are placed flat against the building are almost impossible to read. Perpendicular (blade) signs take care of that problem. Can you tell what is in any of these shops? (bottom right) We couldn't either.

Merchants can form a co-op to purchase blade signs. By combining forces, they can negotiate better prices with a sign manufacturer.



Leavenworth, Washington



Banff, Alberta



Canmore, Alberta



Lethbridge, Alberta

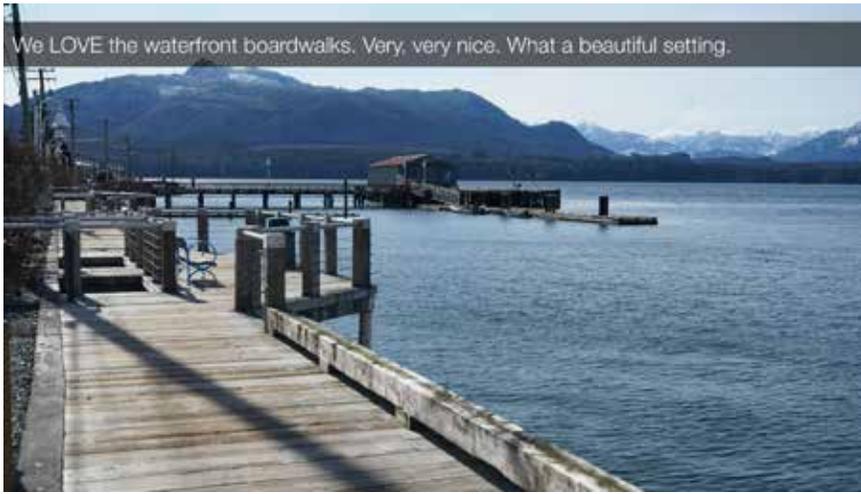
These signs in Leavenworth, WA (top left) are excellent examples of effective blade signs. Chocolate, collectables, trains, restaurant. It's easy to see what kind of stores these are.

These blade signs (top right) are in Banff, Alberta.

Here are some blade signs in Canmore, Alberta, (bottom left). Most successful downtowns have blade signs.

These blade signs in Lethbridge, Alberta (bottom right) are built to withstand heavy wind loads. The frames are designed so that the signs inside can be changed easily.

We think some easy fixes could help you get more of the tourism spending you would like to see.



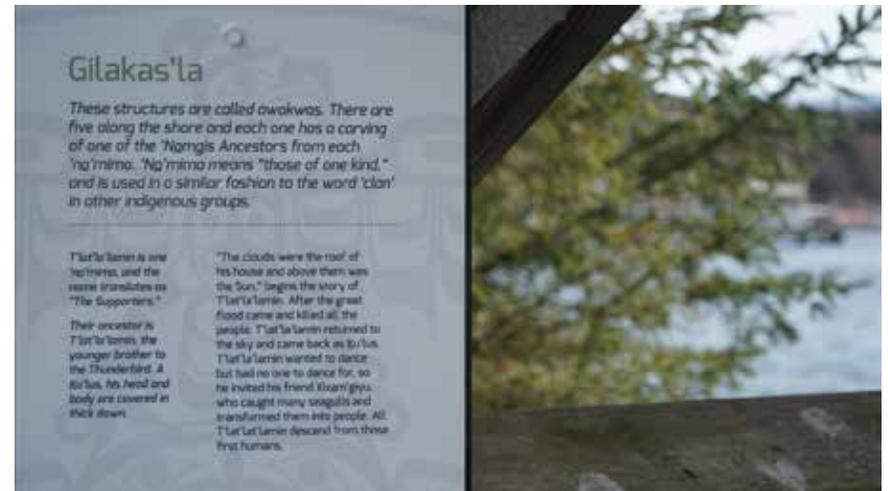
We love the boardwalks all through Alert Bay (top left). Just walking along the bay was a very enjoyable experience.

We walked to the Namgis First Nation Burial Ground (top right and bottom left). This was fantastic. We have never seen such a beautiful, unique burial ground. It was a highlight of our day. We understand the need for the sign to prevent visitors from walking through the grounds, and we think it would be great if you added interpretive signage to explain some of the customs. For example, we read that for some families, when the totem pole deteriorates and falls, that is a sign that the spirit has moved on past this world into the

next. That it is intentional to not repaint and repair the totem poles, as this is a process of life and death. That is what we read, and we're not sure how accurate it is, but it would be wonderful to have information like that available for visitors to help them understand what they are seeing.

The Namgis Burial Ground in Alert Bay should be included in the "Very Best of North Vancouver Island" brochure.

Then we walked to the U'mista Cultural Centre (bottom right) with great anticipation! But we found that it was closed Mondays.

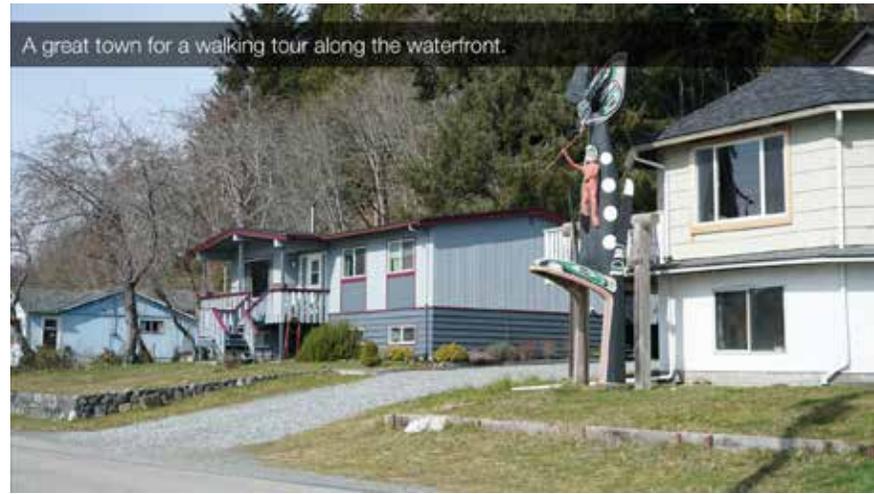
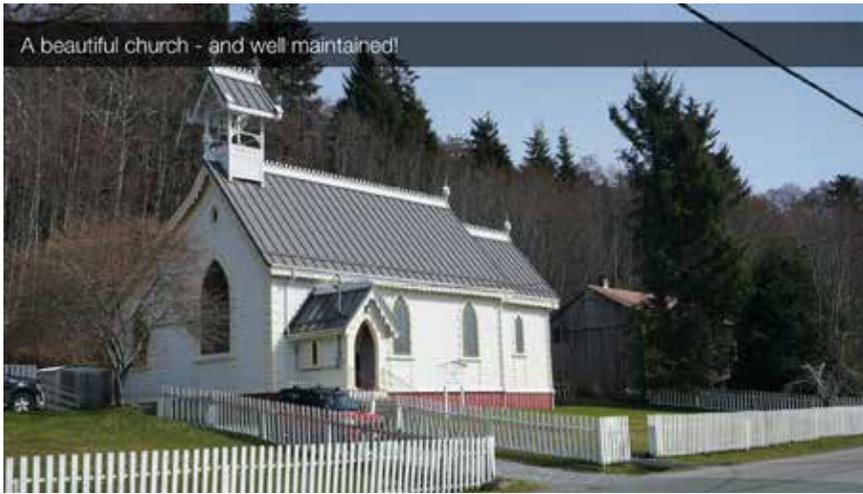


Even though the U'mista Cultural Centre was closed, we enjoyed walking the grounds and looking at the totem poles. Suggestion: Add interpretive signs to let visitors know about the totem poles and what they represent.

We also enjoyed the Awakwas (bottom left and right). They were fascinating and beautiful, and we were happy to see the interpretive signage for each (bottom right).

The Very Best of North Vancouver Island brochure should definitely include the five Awakwas and their stories in Alert Bay.

Visitors, especially those from other parts of the world, find First Nations' cultures and people to be incredibly unique and fascinating.



We thought there were so many interesting things to see in Alert Bay. This old church (top left) is beautiful, and it's been very well maintained for many years. This art in front of a residence (top right) is incredible.

Walking along the waterfront on the boardwalk was such a treat.

Unfortunately, we also were impressed that Alert Bay seems to be in a state of decline. While there is still much that is fascinating, and it's a wonderful experience, it's potential is unfulfilled, and it's fading.

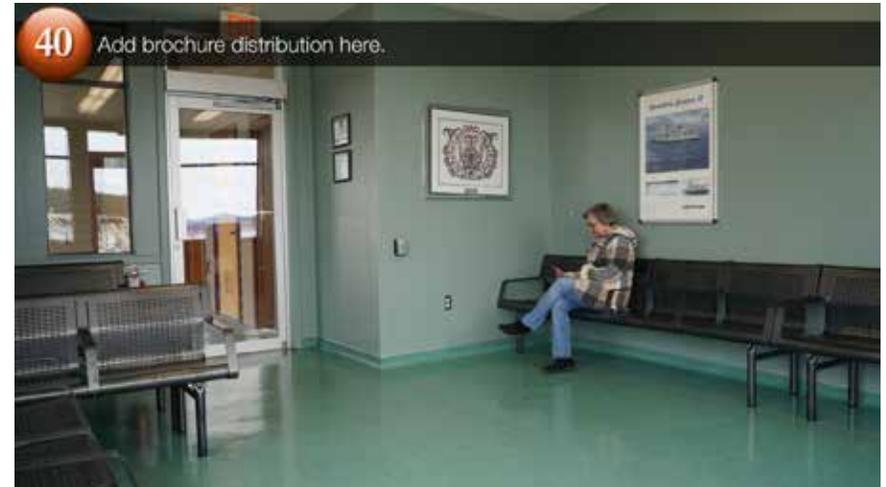
This row of businesses looks like it is empty now (bottom right). If not, if there are businesses here and they are open seasonally, add signage to let visitors know when they should return.



