

Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre Phase Two: Interpretive Exhibits Final Report



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Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre
Phase Two Exhibit Installation
Final Report
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Project History:

In 2005, the Northern Vancouver Island Salmonid Enhancement Association (NWISEA) began a process to replace a series of aging Atco trailers with a multi-purpose facility that would accommodate fish production, administrative offices, an interpretive gallery, classroom, kitchen, and wet and dry labs. The society determined that it was time to diversify their operations and build on their capacity to enhance salmonid populations and habitat, provide education on the value of salmonids and salmonid habitat, involve the community in the welfare of salmonids, and support research on and monitoring of the well being of salmonids on northern Vancouver Island.

This process involved raising over one million dollars to remove the old buildings and build a new facility, which opened in September,2009. Numerous funders, including Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and the West Coast Community Adjustment Program (WCCAP) assisted with this process.



Quatse Hatchery in 2005

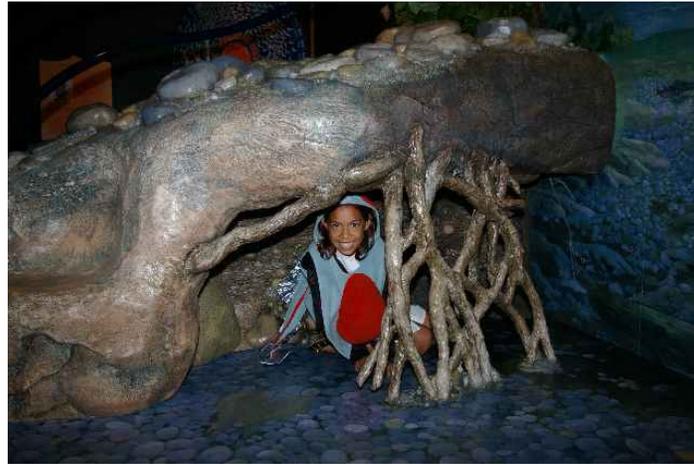


Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre,2009

While this first phase of development of the stewardship centre did include a small number of exhibits in the interpretive gallery, funds that had been set aside for exhibits were not sufficient to complete all of the displays that were intended to deliver the primary messages of the centre,

namely that there are many challenges to the survival of salmon, that there is hope for the future of salmon on the B.C. Coast, and that there is something each and every one of us can do to help salmon survive. In addition, the total cost of effectively marketing the facility was underestimated.

Further, it was determined that an additional investment in the interpretive exhibits would produce a facility of Provincial calibre that would attract more visitors and substantially enhance the tourist economy on northern Vancouver Island.



Part of the habitat display installed in the fall of 2009

Phase Two: Quatse Salmon Stewardship Exhibits

In the fall of 2009, NWISEA applied to ICET for \$175,000. An application to the WCCAP for \$118,000 was later made and NWISEA committed to raising and investing the remaining \$57,000. Of this \$350,000 total, NWISEA intended to invest \$300,000 in Phase Two of the exhibits, \$35,000 in a promotional and marketing program and \$15,000 in administration. Administration costs proved higher than anticipated, as staff was seconded to assist with the interpretive displays, so these latter figures were later amended to \$30,000 for promotion and \$20,000 for administration (still below 6% of the overall project cost).

NWISEA raised most of the funds for its contribution from a variety of sources, including the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Coastal Community Credit Union, the Hayes family, James Walkus Fishing Company and SunFun Divers. Contributions included the donation of a rock wall featuring numerous invertebrates from the region. This display, known as 'Corey's Wall' (in memory of Corey Hayes), was integrated into the oceans exhibit.



'Corey's Wall' as part of the Phase Two oceans exhibit

Phase Two of the interpretive displays for the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre was to include design and installation of a theatre and mezzanine, an oceans exhibit, an exhibit featuring the role of science in salmon and salmonid enhancement and an interactive game that was to be titled 'The Redd Challenge'.

For a number of technical, market and cost reasons, NWISEA did not proceed with the 'Redd Challenge' interactive game, but established a number of smaller features such as a self guided tour of the exterior of the facility, a touch screen predator display, and additional interactive activities for children, including a Jenga game and feltboard featuring salmonid prey and predators.

