



ALBERNI AQUARIUM AND STEWARDSHIP CENTRE FINAL REPORT

Prepared by Sheena Falconer, Executive Director

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Overview

Fast Facts:

- ✓ Over 10,000 visitors in the first summer, exceeding our goal of 8,800 visitors!
- ✓ Over 360 students visited the centre during May/June of our first year with many classes booked for the upcoming fall shoulder season
- ✓ More than twenty student volunteers participating in a defined program where they receive 3 credits for each 100 hours volunteered
- ✓ Economic benefit to the community includes work generated through the renovation, purchase of equipment, ongoing events and benefits, and employment
- ✓ Seven summer students employed from May – August. One full time interpreter has been hired, along with four afterschool students and one Opportunities grant employee. Over twenty volunteers participate in a variety of roles.



West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association

Sheena Falconer, Executive Director

September 1, 2016

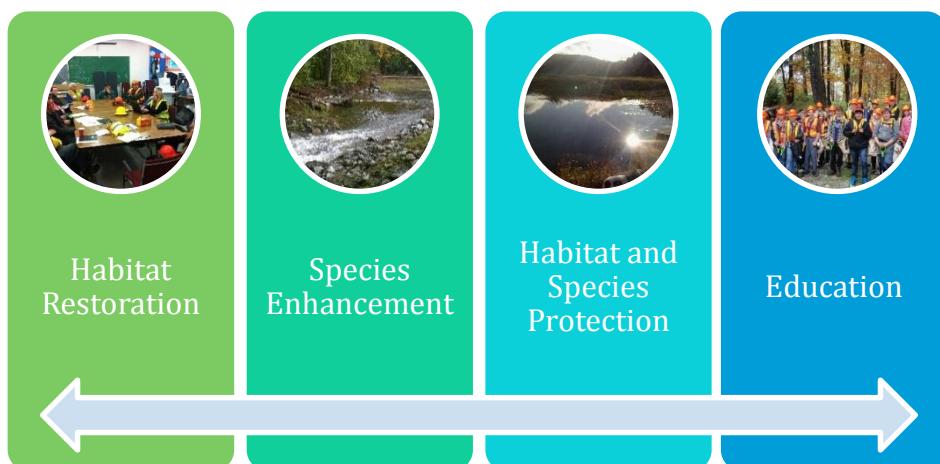
Background

In 2002 the Nuu chah nuluth/WCVI Aquatic Management Society (*now known as the West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association*) was formed as a registered Charity under the Society Act for the purpose of preserving and enhancing the environment by protecting, rehabilitating, and assessing aquatic species and their habitat in the West Coast of Vancouver Island, BC, area. In 2012, the WCA Board released the widely supported Coastal Strategy, which represents one of the most comprehensive approaches to coastal challenges amongst different marine planning initiatives in the world. This strategy sets out goals, objectives, priorities and action areas towards which governments, communities, sectors and other partners will contribute. This strategy also guides the actions of West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association. The organization has four pillars: Habitat Restoration, Species Enhancement, Protection and Education.

WE – people who care about the West Coast, working together.

SEA – a healthy aquatic ecosystem, including abundant species and habitat, vibrant coastal communities, and thriving businesses.

FUTURE – social and economic activities in harmony with each other and nature, based on knowledge, innovation, technology, partnerships, culture and good governance.



Under the Education pillar, the Board determined that outreach was a key component to working toward ocean education goals. Thus, the Alberni Aquarium and Stewardship Centre vision was developed.

In order to meet the goals of protecting, maintaining and rehabilitating aquatic resources, it is necessary for citizens to first understand and appreciate the wonderful diversity of our oceans. Goals under the Coastal Strategy include:

- ✓ Developing community capacity in...education, ecosystem monitoring and stewardship
- ✓ Promoting public understanding and consumer awareness of oceans and marine issues
- ✓ Supporting ocean education
- ✓ Actively recruiting young people and displaced workers
- ✓ Protecting key cultural, recreational and spiritual values and places

Since its inception in 2002, the West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association has had the core values of education and stewardship at the heart of the organization. Education has taken many forms, from working collaboratively with other groups, organizations, and governments to directly teaching students about the natural world. Over the last three years, the society has expanded its education and stewardship role within the school district and the general community. In order to move forward with the goal of increasing awareness, knowledge, skills and technology, while incorporating the goal of ensuring healthy and abundant species and habitat, a decision was made to pursue an aquarium and stewardship centre that would serve as a focal point for education and stewardship within the local community.

Our vision: To create an engaging and financially self-sustaining center that serves as a hub for showcasing and stewarding local aquatic life and activities, especially salmon.

