



BC Forest Discovery Centre

Forests Forever- innovation in modern forestry



A new and innovative exhibit

Concerning COVID-19

It is impossible to have a meaningful discussion on the condition of our wonderful Discovery Centre without taking into consideration the effects of this terrible pandemic.

First and foremost, thanks must be given to the financial support offered by our Federal Government, BC Government, Municipality of North Cowichan, the BC Art's Council, and Heritage Canada without whom our very existence would be in question.

As we planned for what was expected to be the best year in the 54 year history of the Centre with anticipated attendance in excess of 75,000 for the year, increased educational tours and at least 35 cruise ship excursions that had already signed on to visit with the possibility of many more. Plans for expanding our staff levels were shelved as we settled in for what we thought would be a short period of time.

As it happened, we had to extend our staff layoffs until the middle of June and only after much soul-searching and the instituting of strict pandemic protocols we opened the doors to the public.

All our major events have been cancelled including Halloween and our most successful fund raiser the Christmas Express.

We shared our story with many other museums and businesses and feel fortunate to still have our doors open, all our staff working, and an optimistic approach to next year. Not surprisingly our earned income and attendance have dropped by 82% year over year but we are confident we will make it through and continue to be the strong community minded organization that we have been for the last 55 years.



That said, let us talk about Forest Forever- Innovation in Modern Forestry

Forests Forever: *Innovation in Modern Forestry*

The new Forests Forever exhibit has already injected new life into the BC Forest Discovery Centre, making it the premier tourist destination on the BC coast to learn about forestry – past, present, and future.

Housed in the main building this \$1.2 million exhibit has already been responsible for major increases in the number of locals, national and international tourists, students, outdoor enthusiasts, forestry workers and BC wood products consumers visiting the BCFDC.

While in the final construction phases, we were visited by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his family. They spent the entire day enjoying the Forest Discovery Centre and were very interested in the private guided tour they received of the new Forests Forever exhibit which was the main reason for their visit.



For the first time in over twelve years British Columbia welcomed an economic mission comprised of more than 50 international Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Consuls General representing 48 countries to showcase the goods, services and values BC has to offer.



One of the highlights of their visit was a stopover at the BC Forest Discovery Centre in Duncan to view the new and innovative Forests Forever Exhibit that illustrates the current sustainable forestry practices being used in BC.

The visit was a tremendous opportunity and it is hard to imagine a better way to make a positive impression than to welcome international delegates into our community and show them exactly what BC, the Cowichan Valley, and the BC Forest Discovery Centre has to offer the world

As can be seen the new exhibit has fulfilled all our expectations and then some. With attendance surpassing the 65,000 mark and with the expectation of at least 35 cruise ship excursions visiting the Centre in 2020 it becomes obvious how the Forests Forever exhibit has helped the BCFDC become the third most popular paid admission attraction on Vancouver Island.

It was expected that the attendance numbers would increase to 75,000 starting in 2020 but as with most enterprises COVID-19 put a quick halt to our expectations.

Project Rationale



This exhibit has provided an immersive and interactive experience that has enhanced visitors' understanding of why BC's forests are unique in the world, and give them an engaging experience to learn about forest re-generation, harvesting, and manufacturing in the 21st century.

Realizing the importance of telling the modern-day story of sustainable logging practises in British Columbia, The BCFDC agreed to undertake the construction of this innovative exhibit that illustrates the great care that is being taken to manage BC's forested lands sustainably, while preserving biodiversity to ensure the working forests remain healthy and productive for future generations.

The upgrades at the Centre have given visitors a modern overview of the forest sector – highlighting how science and innovation are transforming the industry. Interactive tools and informative displays help convey how forestry has evolved in the 21st century and the exciting future for this sector.

Goals that have been achieved by the exhibit include:

- Showcasing forest innovation and sustainability practices to the public
- Promoting understanding of the importance of working forests, economic partnerships, and community access
- Educate visitors on the life cycle of a tree – from seedling to finished products while featuring careers, manufacturing and environmental benefits from well-managed forests and wood products.
- Increased attendance both locally and internationally
- A lengthened season was planned and will be in place in 2021
- Moving the entire Centre into the 21st century and making the Cowichan Valley a “top of mind” destination for tourists visiting the Island.
- Increased interest in our education programs
- A stronger online presence
- Improved accessibility for all those with mobility challenges
- Improved profile within the community
- A new and expanded curbside appeal
- The ability to attract our Prime Minister, international delegates, and numerous governmental and forestry VIP’s

Background

The Forest Museum opened officially for its first summer season on Saturday, June 4th, and among the earliest visitors were forest industry pioneers such as H.R. MacMillan, Hector Stone, Gerry E. Wellburn, and many others. In their lifelong commitment to their communities and the forest industry’s legacy in British Columbia, these men and women laid the tracks (literally) for the establishment of the British Columbia Forest Discovery Centre as it is known today.