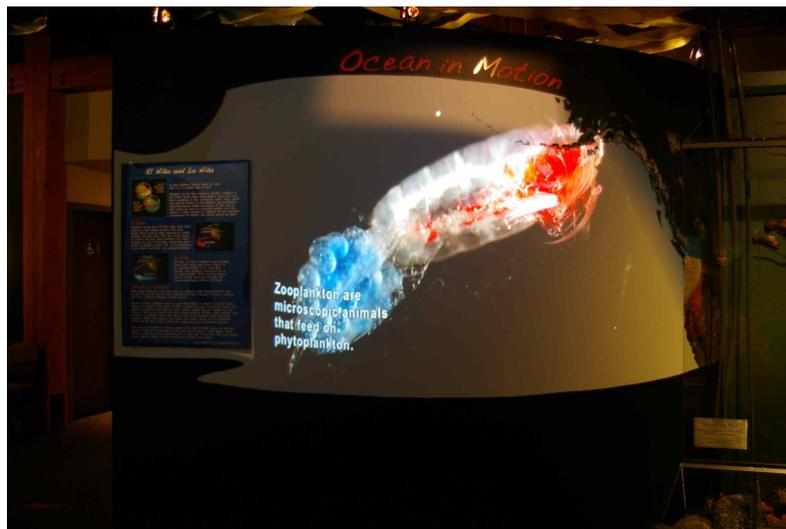


Feltboard exhibit in association with the existing habitat display

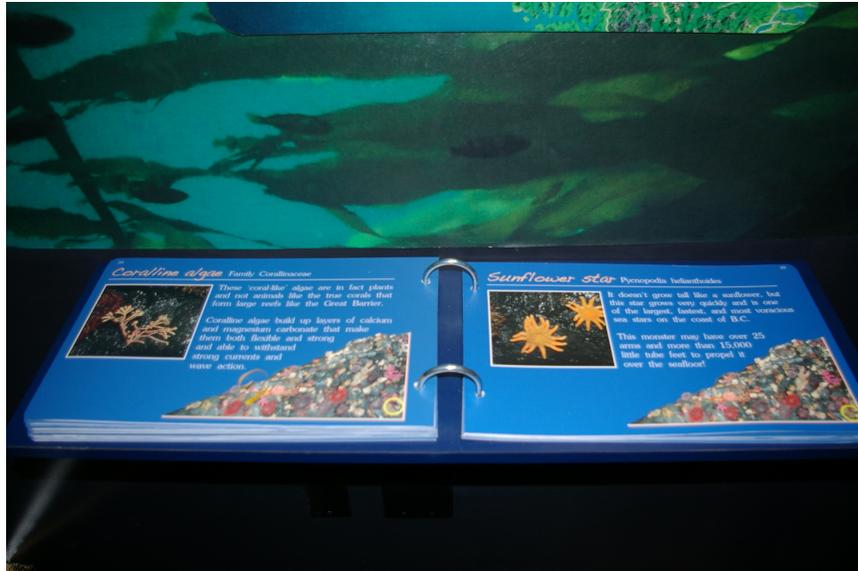


This touch screen, located on the wall of the mini theatre, is one of the additional displays developed in lieu of the interactive 'Redd Challenge'

Three of the four primary exhibits that were intended to be produced, namely the mini theatre and mezzanine, oceans exhibit and 'science and salmon' were completed.



This AV production showing salmonid migrations and feeding behaviour off the coast of western North America was part of the oceans exhibit featuring important elements of salmonid survival



This 'critterbook' was part of the oceans exhibit which featured various plants and animals that share the ocean ecosystem with salmonids



This 'Ocean of Mystery' section of the oceans exhibit features some of the natural forces at play in the ocean and the adaptive features of salmonids



A mini-theatre featuring various productions about salmonids and salmonid habitat, ecology and survival was established in the centre. Plans are in process to produce local features on salmonid ecology and the work that NWISEA does in salmonid enhancement



This computer station, located on the mezzanine above the theatre, offers visitors the opportunity to access internet resources featuring salmon



The 'Science Behind Salmon' exhibit features information on salmonid physiology and offers the viewer an opportunity to view salmonid prey under the microscope

Exterior interpretive signage included not only information on salmonid enhancement activities, but also some of the salmonids' predators and associated vegetation in the river ecosystem adjacent to the centre.



Exterior signage like this one featuring the 'Birds of the Quatse' was also established adjacent to the centre, alongside a walking path that connects the centre to the community of Port Hardy

Phase Two was scheduled to begin in the fall of 2009, shortly after the grand opening in September and be finished in time for the 2010 operating season (May – September), but delays in securing all of the funding meant that a qualified design contractor could not be engaged until the spring of 2010, with a commitment to completion of Phase Two in time for the 2011 operating season. This timeline was largely met, with the exception of the installation of the predator wall, which was completed shortly after the centre opened on the May long weekend of 2011. The project was essentially delayed by one year due to challenges in securing funding, but the experience gained from a year of operation following Phase One proved useful in the long run.

In May of 2010, after confirming total project funding of \$350,000, NWISEA engaged the services of Ernie Tomlinson of Interpretive Design Inc. to complete Phase Two. Mr. Tomlinson worked together with a committee made up of NWISEA Board Directors and staff and a project management consultant. The committee reviewed the proposed exhibits and made modifications where cost, total design concept and philosophy of the client dictated.