38 What is this building? Can proceeds get it painted?



39 The visitor information should be here! Front and center for all visitors.



40 Add brochure distribution here.

We read an interpretive sign along the waterfront that explained a bit about the situation from Alert Bay's heyday to today, and how the fishing industry has declined so drastically.

It was sad to see so many boats decaying in the bay (top left).

This building (top right) looks like it is still being used for activities, but it needs to be refreshed with some new paint.

It looks like Alert Bay has been switching the basis for its economy from fishing to tourism, and we hope that will help it to revitalize.

Suggestion: This building (bottom left) would be a perfect location for visitor information! Easy access for visitors from the moment they get off the ferry!

The ferry terminal and waiting room here (bottom right) was very nice. Add some visitor information with brochure distribution here. People who are waiting for the ferry can read about more things to do in Port McNeill!



**Audrey & Samuel video for Alert Bay:**

- The ferry ride
- Namgis Burial Ground
- Whale watching tours
- Walk the boardwalk
- It's a walkable trip (weather permitting)
- Looking at the boats in the harbor
- U'Mista Cultural Centre "Potlatch" means to give
- Largest totem pole in the world
- Cultural dances (July | August at the Big House)

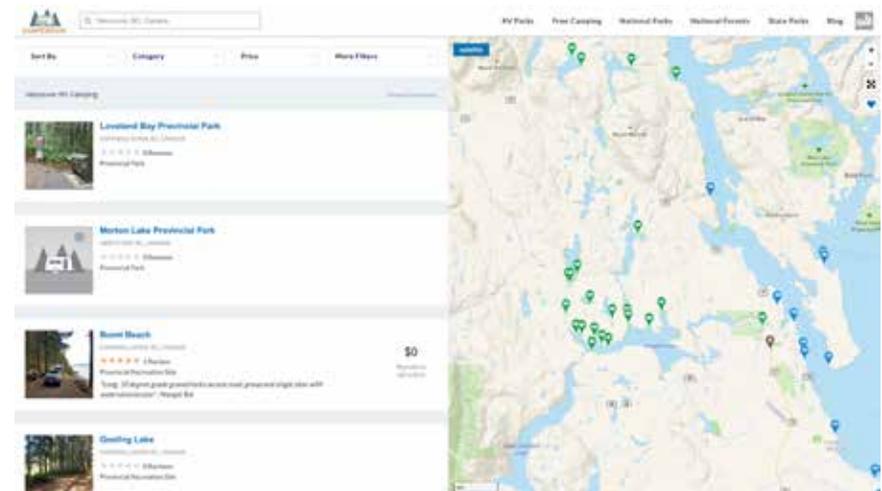
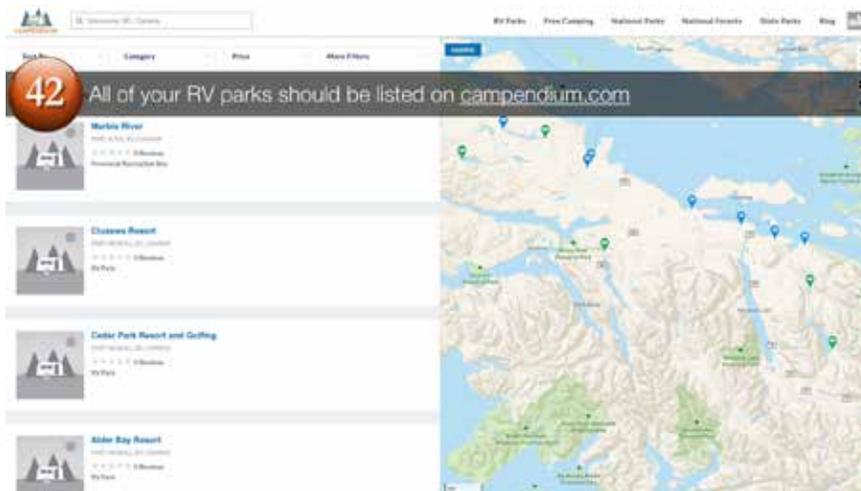


The digital signs for the ferry are excellent (top left). We appreciated it!

In the video about Alert Bay done by Audrey and Samuel, they talked about the ferry ride, the Namgis Burial Ground, and whale watching tours. We didn't see anything in Alert Bay about whale watching tours. They also talked about how enjoyable it was to walk on the boardwalk, and they mentioned that Alert Bay is a very walkable trip. They mentioned that it was fun to look at the boats in the harbor, and that the U'mista Cultural Centre was spectacular, and that potlatch means "to give." Audrey and Samuel also showed the largest totem pole in the world, which we weren't able to find. There are no signs

to let people know where it is. And they mentioned that there are cultural dances at the Big House in July and August, but we didn't know where the Big House was. Their video does a great job showing what Alert Bay has to offer for visitors, and we encourage you to embed it on your website.

After we returned to Port McNeill, we drove out to Telegraph Cove (bottom left and right) to check it out. The sign said it was a twenty minute drive. When we arrived, we thought it looked like a very fun place--very cute. But we were so disappointed that nothing would be open until May 1st.



April, May, September and October are huge travel months--the months the biggest tourism spenders travel. By not being open during those times, you're severely limiting your visitor season, and losing out on a lot of revenue. You need to be open, and promote the fact that you are open.

We read that Telegraph Cove is a popular place for people to rent kayaks to head out to the Broughton Archipelago (top left). But we didn't see any visitor information to help us learn more about it. Telegraph Cove could use some outdoor brochure holders with information that would invite visitors back.

The fastest growing trend in travel is now RVs and travel trailers. And the average age of those buying travel trailers is 45. They usually travel April through October. This is a popular activity on Vancouver Island. If you could stretch your visitor season to eight months of the year, you'd create year-round jobs.

All your RV parks and campgrounds should be listed on Campendium.com (bottom left and right). Many of Vancouver Island's are listed, but there's no photos and no information. This is free, and it's a great way to let this growing group of travelers know what you have to offer.



While we were in Telegraph Cove we drove out to take a look at the campground, but the dirt road leading to it is so full of potholes (top left) it would be very challenging for RVs. Fixing this road should be a top priority.

There were no signs letting us know when anything in Telegraph Cove would be open. Put up signs! Invite us back!

This sign clutter (top right) doesn't help these businesses. Most of the signs are old and faded, and the clutter is unappealing. These should be removed or refreshed, or, if you want a directory, create a new sign that is tidy and decorative to promote the businesses.

When we returned to Port McNeill Monday night, we had dinner at the Sportsman's Steakhouse & Inn (bottom left). It had a very nice ambiance, and the food was good.

Tuesday, we spent a lot of time exploring Port McNeill. Driving down the hill into town, it's hard to tell where the town centre might be, or even where the waterfront is (bottom right). It looks like the road just ends at the Clothes Inn.



As we approached the intersection, there were some signs indicating the RV park to the left and visitor information to the right (top left). But we didn't know where to find the centre of town or anything else.

When we are at the intersection, we saw a sign for the tsunami route, the museum to the left, and it seemed very hodge-podge and uncoordinated (top right).

When we turn to the right and reach the next intersection, the sign for the ferry terminal is on the left side of the road (bottom left). It should be on the right, because that's where most drivers look for signage.

We suggest that Port McNeill plan and develop a wayfinding system. It doesn't need to be extensive, and it should include the items noted bottom right.



Wayfinding signage should be decorative to fit your ambiance and easy to read, such as this example from Woodlands, TX (top left).

It is also important that wayfinding signage “connect the dots” all the way to the end. That means that signs should not just point you once in the right direction, but also indicate each turn to make, as well as the distance to reach the destination. The destination should also be clearly marked, so that people know when they’ve arrived.

Pole banners are great for identifying districts or other amenities, like this

one (bottom left) in Greenville, SC and Appleton, WI (top right) which is on an existing power pole. Wayfinding signs should have no more than five items per sign. .

A good wayfinding system will educate residents and visitors about what assets Drumheller has and assist in finding them. Studies show that wayfinding will increase retail sales and services between 14% and 28%. NOTE: Navigation systems are NOT a substitute for wayfinding.

The DDA resource centre has a video all about wayfinding systems (bottom right).



We couldn't miss the new trail. Looks fabulous!



Aha! This must be the Port McNeill Industrial Park!



One of the scariest places we've seen in Western Canada. Yikes!



The airport looks great. This building is amazing. Very, very nice.

We heard about the world's largest burl, and we wanted to find it. As we explored, we saw your fantastic trail system--part of it looks brand new, and part has been there a while longer (top left). It looks wonderful, and it'll be great when there are signs for it. It should definitely be promoted.

On the video with Audrey and Samuel, they said they found the world's largest burl near some industry. So we saw the sign for the Port McNeill Industrial Park (top right) and thought we might have found it.

As we drove into the industrial park (bottom left), we really hoped the burl

wasn't there. This place looked scary. If this is private, there's probably not much you can do, but if it is publicly owned, consider taking down the signs.

So we went across the highway and found the airport, and it looks great. We think this is a helicopter outfit (bottom right), and it is very nice. But we didn't find the burl here either.