The purpose of the centre is to instil a sense of wonder for the natural beauty of the region and an appreciation for the complex nature of ecosystems. People who care about a place are more likely to protect and preserve that place. Children will learn to value their home from an early age and carry these lessons throughout their lives. The centre provides meaningful employment and volunteer opportunities for young people and provides them with understanding of oceans as they move forward throughout their lives. Economic development in the region is enhanced as the centre draws visitors to the area. We have had groups of visitors come to Port Alberni specifically to visit the aquarium. We are able to acquaint them with the other amazing features of our city. Education programs are available for the primary ages, and we are developing the programs for middle and high schools. Programming runs all year round. Education events will include workshops, speaker series, and conferences focused on the goals of the society and will run year round, drawing visitors to the region. We are currently planning a small aquarium symposium.

Project Development and Completion

Project concepts were developed in 2013/2014. The project start date was March 2015 and the opening date was May 2016. We are pleased to report that the opening date was achieved and our soft opening was a great success with hundreds of people visiting the site.

This project benefits our society through increased visitors to our programs, and also provides increased economic opportunity for local merchants as we work together to provide wonderful offerings to attract tourism and locals to the Quay. The Alberni Aquarium and Stewardship Center is a main destination spot that increases tourism to the area, provides spin off opportunities to partner with the Maritime Discovery Centre, McLean Mill and local merchants, and provides stewardship and education opportunities for community members and students. We have quickly become one of the "Must See" destinations in Port Alberni. Many of our local community members bring their visitors to the Aquarium. This distinct Aquarium and Stewardship Centre networks with the Ucluelet Aquarium and other marine based destinations to provide multiple unique experiences for visitors interested in beautiful Vancouver Island.

The West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Centre consists of a two storey building leased by our society from the City of Port Alberni in order to create an interactive, hands on interpretive stewardship centre designed to attract tourists and locals. Displays feature salmon and other sea creatures, which resonates with Port Alberni's title of "Ultimate Fishing Town" and local attractions such as the largest salmon run on Vancouver Island, the Stamp Falls fishway, and spectacular fishing opportunities that abound in the region.

Live tanks, interpretive panels, and multi media interfaces guide visitors through the exciting experience of living the life of a salmon. As they embark on their salmon journey, visitors learn about ecosystems from the tops of the mountains to the depths of the ocean. The visitor experience is designed to encourage repeat visits, with exhibits that are constantly refreshed, connectivity to outdoor experiences, and friendly, knowledgeable staff. Many of our members have repeat visitation that exceeds the standard of 4 – 6 visits per year. One family reported having visited the centre fifteen times in the summer alone!

We have welcomed over 10,000 visitors so far, and still have four months remaining. We are currently experiencing a different visitor demographic, as we host those visitors without children, but a great

interest in salmon and aquatic life. We are exploring ways to expand our operations to include events and tours of the region, connecting into the many beautiful trails and outdoor experiences available to align with the Destination BC vision:



...Nature has nurtured our people, our history, our culture...and our visitors. BC appeals to those who have a heartfelt need to connect with the wilderness...Destination BC.

Our project also aligns with municipal, regional and provincial tourism economic development priorities through attracting visitors to the area in a manner that is consistent with nearby attractions, provincial messaging, and local culture and character. We are currently working with the city and local merchants on a rebranding of the harbor Quay in order to provide a new experience for visitors. We have made a great start with this carving by well known wood carver Jesse Toso.



In order to achieve our objectives, our first step was to hire project architects. We hired the firm that had provided us with the initial drawing for the centre and was affiliated with the Ucluelet Aquarium, feeling that experience with aquariums was necessary. This firm provided a beautiful framework for the centre



and the space we have created mirrors the concept almost perfectly. We were very pleased with the concept drawings and excited to work with people who shared our vision.



Next steps involved hiring a project manager. We initially hired a project manager who went through the process of creating an RFQ and interviewing the subtrades, such as heating, electrical, framing, etc. A general contractor was chosen, however, he removed himself from the project on the projected start date, citing an inability to meet the insurance requirements. This caused a delay that affected our construction start date, although we were still able to meet our opening date of May 1, 2016. We then hired a general contractor and asked him to serve as the project manager. We were very fortunate in our general contractor, as he managed the project beautifully. We have a wonderful space that brings pride and joy to our community. People are very comfortable bringing family and friends and making recommendations to others about visiting the Aquarium. The general contractor hired local subcontractors for the majority of the work. Framers, plumbers, electricians, painters, drywallers, flooring, doors and windows, finishing, furniture and security systems were all put in place. The general contractor worked with the Aquarium Consultants on plumbing, display and hearing requirements for the building. Tank displays were installed several months prior to the opening, along with life support systems, chillers, pumps and filters. A water

reservoir was also installed upstairs. Animal ambassadors were placed in their new homes shortly before opening day.