Designer Ernie Tomlinson demonstrates how to use the microscope that is part of the 'Science Behind Salmon' exhibit

Phase Two: Exhibit Design and Installation Cost Summary

NWISEA budgeted \$300,000 for the design and completion of Phase Two exhibits. These exhibits were to include a theatre and mezzanine, oceans exhibit, science and salmon display and an interactive exhibit (The Redd Challenge). While the interactive exhibit that was proposed did not proceed, due to cost factors, a number of other interactive activities were established.

Cost projections for the individual exhibits ended up being quite different from the actual costs, but total cost for exhibit development and installation, including HST, amounted to \$319,053, very close to the amount budgeted for the overall project.

Phase Two: Marketing and Promotion

Overview of Marketing Efforts:

As this is the first year of operation, the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre staff elected to take a three-pronged approach to promotion, in conjunction with surveys and a review of participation patterns, to determine the best way to capture the interest and involvement of residents and tourists (recognizing that these can be two very different markets).

The first and most traditional approach was to engage in advertising media such as cable, radio and print media, and to target local audiences and well as external markets that have already been identified by Tourism North Island as strategic targets. Efforts were also made to target international tour companies already doing business in Port Hardy, particularly with Quatse Campground, as this very successful tourism operation has been in business for over 25 years and is affiliated with and adjacent to the centre.

The second approach was to focus on internet marketing, such as the website, blogs, links to other similar attractions such as the Telegraph Cove Whale Centre and nearby accommodations providers with well established and related markets such as the Quatse Campground.

The third approach was to carry out events that would promote the facility and its services. These events included a fam tour for accommodation and service providers in the regional tourism sector, a Rivers Day celebration that included a salmon barbecue, a 5km and a 10km run and various educational displays, and a grand opening featuring the newly completed exhibits produced in Phase Two of the interpretive centre's development. A special event, in partnership with the Vancouver Aquarium, was carried out in March of 2011.

Specific Marketing Initiatives:

Advertising:

Advertising campaigns included print media, weekly ads in the North Island Gazette throughout the month of June and participation in a seasonal 'Our Coast' feature series, radio spots during the first two months of operation (June-July,2010) and recurring cable spots on the community network.

Our Coast...
...is home to the salmon that are born and die here.

Experience what it's like to live in salmon's world at the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre

Salmon's World

Surround yourself with salmon and discover the animals and plants that share their freshwater and marine habitats, and challenges of survival on the coast.

Learn about the salmonid enhancement and habitat restoration programs carried out at Quatse Hatchery.

Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre

Adults: \$5
Youth: (5-18) \$2
Seniors: (65+) \$2
Family: \$10
Under Five: Free

Wednesday to Saturday - 10 am to 5 p.m., from mid May to September

All proceeds of the centre directly fund salmon stewardship, conservation and education on northern Vancouver Island.

Located at 8400 Byng Road next to Quatse River Campground in Port Hardy.

Sample of the 'Our Coast' advertisement placed in the North Island Gazette during the centre's first summer of operation

A light box was rented at Port Hardy Airport and featured prominently in the arrivals area, next to the baggage pickup.



Light box at Port Hardy Airport, featuring salmon centre activities and hours of operation

Other print media advertising included a three-panel brochure, featuring colour photos of the centre, and operating hours, admission fees and contact information to book the facility for tours and events.

The centre participated in Tourism North Island's (www.vancouverislandandnorth.ca) regional map and annual brochure.

A generic poster was produced for use at community events such as Port Hardy's Filomi Days and the regional fall fair and for use at strategic locations such as the ferry terminal in Port McNeill.

Samples of some of these print media advertisements are included as attachments to this report.

Publicity:

Various venues for free publicity were explored, including the issuance of press releases to the local paper, submission of promotional pieces to organizations like the B.C. Museums Association and Pacific Coastal's in flight publication, 'Soar.'

The centre brochure was distributed free of charge on the B.C. Ferry serving Port Hardy to Prince Rupert, courtesy of the Port Hardy and District Chamber of Commerce through their onboard infocentre.

In September, the Lieutenant Governor for British Columbia visited the centre and his tour attracted considerable attention and prestige to the centre.



Lieutenant Governor Steven Point (centre with glasses) toured the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre with the Rotary Club and a number of First Nations students in September, 2010

Adding to that prestige was the centre's receipt of Tourism Vancouver Island's 'Raising the Bar' award in September, 2010. The award recognized the centre's part in capturing the attention of travellers and making the North Island a more desirable travel destination.

Travel writers from Frommers (writer Chris McBeath visited the centre on May 17, 2010) and Lonely Planet (writer John Lee visited the centre on June 4,2010) toured the centre during the summer and may give consideration to including the facility in their guidebooks.