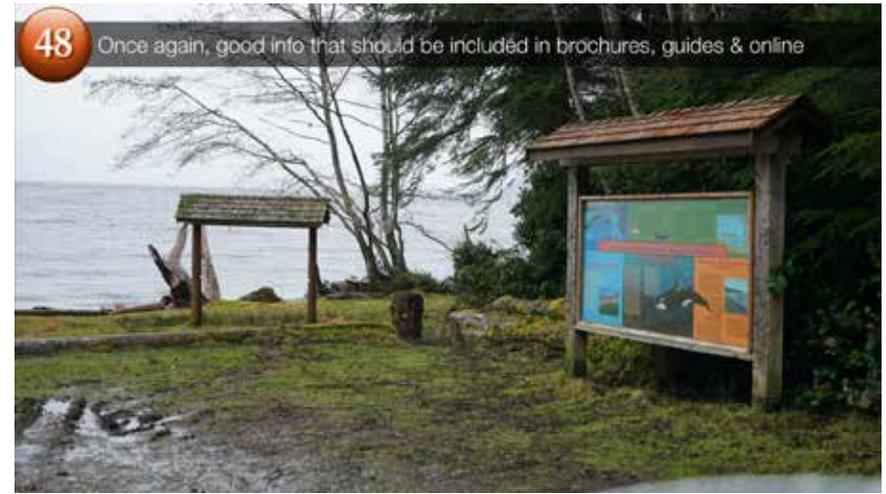
We decided to give up finding the burl for the day and take the ferry to Sointula. In Audrey and Samuel's video, they suggested driving to Sointula because there is a lot of beautiful wilderness to explore out on some winding gravel roads (top right).

We followed our route with the navigation system in the car (bottom left), and we knew we had reached the end of the road when we got to "Lands End."

Along the way we came across two young bald eagles (bottom right). They were looking out over the water, and it was amazing.



47 Make sure you suggest an SUV or high clearance vehicle



48 Once again, good info that should be included in brochures, guides & online



49 Good info, but hidden "around back" - move it if you can.



50 Add brochure distribution here.

We also drove out to Bere Point, which was beautiful (top left). The places and views on the island were spectacular, but it might not be best to encourage lots of people to drive around there, as most of the roads are one-lane and gravel. Be sure to recommend that visitors drive a high-clearance vehicle because of the potholes and rough roads.

At Bere Point we found some excellent information on signs (top right), but this information wasn't in any brochures or websites that we could find. This should be available in your marketing materials.

Back at the ferry terminal, we found some more good information (bottom left), but it was kind of hidden from view of the street. We suggest you move it to a more visible location. Add a brochure holder here (bottom right) so your visitor information is working 24/7.

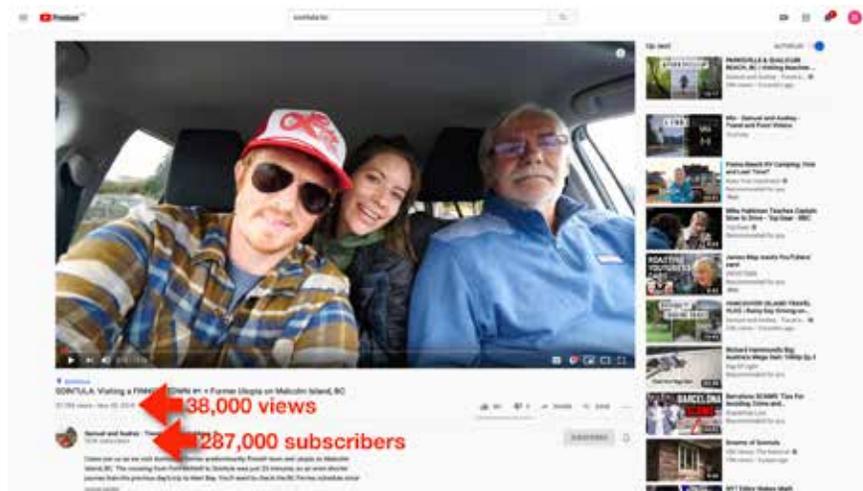


A brochure holder can even be as simple as this one outside the Visitor Information Centre in Bruce County, Ontario (top left). You can get these at office supply stores or Amazon—they are simple real estate brochure holders. As long as it is weather-proof, it can work.

When you provide brochures and information, people can see more of what there is to do in your community, and they'll spend more time there. When people spend two hours in your community, spending doubles over just a stop. The longer people stay, the more money they will spend—on a snack, a meal, some souvenirs, or more.

Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia and Wickford, Rhode Island also use these simple, but effective brochure holders for 24/7 visitor information (top right and bottom left).

We thought it would be easy for visitors to spend a full day in Sointula. Unfortunately, there were even fewer places to spend money there than in Alert Bay. But we did find the Upper Crust Bakery (bottom right), and we had lunch there. It was very good. The unused sign on the roof should be taken down—it just looks cluttered. We noticed inside that there was a place for live music to be performed—it would have been great to have a sign letting people know when performances are scheduled.

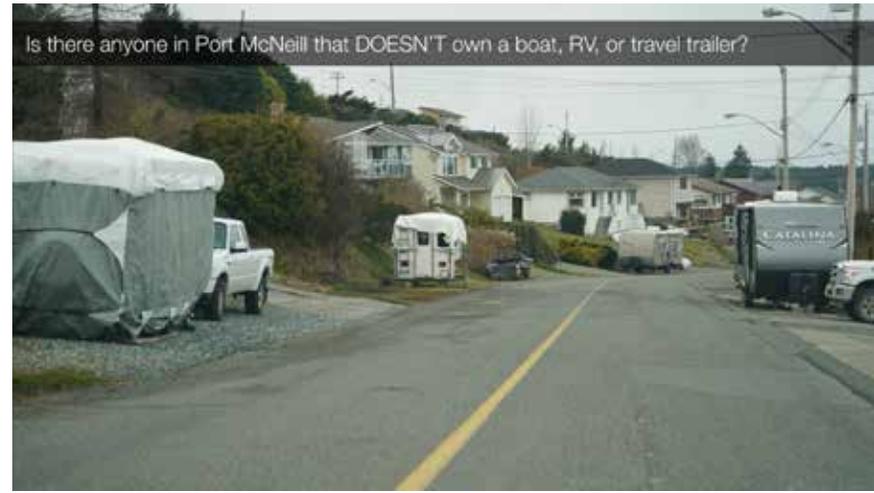
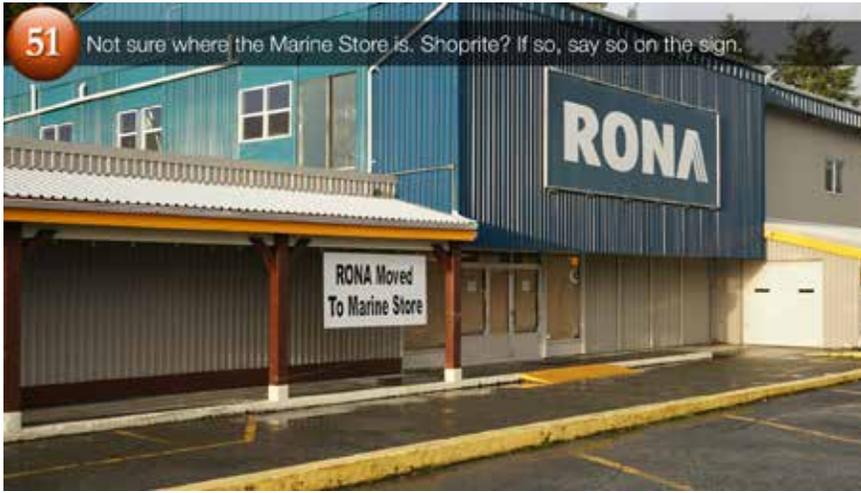


We went into the Sointula Co-op (top left), and it was fun looking around. Audrey and Samuel's video talked about finding some Finnish-made products in the store; Samuel found some Finnish licorice (top right), which he highly recommended.

When we were there, we asked about the licorice, but we learned that they can't keep it in stock. That shows the power of social media and online videos--38,000 people have viewed Audrey and Samuel's video about Sointula. They have 287,000 subscribers to their YouTube channel, and all of those people received an email about the Sointula video when Audrey and Samuel

first posted it. That's a lot of free marketing!

We returned from Sointula in time for dinner, and we went to Northern Lights (bottom right). It had been closed for a few days, but it was open, and it was good!



Important statistic #6 is that 70% of all consumer retail spending takes place after 6:00 p.m. It used to be that the average time families in North America at dinner was 5:30. Now, the average dinner time is 7:30. People are shopping and dining more in the evening hours. But we found that some of your restaurants close at 7:00. Why? They are missing a lot of business. And when shops only stay open until 5:00 or 6:00, they also miss a lot of business. Many people are at work during the day, and they can't go shopping then. Many visitors are hiking, biking, kayaking, going to the islands, or having other adventures during the day, and when they're done, they'd like to eat and shop. But they can't if you're closed.

Wednesday we explored Port McNeill in depth. We saw that RONA had moved to the Marine Store (top left), but we had no idea where the Marine Store was. We couldn't find it anywhere.

We drove through many of your neighborhoods and saw that nearly everyone must own an RV or travel trailer or boat! (top right) We could see that people in Port McNeill love to spend time outdoors.