World class video displays were created by Rendezvous Dive. These displays are truly wonderful and visitors often sit and watch the looping videos. A large 400 year old tree was installed in the Aquarium as a way of connecting fisheries and forestry. Interpretative signs explain which creatures inhabit the tanks, and tell the story of their lives as well as interesting facts, particularly related to conservation. Interpretive panels allow visitors to lift up flaps to discover the answers to various questions. Webpage, traditional and social media have been utilized throughout the project to generate excitement and encourage visitors.



Statement of Completion of Project Objectives

Anticipated	Achieved
Participant experiences the 'story' of the salmon, walking through its lifecycle stages and associated ecosystems, interacting with aquarium tanks with live animals, wall paintings and installations representing their habitat, panels with interpretive text and photography, sound / video/game technology, and a living lab with touch tanks, microscopes, specimens, and crafts. Overall look includes beach elements such as rocks, shells, driftwood, and marine inspired furnishing (such as jellyfish lamp). Colour palette is natural marine / beach. Warm, dynamic, bright.	

First Floor:

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Reception Area ‘Fish Egg’ desk constructed to emulate salmon roe, with natural elements – pebbles/driftwood to emulate a nursery stream. Point of Sale (POS) system; tickets for indoor and outdoor activities; membership; store sales; information.		We changed the look of the fish egg desk. It was a beautiful concept, but not very practical. We have a beautifully finished cedar reception desk that elicits many favourable comments.
“Stream” tank Circulating water mimicking stream, with rocky bottom. With a dome ‘bubble’ that kids put their heads into from below. Ample plant elements coming up from the tank. Includes fry/smolt and other kinds of creatures in that habitat. Incorporates rain forest elements through tree installation on wall behind it and between reception desk, and on ceiling above.		The stream tank does not feature a dome bubble due to cost restrictions, however, the tank is very popular as it is at a great height for children to view the salmon, and adults watch the video stream of footage of Stamp Falls, spawning salmon and other engaging material.
Nearshore/Subtitle/Estuary” tank Designed to represent estuarine habitat. With a dome ‘bubble’ that kids put their heads into from below. Eelgrass, juvenile salmon, rockfish, halibut, and other estuary life. Incorporates bears and birdlife on wall behind.		We were unable to use a dome bubble due to cost restriction. Our estuary tank is popular as we feature sand dabs – a creature that is very difficult to spot. People stay for long periods of time searching for that last sand dab.
Interpretive Panels With text and photography outlining elements of each tank and interconnectivity		Each tank has interpretive information about the ecosystem and creatures that inhabit that particular ecosystem. We are constantly changing our interpretive panels to reflect changing seasons.
A. Shoreline/Nearshore tank Feature ocean salmon at a shallow depth. Other kinds of creatures and fauna. Includes information about salmon harvesting activities		The intertidal tank does not feature harvesting activities. The main focus is on rockfish conservation.



Pond (not included in original proposal)

We have created the framework for a pond ecosystem. This display is still under development



Four hundred year old tree (not included in original proposal)

We were very lucky to get a four hundred year old tree donated from Western Forest Products. It took a real group effort to install this feature and we are very pleased with it. It does require some modification to make it more user friendly.



Aqua Dome (not included in original proposal)

This tank takes the place of the proposed two dome tanks. Very popular with visitors, it allows a great space for taking pictures while surrounded by fish.

Shallow Ocean Tank

Rock fish and other kinds of salmon interactions. "Diver depth". Information about climate change and other impacts on ocean survival



This display is completed and features a multitude of creatures, even our hard to find octopus!



Jellyfish Tank

The jellyfish tank is a great hit with everyone as they watch the serene movement of the jellyfish

		Deep Ocean Tank This tank features a variety of ocean creatures and we will be working with Neptune Canada and Oceans Network to provide live streaming of the deep ocean floor in the future.
Rolling 'Aqua-Bar' Fitted with tablets/ipads for video/web/game viewing. Sides designed for aesthetic cues. Can be moved and/or used for events	We opted for a wall rather than the aqua bar, as the wall provides a more complete visitor experience. The wall is moveable and can be taken down for events.	
'Water Play" hands on area (for kids age 2-6) Recirculate water that is sanitized by a small light unit. Contains wooden fish, boats and other toys. Opportunity for interpretive reading area above water play for 'take home' messages to parents.		We have an area at the back with a small play area. This is still under development in consultation with parents.
Robotic Diver tank Robotic arms allow children to 'dive' for treasures and construct things under water.	Sadly, this was not able to be achieved due to budget constraints	
Touch tanks Shallow tanks with live animals where participants can be guided on animal care and physiology. Storage above and under		We have four touch tanks featuring a variety of animal ambassadors including sea cucumbers, sea stars, anemones and others.