Over fifty years ago, these industry pioneers and others from the Cowichan Valley community sought to relocate Gerry Wellburn’s exceptional collection of forest industry artifacts to a fifteen-acre site overlooking Somenos Lake in Duncan.

As the Forest Museum grew, three more parcels of property were purchased between 1964 and 1967, thanks to the Municipality of North Cowichan, City of Duncan, and the Village of Lake Cowichan. By 1972, the Windeyer Farm, south of the Forest Museum was acquired by the Province of British Columbia for the Forest Museum’s use. By 1974, the 100-acre site that the BC Forest Discovery Centre sits on today had been fully assembled.

Today’s Board of Directors, staff and volunteers have a “Tree-mendous” legacy of foresight, dedication, innovation, and integrity to live up to. The hard work ethic and commitment, so evident in the life of BC’s forestry pioneers, remains the common thread binding everyone involved in the BC Forest Discovery Centre over the past fifty-five years.

For half a century, the BC Forest Discovery Centre has been preserving the history and heritage of forestry – one of British Columbia’s cornerstone economic drivers. The Centre’s unique educational approach has inspired young minds for five decades and entertained local, provincial, national, and international visitors of all ages and abilities.

Getting young people interested in the forest sector through artifacts and interactive exhibits stimulates their imagination and innovation, promoting the industry early in their lives as a possible career path. Informing those who visit the Centre of the key role of forestry in shaping our province is an excellent reminder of the sector’s importance to the province’s identity – and to its future.

Now, it is time, with participation and cooperation of many of those associated with the forest sector to tell the story of modern-day forestry practises as depicted in the many facets of the Forests Forever exhibit. The exhibit illustrates the positive influence that coastal forestry has on BC’s economy, environment, and social fabric.

As we say to our visitors “Come and enjoy the new Forests Forever exhibit and you will be amazed how much fun learning can be.”



A message the Forest Minister of BC:

Congratulations to the BC Forest Discovery Centre. Your new exhibit: Forests Forever – innovation in Modern Forestry is sure to be a great success. I encourage everyone to visit and learn about modern-day forestry practises in British Columbia and our unique coastal forest resources.

Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources

A message from the Premier of British Columbia:

On behalf of all British Columbians, I am happy to congratulate the BC Forest Discovery Centre on its newest exhibit: Forests Forever. For over 50 years the Centre has told the story of BC's Forest Industry and made it fun for kids of all ages. I wish you all the best for 50 more!

Premier John Horgan

A message from the Prime Minister of Canada:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Forest Forever Exhibition, hosted by the BC Forest Discovery Centre.

The BC Forest Discovery Centre has been educating the public on the history of forestry in BC for more than 50 years. The new Forests Forever exhibition aims to inform visitors about current forestry practises and displays the innovative advancements made in protecting our precious eco-systems. It is a celebration of Canada's vibrant nature, as well as our rich forestry history.

Please accept my warmest welcome and best wishes for a memorable exhibition!

Justin Trudeau

Ottawa 2019



Where to Begin:

The idea was first discussed when it was realized that the mandate of the BCFDC was to tell the history of Forestry past present and future. The major flaw with this statement, we discovered, was that the newest display we had dated from 1973.

COWICHAN LEADER, Wednesday, June 17, 1970

FOREST MUSEUM

DUNCAN, midway between Victoria and Nanaimo



Fun and adventure for the Whole Family
THRILL to a ride on a real steam logging train
ROMANCE to the "Glory Days of Logging"
RELAX in an unspoiled 40-acre paradise
Admission: \$1.00 , children 50c, under 6 (with adults) free
Admission includes FREE ride on the train
OPEN 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
EVERY DAY ALL SUMMER

The main building was dark and dingy, unheated with poor lighting and dated fixtures. An out of date gift shop and the admissions area was not the slightest bit inviting. Attendance was dropping on a yearly basis and the Centre itself did not have a high profile or a strong presence in the community

It was realized that it was time to tell the story of modern-day forestry practices in an industry that is so important to all British Columbians and to bring the Forest Discovery Centre up to date.