As we drove through your neighborhoods, we couldn't help but pick out houses we would love to buy (we wish)! (bottom left and right)



We also got a big kick out of all the monkey puzzle trees! (top left)

Port McNeill schools look great (top right and bottom left). People's first impressions of a community have a lasting impact.

The Chilton Regional Arena, the public pool, the curling centre, all make Port McNeill look like it offers a great quality of life.

Good quality of life is one of the leading factors for economic development. People want to live where there is a great quality of life, and businesses want to locate where they can offer their employees a great quality of life.



The senior housing that we found (top left) also looks fantastic.

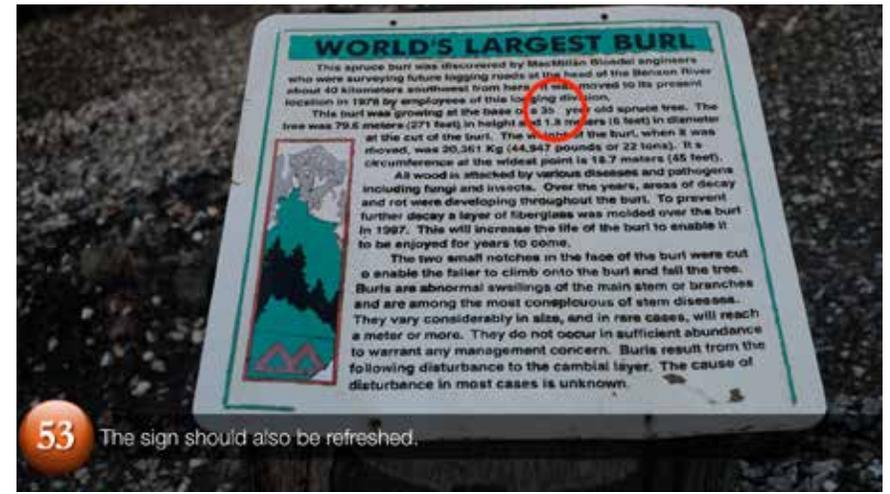
Port McNeill looks like it offers a great quality of life for its residents!

As we drove around exploring, we found another business park (top right). This one looked fantastic, and we were thrilled to see everything there. But we still didn't find the world's largest burl.

But then, as we drove further, there it was! In a lumber area! (bottom left and right). We were thrilled.



52 This should be moved to the heart of your spending district.



53 The sign should also be refreshed.



The waterfront is beautiful - even during mud season



54 This one-way street here is weird, to say the least. Can it be put back to two ways?

We were thinking the giant burl should be moved into the centre of town-- where people could look at the burl and then have the opportunity to spend money in Port McNeill.

The interpretive sign (top right) should be refreshed. Someone has changed the age of the tree from 350 years old to 35 years old.

After finding the burl, we went into downtown Port McNeill. The waterfront area, the marina, and the park are absolutely stunning. It doesn't matter what time of year it is--it's beautiful.

We could not figure out why this street (bottom right) is one-way! This is probably the most important street in town--it needs to be easy to navigate! There was probably a good reason to make it one-way, but we didn't see it. We encourage you to turn this street into both directions to make it easier for people to get around.



We waited until Wednesday to go to your visitor information centre. 95% of visitors don't ever go to a visitor information centre, so wanted our experience to be similar to theirs. We wanted to try to find everything without help first.

So we went into the visitor information centre and asked lots of questions. Emma was fantastic--giving us lots of great information.

Add outdoor brochure distribution at your visitor centre (top left). Plus, be sure to add signage letting people know there is 24/7 visitor info available there (top right).

We were surprised to see you have a trail app (bottom right). That is fantastic. Many tourism apps are not used by visitors, but trail apps are. This was the only place we saw the table tent telling about the trail app. These should be on display in all your shops and restaurants and lodging facilities. Encourage business owners to display them.

Another excellent place to put trail information is All-trails. It is a widely used trail app.

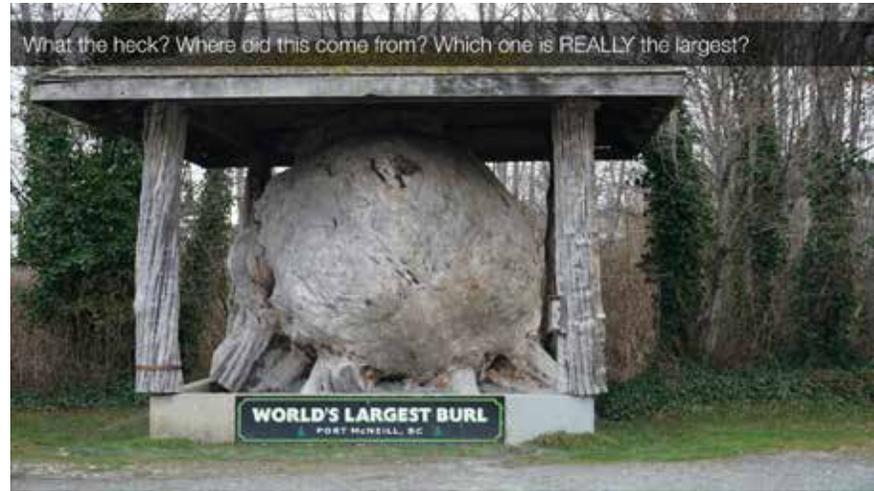


We loved how the utility boxes are wrapped in art (top left). That's really taking lemons and turning them to lemonade. They look great.

We suggest getting rid of this sign (top right). It is so cluttered that it's an eyesore. And no one is going to get up close to the sign to read all the advertising, let alone bringing a clipboard to write down information.

These dumpsters right at the waterfront are an eyesore (bottom left). We suggest using a decorative fence to screen them from view.

In fact, there is a very beautiful fence in town that doesn't seem to be screening anything at all (bottom right). Could some of this fence be used?



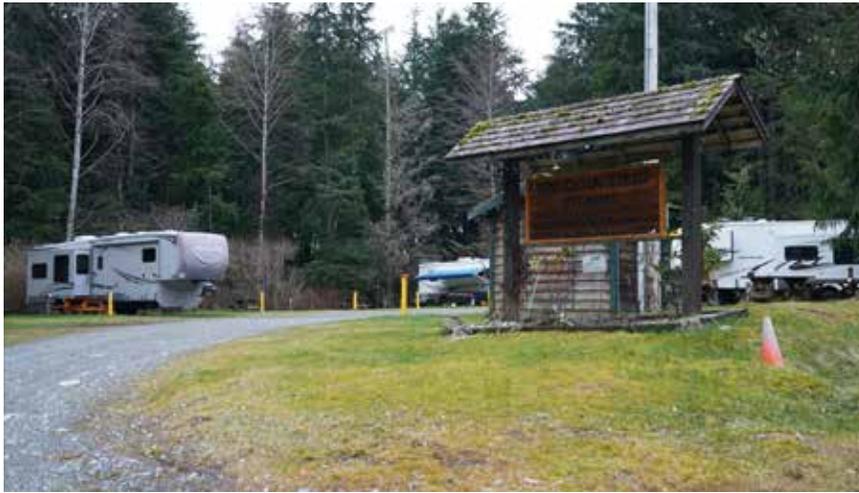
While exploring the downtown, we saw this big old machine (top left). We didn't have any idea what this was, but we were very curious. Add interpretive signage to let people know what this machine was, what it was used for, how it worked, and the time frame it was used. When you offer good information like that, visitors will learn more about Port McNeill, it will endear them to your community, and it will keep them in town longer, so they'll spend more money.

Tourism is a means to an end. It helps import money into your community so that your businesses thrive and your local taxes are reduced by visitors taking

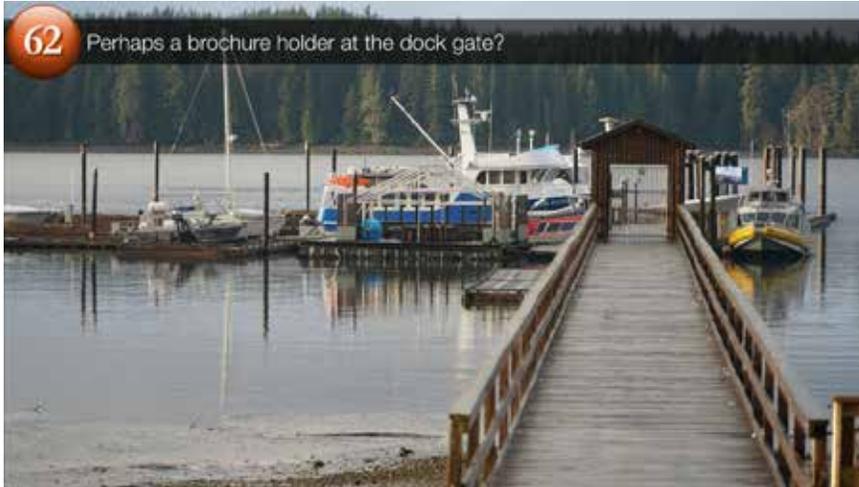
some of that tax burden.

We saw the sign for the museum (top right). It looks like an amazing museum from the outside, but it is only open six hours a week (bottom left). We were disappointed! If it is open longer hours in the summer, add a sign to let people know specifically when and what those hours are.

And then we turned around and spotted another giant burl! (bottom right) We didn't know which one is the real largest burl, but we were thrilled. So funny!



We saw the blue & white tour boat from the ferry. Where can we get information?



62 Perhaps a brochure holder at the dock gate?



63 Or perhaps here? And how about info on any upcoming Dragon Boat races?

We drove into the RV campground (top left), and it looks great. We were happy to see that there were no permanent residents there, and we suggest that these types of campgrounds should always have a time limit for campers.