Work Stations Tables for educational activities and crafts		We have mobile tables with educational activities, puzzles, books and crafts available in the classroom area.
Lab Desk Microscopes and other lab equipment where participants can learn more about microscopic elements of salmon and sea life. Storage above and under		The lab desk is under development.
Main Chiller and Electric Panel Chillers also located in several other locations on outside walls.		Completed
Unisex bathroom		Completed
Gift "mini-store" Local artisans, smoked salmon, salmon and marine themed items. Branded Stewardship Centre 'swag'		Completed – we are currently developing retail products for the slower seasons.
'Kelp' curtains providing partial visibility and easy flow through		We did not install kelp curtains due to concerns with visibility/security.
Second Floor was to include a library and meeting area with desk, library, comfortable seating area for meetings up to 8 people, staff lounge space. There were to be kitchenette facilities with sink and counter, bar fridge, washing machine, hot plate and microwave. An upstairs unisex bathroom. Storage space, photocopier, printer and offices. The only items not completed on the second floor is the library and we don't have a washing machine. We have an absolutely lovely meeting room that is well used.		

Economic Impact

Temporary Positions

Estimated temporary jobs (during construction/implementation):

The following organizations and people were hired temporarily during construction:

Blue Sky Architects	4
Ocean to Eye Level Consulting	3
White Raven Consulting	1
Project Manager	1
Don Anderson Contracting	1

J Salmon Framing	3
Drywall Crew	6
Beaufort Painting	2
Braker Electric	2
Plumbing	1
HVAC	2
Security	1
Signage	1
Cleaning	4
Tank construction – UMI	3
Tank construction – Envision	2
Tree carving	1
Tank construction – Aquadome	3
Totals	41

In total, 41 people were employed on a temporary basis in the construction of the Alberni Aquarium and Stewardship Centre.

Permanent Positions

Estimated direct permanent jobs (once project is complete):

Permanent positions consist of the following:

Executive Director	.25 FTE	12 months
Financial Manager	.25 FTE	12 months
Head Interpreter (NETP)	1.00 FTE	3 months
Head Interpreter	1.00 FTE	6 months
Student Helpers (5)	.125 FTE	12 months
Canada Summer Students (between 2 - 4)	1.00 FTE	3 months
NETP Summer Students (2 or 3)	1.00 FTE	3 months

Incremental Economic Benefits: *Detail all incremental economic benefits to the community and/or region Detail all new, incremental economic benefits to the community and/or region and how they will be measured.*

Incremental economic benefits have already been shown at the Harbour Quay, with local merchants experiencing higher than normal visitors. We haven't quantified this as yet, but merchants are very pleased with the increased revenue. We have developed a very good relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and host one of their information stations at the Aquarium. We have had numerous tourists ask for information about local and regional places of interest, accommodations, and restaurants. We are

definitely considered “one of the places to see” in Port Alberni and this allows us to provide good information to visitors. We will be developing a stay and see package throughout the winter for launch next year.

As we expand our offerings to include eco tours and charters, we expect to draw even more visitors. There is a definite niche to fill in this area.

We are developing relationships with Ucluelet, Vancouver, and Campbell River Aquariums and send people to see what others have to offer. We are working with the designers to develop a conference for the smaller aquariums to share lessons learned, marketing and tourism skills and other information. We have offered to host the first conference in Port Alberni.

Vancouver Island University is a wonderful partner and we are collaborating with them on research, tourism and fisheries projects. We currently have two research projects underway and this has led to the involvement of local First Nations, federal government and others.