Two obstacles had to be overcome at the very outset. As with most not for profits we did not come close to having the funds to even begin planning. The second hurdle would be getting our large number of members and volunteers to buy into the prospect of such a major change to the main building and its contents.

Surprisingly, the old timers were not that hard to convince as the thought of constructing a world class exhibit seemed to pique their interest.

Meetings with many of the members of the forest industry made it clear that the time was right for an innovative display telling the story of modern-day forestry.

The first major contributor, Western Forest Products got the ball rolling by committing to a donation of \$250,000 and we were soon on the way, with the help of more than 42 sponsors, to raise the \$1.2 million needed to substantially complete the entire project.

Including of course the \$400,000 from ICET.

Karen Sorensen of Remark Management took on the responsibilities of planning, contracting, and overseeing each step of the process.

First was the removing of the very dated exhibits from inside the main building.

Then of course demolition of the walls, floors, ceilings, and admissions area.

This massive effort took several months and all the while the Centre stayed open and conducted daily business.



A new floor, new walls, new lighting, a brand-new admissions area and giftshop, and for the first time the Centre would have a heating and air conditioning system

While all the construction was happening, the entire exhibit was built off-site so that once all the sawdust had cleared the exhibits could be brought in and made ready to display.

It was realized that the grand opening date should be delayed until April of 2019...in time for the brand-new season and giving us a longer time to get the entire exhibit ready

Plans were made, invitations were sent out and the exhibit opened on April 24th with extensive coverage from the media and many our sponsors and government officials on site.

All in all, it was very successful

The changes to the Centre have been substantial and the positive reactions from all that visit phenomenal.

Forests Forever includes in its 4,500 square feet

- New reception area
- Grand entrance hall
- Immersive interactive exhibit vignettes that follow the life cycle of a commercial tree.
- Illustrations highlighting the forest sector as a driver of economic, environmental, and social sustainability for the BC Coast.
- Programmed interactive video displays
- Updated gift shop featuring a varied number of products including many produced locally
- Interactive phone app that interfaces with the exhibit and the 100-acre grounds
- Building improvements including electrical, heating, lighting, and flooring.
- A complete modernization of the main building making the Centre a world class destination.



Benefits to the community:

The BCFDC is now recognized as the third largest admission-based destination on Vancouver Island. Behind only the Butchart Gardens and the BC Royal Museum. With an attendance of more than 65,000 that can only continue to increase. Covid19 of course put a damper on the year 2020 but we are confident that we will return better than ever once the crisis is finally over.

People now see Duncan as a destination as many families can easily spend three to four hours on the grounds.



A brand-new curriculum has been developed and though delayed this year will be implemented once again after the Covid19 threat has passed.

By attracting more than 65,000 visitors to the Centre each year, many of them from out of town, we believe the economic implications for business in the Cowichan valley to be dramatic.

In the following years, the BCFDC will partner with local tourism-based industries to make sure that they all can participate in the economic benefits that the increased visitations to the Centre will bring to the area.

Once things have returned to normal our lengthened season, increased operating hours and higher revenues will give us the opportunity to increase our staffing. A new full-time position of education curator has already been created and we will be adding an estimated 5,000 worker hours to support the new exhibit and extended hours.

As well the exhibit will become an integral part of our Virtual Museums of Canada online offering. Drone footage of Forests Forever will be highlighted and the first thing visitors to our new website (finished in 2021) will experience.

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Financial Statement

Project expenditures:

Category Description	Budget	Actual
Exterior Upgrades	\$82,098	\$81,813.00
Interior Exhibits	\$482,656	\$470,340.29
Building upgrades	\$265,246	\$318,359.00
Consultant fees	\$330,000	\$248,632.00
Contingency and miscellaneous	\$116,500	\$43,927.00
Hvac systems	\$22,000	\$35,000
	\$1,298,500	\$1,198,071.29

Project Income (Sources of Funding):

Major Donors	\$630,000
Medium Donors	\$64,000
In Kind products and services	\$109,000
Island coastal Economic trust	\$354,702.29
Miscellaneous (individual donors)	\$3,000
BCFDC Operating Account (Hvac)	\$37,369
Total Income	1,198,071.29

I hereby certify that this statement accurately represents all project expenditures and all sources of project funding.



Chris Gale

General Manager BC Forest Discovery Centre