Back at the marina (top right) we saw what we thought was a tour boat--one that we had seen on the water before. But we couldn't find any information about boat tours. If there are boat tours, consider providing a brochure at the gate to the dock (bottom left). It could be in a weather-proof brochure holder.

Or there could be a couple brochure holders here (bottom right). One for boat tours and one for information on Dragon Boat races.



We had lunch at Tia's Cafe (top left), and it was busy! The food was great. Then we decided to check out some of the shops.

The Clothes Inn (top right) is a great store. The sales staff is excellent, and it has a lot of very good quality merchandise. We suggest removing the phone numbers from signs--instead, put a web address.

We saw the work being done at the Humpback Inn (bottom left), and we couldn't tell if it was new or being remodeled, and we wondered when it was going to open. Add a sign announcing when the scheduled opening date is. This would be a great way to invite people back.

Timberland Sport Centre (bottom right) was redoing their window displays. They had a good selection of merchandise, a little sparse on some things, but that could be the time of year. We kept trying to think of ways to get visitors to experience your waterfront, and in one ocean-front town we've worked, merchants would sell little crab traps on fishing poles. People would cast them out into the ocean with a little bait, and when a crab crawled in it would cause a tug on the line. The person would reel it in and measure the crab and have some fresh crab for dinner! Perhaps you could do something like that in Port McNeill.



66 This row of shops has zero curb appeal and is easy to overlook. Add color...



67 This seems to be the best visitor-oriented "outfitter" in town. Promote it!



68 If Grizzly caters to visitors, fix the sign, fix the window displays, add hours, add brochure distribution, ditch the phone number for a URL...

We also went into Fields and we spent a lot at the IGA store--that's where we would buy our provisions and beverages. This strip mall doesn't have any curb appeal (top left). Unfortunately, the papered-over windows make it look like the Shed is out of business, which it isn't. Add curb appeal to this row of shops: new paint, pots of plants, benches. Beautification is a great investment because it attracts customers.

Important statistic #7: The top 15% of hotels and lodging facilities, in terms of quality, command 85% of the leisure -travel business. Baby boomers, millennials, and even gen-xers will pay more to stay in higher quality lodging. And curb appeal is a big factor: does it "look" like a nice place to stay?

Important statistic #8: Women account for 80% of all consumer spending, including making the decision about where to spend the night. And women prefer staying in places that appear safe and attractive. Port McNeill's hotels and motels need to work on their curb appeal.

This is a great outfitter (bottom left). It's visitor-oriented, has great customer service, and it has lots of merchandise. Promote it!

Does Grizzly Helicopters (bottom right) cater to visitors? Clean up the exterior, fix the displays and signs, add hours and brochure distribution, and add curb appeal.



69 This has tremendous potential. Anything coming here? If so, let us know!



70 If possible, move the parking, make this a garden area. Too much asphalt!



71 These are hidden away and easily missed. Add brochure holders, open hours...



72 A great location for a full outfitter, micro-brewery, or a multi-vendor pavilion.

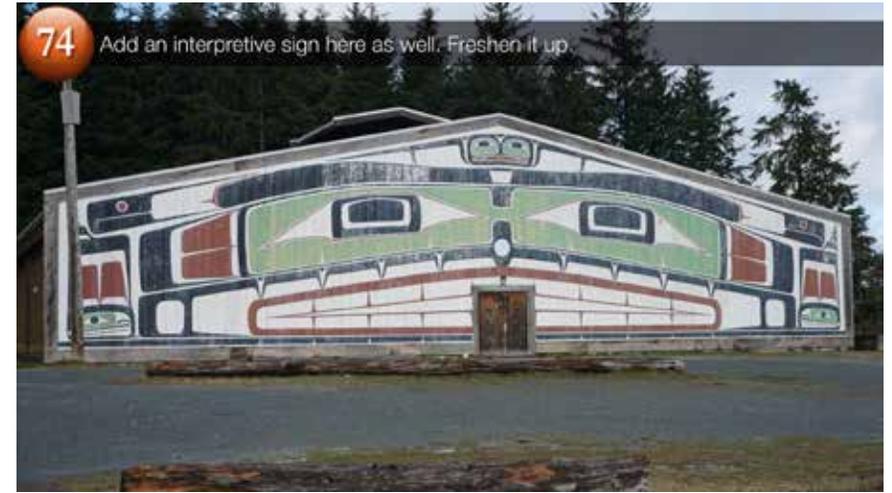
This empty building is in a great location and has tons of potential (top left). It would be perfect for a restaurant, coffee shop, or bistro. We learned that it will be a coffee shop, and it'll be opening in May! Add a sign to let people know, "Coming soon in May!"

For this inn (top right), we suggest moving the parking and turning the parking lot into a garden area. Sitting out on the front porch would be much more enjoyable if you didn't have to look at bare asphalt. At least, remove a strip of the asphalt to plant some flowers and shrubs. Add pots of flowers too.

This whale watching tour company (bottom left) is kind of hidden from everything else. It would be easy for visitors to miss. Add brochure distribution here and provide information for visitors. Post your operating hours.

This building (bottom right) would be great for a micro-brewery or a pavilion to house multiple vendors, including tour operators. We learned that it is being converted into a brewpub! That's fantastic!

We felt that Port McNeill's retail needs are underserved. Adding the new coffeeshop and the brewpub helps fill some of your needs.



Wednesday afternoon we decided to go back to Alert Bay to see the things we had missed on Monday. We drove onto the ferry this time so we could see a bit more of the island as well.

We were thrilled to find the world's tallest totem pole (top left). It is amazing. And it is next to the Big House (top right), so we were able to see that on this visit as well. We suggest you add interpretive signage for both of these outstanding attractions, including information about the dance performances. The Big House would benefit from some freshening, such as fresh paint, as well.

There was a lot of litter on the ground around the totem pole. We suggest having volunteers regularly come out and clean up the area.

The world's tallest totem pole should definitely be one of "The Very Best of North Vancouver Island" brochure, as long as the litter is cleaned up.

We went to the U'mista Cultural Centre and were able to view the incredible collections of artifacts and masks (bottom right). This was an amazing highlight, and we could have spent hours here. It's really a one-of-a-kind experience. Definitely one of North Vancouver Island's "Best Of's."



We explored Alert Bay in our car and found a lot of fascinating things. This log is obviously being carved (top left), and the art painted on this wall by the ferry terminal (top right), is very fun. If there were interpretive signs explaining some of these, that would be fascinating.

People are four times more likely to buy art when they meet the artist.

The art on the school building (bottom left) was incredible.

It would be fun if a private business started a little trolley tour of Alert Bay to show visitors some of the fabulous art that all over. You don't want everyone

who comes to visit to bring their cars, but a little trolley could make it easy to see all the treasures around Alert Bay.

There were a couple places we saw amazing art at people's houses (bottom right). The long, carved, hand painted canoe was incredible.



Back at Port McNeill, we thought about the downtown area and how there isn't really a downtown centre or a focus, and we wanted to come up with some ideas to make downtown more people-friendly. How to make it a more enjoyable space to spend time. How to give it a focus area.

We looked at the park beside the visitor information centre (top left), and considered that the lawn makes it a kind of swampy, wet area. It's pretty, and it's nice there are benches and picnic tables, but there tends to be a lot of goose debris (top right).

So we thought about turning it into more of a plaza area, than a lawn area.

Widen the walkway, use paver stones throughout because water drains right through them, and they are decorative, as opposed to asphalt or concrete.

It could be terraced (drawing, bottom left), perhaps with a stage near the water and terraced amphitheatre seating going up the hill. Events and performances could take place there. You could have activities there year-round. Add some shade trees near the street, and some gardens around the visitor centre, and it would be beautiful and people-friendly.

Imagine it in this area (bottom right).



This is a close up of the idea (above), which is just a quick sketch and could definitely be refined. It could be built in phases.

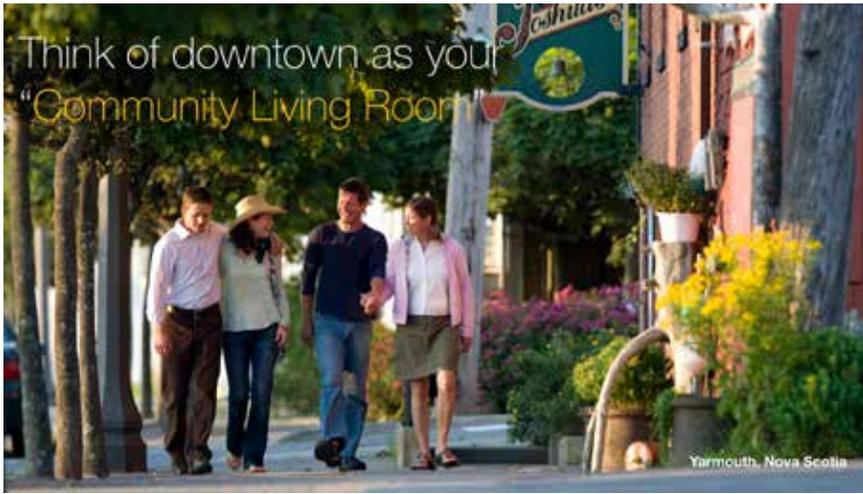


The paver stones could be like this (top left). Pavers are beautiful and allow rainwater to seep through so there's no puddling or sogginess. Lawn is beautiful, but it's high maintenance.