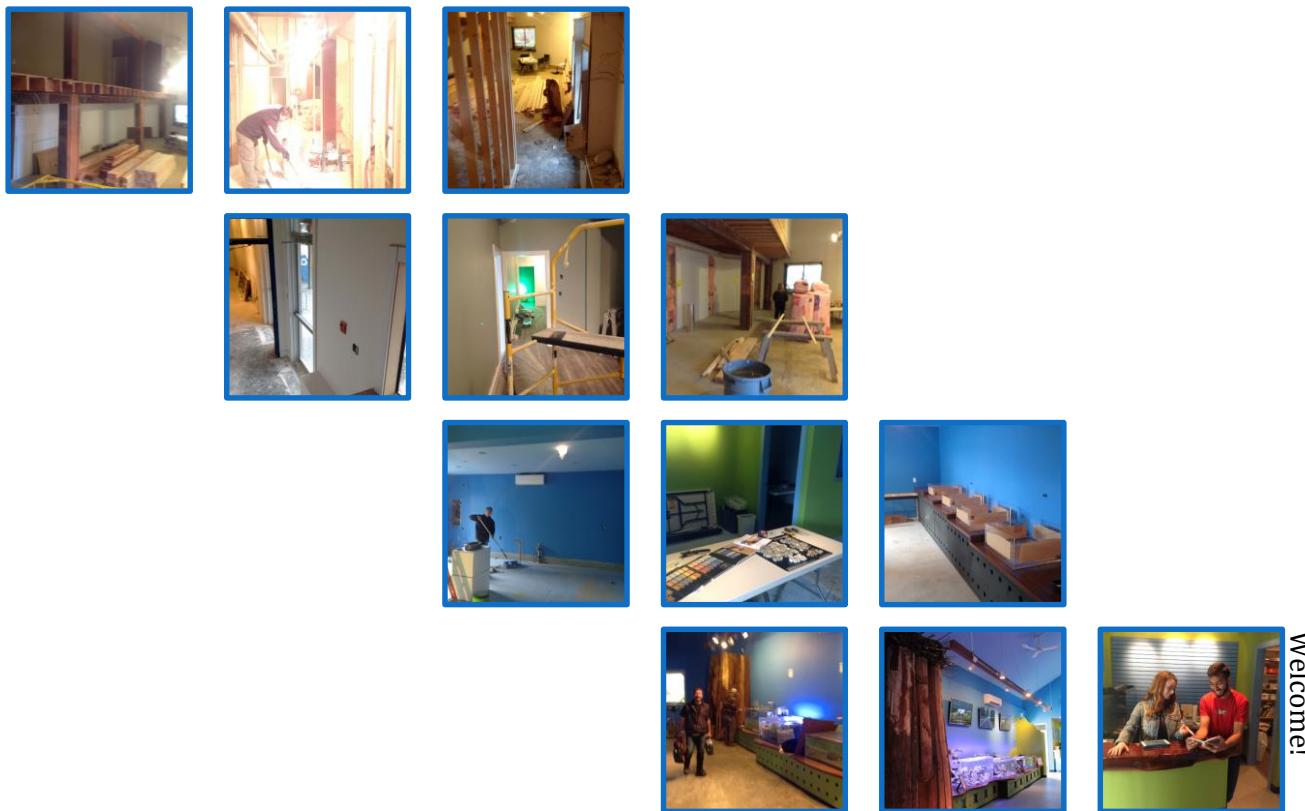
We are working collaboratively with organizations with similar mandates as we learn more about the marine world around us, thus benefitting not only our own region, sharing our knowledge learned with others beyond Vancouver Island.

The Aquarium is an interactive place for people to learn about the natural world, extend their knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of ecosystem interactions, leading to the citizen science program. We have over twenty people involved in our small community already and others joining all the time. Our membership base has reached almost 300.

Media coverage

1. <http://www.albernlvalleynews.com/news/369860891.html>
2. <http://www.albernlvalleynews.com/news/377998821.html>
3. <http://www.portalberni.ca/news/july-27-2016-127pm/alberni-aquarium-and-stewardship-centre-now-open>
4. <http://www.businessexaminer.ca/vancouver-island-articles/item/port-alberni-aquarium-stewardship-centre-now-open>
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78pZV0rrGUg>
6. https://twitter.com/tania_onc/status/741049233634000896
7. <http://www.oceannetworks.ca/celebrate-world-oceans-day-us>
8. <http://elmhill.ca/locations/Alberni-Aquarium>
9. <https://www.moore.org/article-detail?newsUrlName=west-coast-aquatic-opens-new-aquarium-in-port-alberni>
10. <http://www.pictaram.com/user/jennypenny55/53160306>
11. <http://www.avtimes.net/news/299881261.html?mobile=true>
12. <http://vancouverislandbeyondvictoria.com/>
13. <http://canadianriviera.com/west-coast-aquatic-aquarium-shaw-tv-port-alberni/>
14. Interviews with PEAK Radio
15. Advertising with PEAK Radio on a regular basis. Transcripts can be provided.

Construction Photographs



Welcome!

Financial Statements

See Attached

West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association
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