You could even do a covered stage like this one (top right). This cover is actually designed so it can be removed.

Perhaps down the road, you'd want to cover the whole plaza with a tent-like covering. This one is in Missoula, Montana (bottom left). Here it is from underneath (bottom right).

Where is Port McNeill's community "living room"? Where can people gather to have fun together? More and more, we are realizing the importance of "place-making." Providing a place where the community can get together to have events, activities, and fun. And visitors love these kinds of places too.



Think of your downtown as your community living room.

Some cities create pop-up parks or plazas with activities built in (top right). People can gather and play a game. They can grab a snack at a nearby vendor and watch.

Many cities build stairs that people use for seating (bottom left). This is in Edmonton, Alberta.

Pavers are practical and beautiful. They can be lifted to install wiring for lights and sound. Plan on \$15 per square foot installed.



### Plaza sponsor menu

		Six ECR4Kids 4-to-score giant game set @ \$200 each. Six Giant Jenga sets @ \$70 each. <b>Total investment: \$1,250</b>
		Four MegaChess w/25" tall King @ \$750 each. <b>Total investment: \$1,800</b>  Option: 37" tall King \$1,100 each. <b>Total investment: \$3,500</b>
		Four Playcraft Extera Outdoor Foosball tables @ \$1,200 each And four Joola Nova Outdoor table tennis tables, paddles, and covers, bag of balls @ \$700 each. <b>Total investment: \$7,600</b>

Pavers are ideal for fund-raising as well (top left). Add the donors names to the pavers.

You could place your shade trees in these big box-like planters (top right). These can be moved around by a fork-lift, enabling you to change the configuration of your plaza depending on the event you are hosting.

You can light the plaza up at night (bottom left), making it magical.

The key thing about any successful plaza is that you must have activities. Not events--activities. These activities, games, puzzles, etc. can each be sponsored by a business, a bank, an organization, or individuals. They need to be rotated or changed every two weeks or so, so there is always something new to see and do on the plaza.

You can have giant game sets, Jenga sets, huge chess games, foosball tables, table tennis, and more (bottom right). These are designed for outdoor use.

### Plaza sponsor menu

			48 qty. US Games standard hula hoops, 36": \$164 48 qty. Hoop bundle pack 32": \$200 Three racks @ \$190 each: \$570 <b>Total investment: \$950</b>
			Six Mags Spun Armchairs @ \$400 each <b>Total investment: \$2,400</b>
			1 harp, 1 Pagoda bells, 1 Melody From Freenotes Harmony Park or Ensemble Collection (5 instruments) <b>Total investment: \$7,000 to \$20,000</b>

### Introducing Our NEW Inclusive Mallets

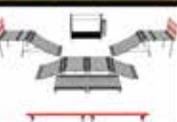
Now available for any instrument by request only  
*(for a small upcharge)*




Outdoor Musical Instruments For All Ages And Abilities



### Plaza sponsor menu

			8 qty. 10'x10' Ez Pop-up Canopy Tent with removable end side walls, roller bag, four sand bags with each: \$290 each <b>Total investment: \$2,500</b>
			Park In A Cart Portable Skatepark w/cart <b>Total investment: \$4,500 or \$9,000 for two</b>
			4 quantity Driveway Games all-weather corn hole set: \$120 each <b>Total investment: \$500</b>

### Plaza sponsor menu

			8 qty. Tacklife Gas Fire Table, 28", 50,000 BTU Auto-ignition, propane tank, one fill: \$220 each <b>Total investment: \$1,800</b>
			3 qty. (1 for parts) Zume Games portable badminton set w/freestanding base: \$40 Extra rackets, shuttlecocks <b>Total investment: \$150</b>
			1 Stamina outdoor fitness multi-station: \$240 3 qty. Stamina outdoor fitness striders: \$440 <b>Total investment: \$1,600</b>

You can put out a sign that says, "This game is donated by..." to promote the businesses that made the donations.

The options are endless: hoola hoops, spun chairs, musical instruments made for outdoors.

These are some musical instruments that are more designed to be permanent fixtures outside (top right).

You wouldn't need all of these--you can pick and choose.

Then, you could add some booths (bottom left) where you can have some artisans create their art on certain days of the week. These are easy to set up and tear down. And remember, people are four times more likely to buy art when they meet the artist. There are even portable skateparks!

There are even portable fire pits (bottom right)--perfect for a wintery day with a mug of hot chocolate. Portable backgammon sets and exercise equipment. Canmore, Alberta has outdoor exercise equipment downtown, and it's used 12 months a year.

### Plaza sponsor menu

			200 qty. Value Series gray rattan indoor-outdoor stack chairs @ \$26 each: \$5,200 50 qty. Round Coral steel patio table 32.5" @ \$60 ea: \$3,000 50 qty. Jordan Mfg. 9' Market umbrella @ \$52 ea: \$2,600 <b>Total investment: \$10,800</b>
			4 qty. MegaChess Giant Checkers Set - 10" @ \$200 This uses the same mats as the chess sets. Four separate mats @ \$65 each. <b>Total investment: \$1,060</b>
			4 full Imagination Playground 105-piece sets \$4,975 ea. 4 storage carts @ \$1,200 ea. <b>Total investment: \$24,700</b>



### Mobile climbing wall

Options:

- You purchase it and operate it (they must be staffed.) Approximately \$20,000 to \$35,000
- Contract with a small business who owns it (but must charge for its use)
- Talk to your Parks Department!




wayfair.com  
32" x 32" (81 sq. cm)  
Propane  
\$370

Make it easy for people to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee, iced tea, snack, or lunch on the plaza with chairs and tables. Umbrellas provide shade and are decorative (top left). Mega chess and checkers sets are fun, and Imagination Playground makes fantastic building toy sets for fun outdoors.

Consider changing the activities 13 times, twice a year. That'll keep people curious and entertained.

Perhaps bring in a climbing wall for a couple weeks (bottom left). Vendors will bring these in and run them for a small fee.

Here is another example of a great fire pit (bottom right). Imagine several of these along the waterfront trail or beside tables and chairs.



Fire pits create a wonderful ambiance (top left).

You could bring in a vendor to do Segway tours (top right). They charge a small fee and take people along the waterfront trail and throughout town.

Bike rentals are another wonderful activity (bottom left). Some vendors use these cargo containers as portable shops to bring their bike shops with them.

Food trucks or food containers (bottom right) are very popular too.

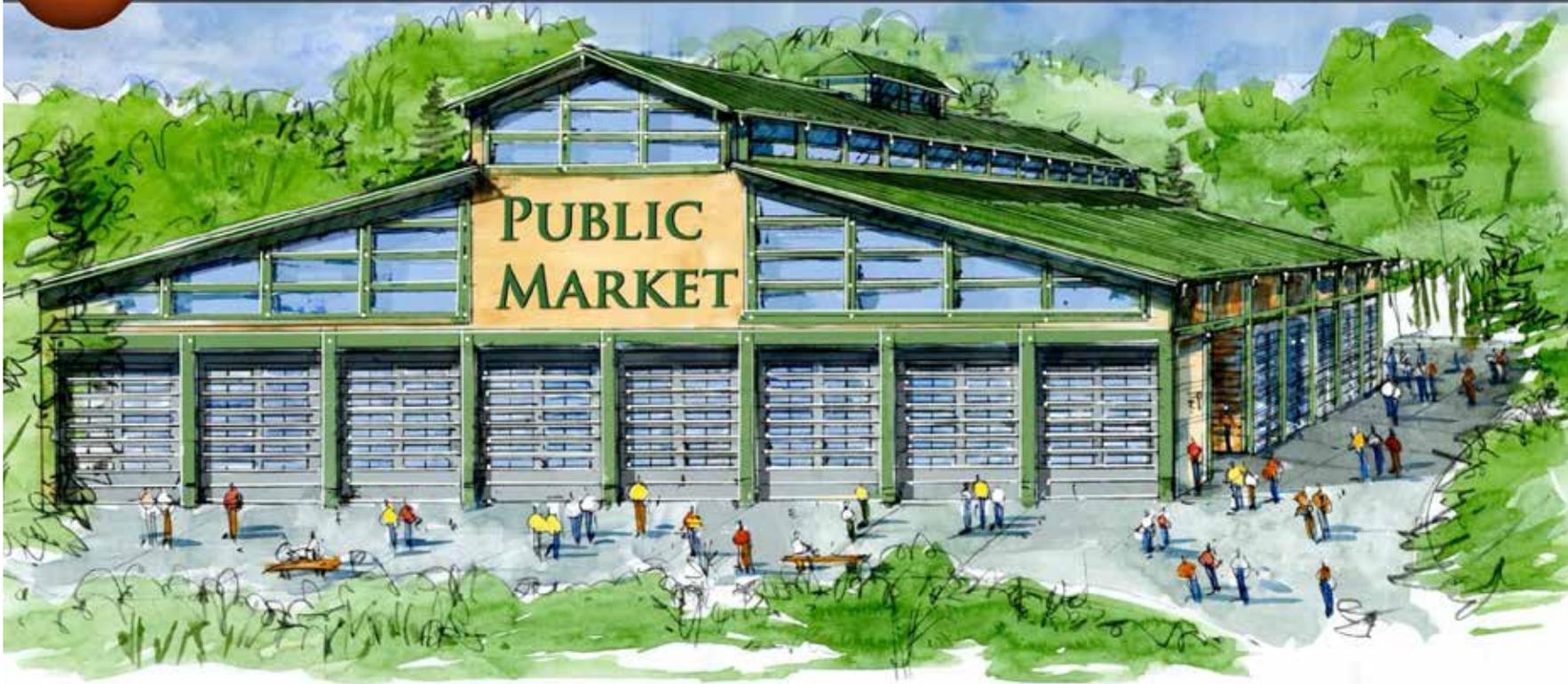


This empty space (bottom left) is used for the lunch crowd—it was just a parking area until they brought in old wire spools for tables and chairs, some potted trees from a nursery, and five food trucks. Instant party! It's simple, inexpensive, and it works.

The whole idea is to create a “people-place”—a space for your locals to spend time, have fun, and be together. It creates a sense of community. And visitors will join you. They like to go to the places you like. If you don't spend time in your downtown, neither will visitors.

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## Develop a year-round market pavilion



Important statistic #9 is that the biggest travel spenders like to travel during April, May, September, and October. You need to expand your seasons to attract those visitors. For businesses to be sustainable year-round, they need at least an eight month season--you need eight months of activity. You already have it, but your businesses need to be open during those times.

Another suggestion for Port McNeill, either by itself or in addition to the plaza, is to create a year-round covered market pavilion (above). This is a covered pavilion, making it easy to have events and activities all year long. This can be used as a public market, an event pavilion, and for numerous other activities.

Three of these walls are like garage doors--they can go up. They are also glass to let in light. So during the summer, they can all be open, or if it gets windy, some of them can be closed and some open. This allows for great flexibility. The floor can be heated.

You could call it the Port McNeill Pavilion.

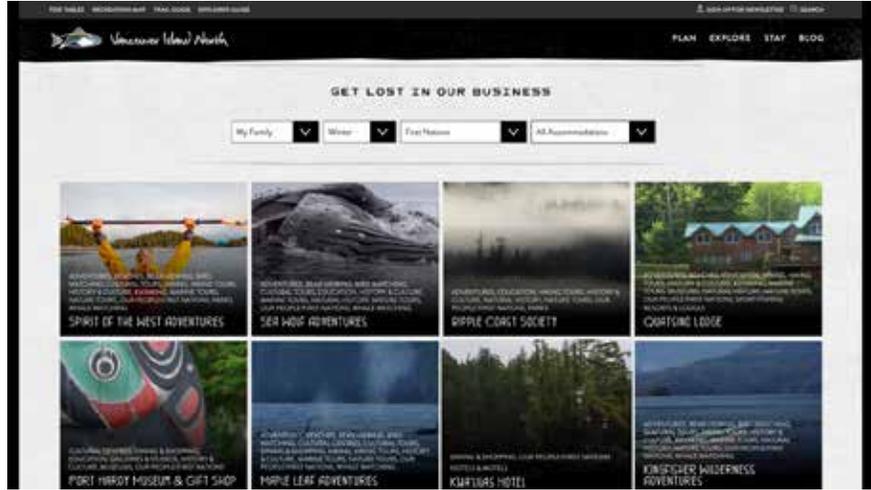


You could use the space in many different ways. Imagine the interior of the pavilion like this (above). It could be filled with vendors selling jewelry, pottery, fabric-art, honey, coffees and teas, wine tasting, bakery items, chocolate, meats, and produce, serving as a public market. There's space for 82 vendors with this configuration.

This interior layout has vendor booths, kitchen space, plus a center stage surrounded by tables and chairs. There could be daily entertainment on stage during lunch and/or dinner during the high season.

Since the interior is basically an empty space, it could be configured to hold any type of event, from car shows to arts shows to Christmas fairs.

You could invite clubs and associations to hold their events in Port McNeill. With the pavilion, you have the perfect place.



This pavilion (top left) is in Olympia, Washington, and it's used as their farmers market. The doors to the right open like garage doors when it's nice outside.

They sell all kinds of locally-made products, including baked goods, honey, jam, cheeses, meats, fruits and vegetables, eggs, as well as arts and crafts (top right). They offer some prepared foods for lunch and bring in musical entertainment. This is so popular, people from Seattle will drive the mile south to go to this market instead of the markets closer to home.

You could use the pavilion as a market and business incubator and have small booths for different small businesses (bottom left). They could each house an artist, carver, potter, painter, wood crafts, jeweler, and more.

All of these great businesses (bottom right) could have a space in the pavilion.

**Part public market:**

- First Nations art
- Artisans in action
- Food items
- Outfitting items
- Clothing and outdoor gear
- Gear rentals
- Guide services
- Co-op art market
- Farmers market (in season)
- Central gathering place
- Part museum | local history



If you used the pavilion as part public market, you could have First Nations art, artisans in action, food items, outfitting items, clothing and outdoor gear, gear rentals, guide services, a co-op art market, fruits and vegetables in season, and more.

This would create a central gathering place for the community, and it could include local history displays, museum displays, and it could be a place locals could spend time in the winter to walk and exercise.



We kept trying to think of where the best place to build a pavilion would be. We thought about these spots (top right), and these (bottom left). This is the boat parking lot (bottom right), and wondered if it could be built there.

It should be close to the water--that helps make it an even greater attraction. And parking lots are NOT the highest-and-best-use of waterfront property.

It would probably cost at least \$2 million to build this, but it would provide Port McNeill with space to have a market, a business incubator, hold events, showcase your artists, craftspeople, and vendors, show your adventure guide

services and activities, provide a place for locals to gather, create community pride, and more. It could be the pavilion for all of North Vancouver Island to host events and come to participate in events and activities. All of the activities you could do on the plaza, you could also do in the pavilion.

# THE VERY BEST OF THE NORTH ISLAND

The Top 10 Must See and Do Adventures of North Vancouver Island  
(Plus a couple of bonuses)

## The Very Best of North Vancouver Island

- The drive from Nanaimo (The Coastal Route)
- Alice Lake Recreational Loop (?)
- Kayaking & boating the Broughton Islands
- Namgis Burial Grounds in Alert Bay
- The five Awakwas & their stories in Alert Bay
- The world's tallest totem pole in Alert Bay (?)
- U'Mista Cultural Centre In Alert Bay
- Telegraph Cove (in season)
- Local tour operators & guides (flat out amazing!)
- The Port McNeill Waterfront (when activated)
- A top hiking trail? (the Lighthouse at Pulteney Point)
- The drive to Bere Point Regional Park (Malcolm Island)

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## Where do you go from here?

Create a "Destination Port McNeill Team"  
Go through these suggestions and turn many, most or all into  
recommendations!

This effort is 100% about making something happen!



We strongly suggest you create "The Very Best of the North Island" brochure. It could have the top ten must-see and do activities of North Vancouver Island.

It could include:

- The drive from Nanaimo (The Coastal Route)
- Alice Lake Recreational Loop (?)
- Kayaking and boating the Broughton Islands
- Namgis Burial Grounds in Alert Bay
- The five Awakwas and their stories in Alert Bay
- The world's tallest totem pole in Alert Bay (?)

- U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay
- Telegraph Cove in season
- Local tour operators and guides (flat out amazing)
- The Port McNeill Waterfront (when it becomes activated)
- A top hiking trail? (the Lighthouse at Pulteney Point?)
- The drive to Bere Point Regional Park on Malcolm Island

You could add a couple bonus ones, like "The shops of Port McNeill." Don't include lodging because you want hotels to give them to their guests, and they won't if their competition is being promoted.



Where do you go from here?

Create a "Destination Port McNeill Team." Go through all these suggestions, discuss them, decide which ones are feasible and have merit, and turn them into recommendations. Then, implement!

The top two strategies for revitalizing a town in North America are:

- Creating a programmed, public plaza
- Creating a pavilion to house a market and events/activities

These two suggestions are the most expensive ones in this report--the remainder are low-hanging fruit. But all of them working together create more than the sum of the parts.

Port McNeill is a fabulous place, and it has so much untapped potential!

We hope these findings and suggestions will help you create an even better, more successful and beautiful town with an even better quality of life.

Here's to making Port McNeill even MORE amazing - and considerably more successful, and far less seasonal!





## Port McNeill Marketing Assessment

The following pages contain an assessment by our secret shoppers, who researched the area from a distance, reviewing marketing materials to see if they could find the area, and if the materials were convincing enough to make them want to visit.

### Marketing Materials/Collateral requested: via phone and online

I contacted the Port McNeill Harbour/Information Centre and received wonderful service. They recommended I look to the Vancouver Island North Explorer guide. Unfortunately, the print version was out of stock, so I downloaded the PDF version. It is a big file, so it was not too convenient to print off. It does look like they will be creating an online version, that is not available as of yet.

### Top Thing to See:

During the phone conversation with the representative, they provided me with one top thing to see while in Port McNeill:

1.) World's largest Burl

<http://www.mcguiresplace.net/Sawmill-The%20World%27s%20Largest%20Burl/>

<https://www.amusingplanet.com/2015/09/the-worlds-largest-burls.html>

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/ronning-burl-worlds-largest>

### Websites

I found some websites that assisted in my planning:

#### Town of Port McNeill – Official Town website

<http://www.town.portmcneill.bc.ca/>

I loved that they added a note on the homepage that Roger Brooks International was here, with a link to the poster.

There isn't much to the website. They do have a menu option for Tourism (<http://www.town.portmcneill.bc.ca/tourism>) and the first thing they mention

is that they are looking for volunteers.

The town does have a museum; however, it is open only from July 01 – September 30. The next town over, Port Hardy, does have a museum that is open with the exception of the month of January.

The link to the Community & Recreation Groups has not been updated since 2016. I found this document by clicking via the Tourism page, “Enjoy a local church service or drop in on a recreational activity.” This list needs to be updated, to ensure there have not been changes. An accurate list is helpful, especially for those visiting for the first time. I saw 2016, and am assuming there will be changes, so I don’t count on the information.

While on the Tourism page, I also clicked on both the “Whale Watch, tour, or fish with local guides,” and “Shop at our local businesses.” Both links took me the same page. It is a list of businesses in Port McNeill. A long list, that is separated by type of business, but it was overwhelming to have to scroll through so much to find the “type of business” a visitor would want to see.

Also, while planning RBI’s visit to Port McNeill, this website provided different accommodation options, however, there are no notations for when the lodging is open. The first option I tried does not open until summer. (Hidden Cove Lodge)

#### **Port McNeill & District Chamber of Commerce –**

<https://www.portmcneill.net/>

An attractive website for the Chamber, however, I noticed the events page hasn’t been updated recently.

#### **YouTube – Revival of the Humpback Whales**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Yq62sdmpcg>

On the town’s homepage there is a link to the above YouTube video. I’m not sure how it connected to Port McNeill. The homepage should have some information on the video to entice people to watch it and draw a connection between it and the town.

#### **TripAdvisor –**

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g499144-Port\\_McNeill\\_Vancouver\\_Island\\_British\\_Columbia-Vacations.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g499144-Port_McNeill_Vancouver_Island_British_Columbia-Vacations.html)

#### **Top 7 Attractions listed on TripAdvisor for Port McNeill:**

1. BC Ferries
2. World’s Largest Burl
3. Port McNeill Harbor
4. Port McNeill Harbor & Information Center
5. Nimpkish Lake Provincial Park
6. Lower Nimpkish Provincial Park
7. The Port McNeill & District Museum

#### **Top Restaurants listed on TripAdvisor for Port McNeill:**

1. Cluxewe Waterfront Bistro – This restaurant is in Mount Waddington, BC, is 10 minutes from Port McNeill. However, it is recommended that you call to get a reservation if you are eating there. (<https://cluxewe-waterfront-bistro.business.site/>)
2. Northern Lights Restaurant – On TripAdvisor, and on Google, this restaurant is listed as open, but the link on TripAdvisor takes you to a page that indicates it is permanently closed. So confusing. The link from Google, takes you to the Haida Way Motor Inn’s website: (<https://pmhotels.com/restaurant/default.html>) which is not an attractive website. It is blank space. The only information regarding the restaurant is the menu, and that came up blank as well. I did finally find a Facebook page for Northern Lights Restaurant. ([https://www.facebook.com/bestfoodwest/?ref=py\\_c&eid=ARC0wUo2O3APNTATxqqACGITBUjDD83eT24GOKj1U-8A1sO8PEGbct79G0pXz9a2NFKL1t71X9d28K8](https://www.facebook.com/bestfoodwest/?ref=py_c&eid=ARC0wUo2O3APNTATxqqACGITBUjDD83eT24GOKj1U-8A1sO8PEGbct79G0pXz9a2NFKL1t71X9d28K8)) It is monitored and has updates. On March 2nd, they posted their dinner specials. They looked good.
3. Archipelago Bistro – Based on a customer review, I would get the steak and potato poutine, as it “knocked her socks off.” Definitely worth a try. The customer also recommended the kettle chip appetizer. Their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Family-Style-Restaurant/Archipelagos-Bistro-399295670498014>) It doesn’t look like there is much movement on the Facebook page, however, I did enjoy stumbling upon the puppy videos they posted.
4. Sportsman’s Steak & Pizza House – The photos posted look good; however,

the website links to a non-existent Facebook page. Doesn't bode well. Through another search of Facebook, I found the correct Facebook page for the restaurant. The last post on the Facebook page was from 2018. (<https://www.facebook.com/Sportsmanssteakandpizza/>)

5. Tia's Café – This restaurant looks okay. It has a Facebook page, instead of a website, which doesn't dissuade me from trying it. ([https://www.facebook.com/tiacafebc/?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARBc4bAOvmvKiaJSqzlhQHf7tEO MvJqRbdMSzdX-stUqdEhgZN\\_\\_YqTviRyEu8MT-KJOuccEnCNxO-l](https://www.facebook.com/tiacafebc/?__tn__=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARBc4bAOvmvKiaJSqzlhQHf7tEO MvJqRbdMSzdX-stUqdEhgZN__YqTviRyEu8MT-KJOuccEnCNxO-l))

**Facebook –**

<https://www.facebook.com/TownPortMcNeill/>

The Port McNeill website has a direct link to the Port McNeill Facebook Page, but when I clicked on the icon, it took me to my home feed. The above link is the page I found after searching.

There is not a lot of content on the Facebook page. Only one event is listed, and it is the Findings & Suggestions workshop. I appreciated that the town posted an update that there was to be a power outage. There is no restaurant or must see/must do activities listed, which was disappointing. It is always beneficial to have locals recommend places to eat, and things to do and see.

[https://www.facebook.com/pmfirerescue/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/pmfirerescue/?ref=br_rs)

The Port McNeill Fire Rescue has their own Facebook page. There isn't a link to the town Facebook page, but it does have a web link to the town website.

[https://www.facebook.com/Northern-Lights-Restaurant-Port-McNeill-BC-107233759305483/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/Northern-Lights-Restaurant-Port-McNeill-BC-107233759305483/?ref=br_rs)

This is a Facebook page for Northern Lights Restaurant. The last update was posted in 2017, so I'm not sure it is even open anymore. The website URL takes me to an ERROR FORBIDDEN page online.

Vancouver Island North – Have you ever come across a website and the homepage was so inviting that you want to immediately go there? That was my first impression of this website's homepage.

<https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/>

I love how they have separated the different "Get Lost" activities:

- Get Lost on Water
- Get Lost on Land
- Get Lost in Culture
- Get Lost with Wildlife

My absolute favorite part of this website is the "Plan Your Ultimate Escape" section. It has a fill-in-the-blank sentence, where you choose who you want to get lost with, what you want to discover, and when you want to go. I had TOO much fun, picking who, what, and when.

Outside of my detour in the Explore section of the website, I was able to do a search for Port McNeill and found their dedicated page for Port McNeill. (<https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/communities/port-mcneill/>)

First website that gave a brief description of Port McNeill:

"Known as the gateway to the gloriously scenic islands, protected spaces and lazy waterways of the Broughton Archipelago, Port McNeill is a grade-A stepping stone to outdoor adventure. Vancouver Island North's second-largest community proudly co-exists with the rich natural resources of land and sea. Its location (two hours drive time from Campbell River, four from the ferry terminals in Nanaimo) and close proximity to the east coast's finest island gems make it a regional centre for ecotourism – wildlife viewing, whale watching, grizzly bear safaris, diving, sea kayaking and fresh and saltwater fishing included."

Then they posted the "Area Highlights" but beyond that, the only other information found on the page is "Getting Here" information.

Upon further searches, I did find a few more pages that reference Port McNeill:

- **Orcafest – Port McNeill**, which takes place in August. (<https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/events/orcafest-port-mcneill/>) Unfortunately, the link to the Orcafest website is broken; however, the link to the Facebook page is not. It looks fun.

- **Free Things to do on Vancouver Island North** – From this page, I found that in Port McNeill there are over 400 geocaches! Geocaching has a cult following. This actually entices me more than anything else I've seen to go to Port McNeill. (<https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/free-things-to-do-on-vancouver-island-north/>)

### This is Port McNeill – (blog)

<https://thisisportmcneill.com/>

Although it doesn't look as though this website has been updated since November 2019, I enjoyed seeing what the holidays brought to Port McNeill last year. This website is touted as "Business, tourism and adventure happening in Port McNeill, BC." This blog is maintained by Port McNeill local, Karen Stewart, who is a freelance writer, blogger, volunteer and retired B&B owner.

### British Columbia.com -

<http://britishcolumbia.com/plan-your-trip/regions-and-towns/vancouver-island-bc-islands/port-mcneill/>

This website has some basic information about Port McNeill. Most of the information has been seen on other websites.

### Discover Vancouver Island –

<https://www.discovervancouverisland.com/regions/north-island/port-mcneill/>

I appreciated the history lesson, and the suggestions for day hikes within Port McNeill, just the names sound interesting.

- Salt Marsh Trail
- Schoolhouse Trail
- Stroll along the seawall and see the 1938 steam donkey once used for logging operations.

### My Impressions

Now that I've done the research, do their printed and online marketing materials make me want to go there?

If Port McNeill was located two hours from my house, would I make a special trip there based on what I saw, read and learned?

- No, probably not. From what I've researched, I don't see more than a few hours' worth of activity, so I wouldn't drive two hours to spend two hours and then drive home.

If not, was it the lack of information? Nothing really worth the drive?

- Although Port McNeill looks like it is beautiful, based on the information

I found, and had accessible, I didn't find anything that makes it worth the drive. The only thing that interested me enough to make a trip out of it, is the OrcaFest. That looks like it is a great festival. But it is a 3-day period in August.

If I were driving through Port McNeill (on my way to somewhere else), is there any place you'd stop? How much time would you spend at each (or the one) place you'd stop? If so, where? This can be as simple as a restaurant, a scenic viewpoint, anything.

I didn't find enough activity to have the desire to stay overnight, but if I were driving through to another location, I would more than likely plan it, so I can get the steak and potato poutine dish at Archipelago Bistro, and maybe check out a geocache or two. But after that, again, based on what I've found, I would carry on to my next destination.



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