Grant Anderson accepts the Raising the Bar award from Lee Caldwell, on behalf of the salmon centre



NVISEA Chair Grant Anderson, shown here doing an egg take at the Marble River hatchery where he volunteers, was the recipient of a national recreational fisheries award for his work in enhancement and at the centre.

Frequent written correspondence with international tour companies via email was offered, through connections with the adjacent Quatse River Campground. Referrals through campground staff brought many visitors from the campsite and took advantage of the current marketing through the campground to attract a stable of visitors.

Staff also took advantage of links with other organizations' websites. These web references ranged from an educational blog on a small school's website (<http://mrswatson123.edublogs.org/2010/10/24/quatse-salmon-stewardship-centre/#comments>), to references on Tourism North Island's website (www.vancouverislandnorth.ca) to a blog put out by the B.C. Rural Communities Summit (<http://ruraltourismdevelopment.blogspot.com/2010/03/fish-tourism-and-education-quatse.html>). The Port Hardy Chamber featured the centre on their website (<http://www.ph-chamber.bc.ca/thingstodo.html>), and a local designer who produced costumes for the interpretive gallery also featured the centre on her website (<http://sewing.patternreview.com/article/042910>)

Partnering:

The centre worked with existing operations sharing a similar educational purpose to promote the gallery and activities and events. Facilities such as the killer whale interpretive centre in Telegraph Cove and the Port Hardy Museum would refer visitors to the salmon stewardship centre and, in return, the centre would promote these related facilities.

The caretakers of the adjacent Quatse Campground proved excellent and ongoing referrals to the centre and campers were regular visitors to the centre and offered word of mouth promotion of the facility.

One of our key partners, the Vancouver Aquarium, joined with the salmon centre on March 12, 2011 to offer a free day of access to the gallery and 'aqua van' exhibits. This event brought close to 400 young visitors and proved very successful in drawing attention to the salmon centre and the newly established oceans exhibit and mini-theatre. Joint events such as this will be used again in future and as often as possible to introduce local residents to the facility and the programs it offers.

Future efforts will be made to use the network of salmonid enhancement operations throughout the coast to promote the centre, including school tours and field trips.

Events:

Early in the season, a fam tour was hosted for local tourism accommodation and service providers. The event was attended by 50 operators, who were introduced to the centre and offered guest passes to extend to visitors. Two rental bookings were solicited at the event, and numerous inquiries regarding future event bookings were recorded.



Education coordinator Erin Wright talks to a group of accommodation providers during a June 22 familiarization tour at the centre

A subsequent Rotary function at the centre attracted 100 business people who also took brochure and posters promoting the facility.

Subsequent tours that brought profile and attention to the centre included a B.C. Mining Reclamation conference field trip, a Department of Fisheries and Oceans Community Advisors meeting, a number of Environment Canada meetings regarding the Scott Islands and a meeting of the provincial Ministry of Environment staff.

The community of Port Hardy was thrilled to host a welcome reception for delegates to the sixth annual B.C. Rural Communities Summit at the salmon centre. The centre offered a warm and interesting environment for the delegates who came from all over British Columbia to meet and share stories.



NVISEA Chair Grant Anderson and Port Hardy Mayor Bev Parnham proudly stand in front of the salmon aquarium at the centre during the B.C. Rural Communities Summit reception

NVISEA had planned to host a 'Rivers Day' celebration in September, 2011, but a rainstorm precipitated a flood the night before the event was to take place and washed out part of the trail and washed over the gazebo where the salmon barbecue was to take place. Plans are underway to host the first official Rivers Day celebration at the salmon stewardship centre this fall.

Tours:

The centre hosted numerous tours during the first year of operations. These ranged from local school tours (over 25 in total) to community group functions to corporate tours to public sector (local government and provincial ministry) functions associated with field trips and conferences.

Many of the tours resulted in membership and gift shop sales which will help fund annual operating costs.

NVISEA will be developing tour packages for schools throughout Vancouver Island. The salmon centre's enormous appeal as an educational facility and its proximity to a regional campground make it an excellent destination for school tours from other parts of the Island.



Participants in a mining reclamation conference tour watch as educational coordinator Erin Wright tells them about pink salmon broodstock

Signage:

Every effort was made to improve directional and facility signage for the benefit of visitors. The salmon centre participated in the Ministry of Transportation's 'blue sign' program and signs were placed at strategic locations coming north on Highway 19 and from the Bear Cove ferry terminal to the centre. Committee members did not feel that this provided adequate direction to travellers and tried to install larger signs on strategic private property locations en route to the centre, but have had limited success to date securing private property and even less success on Crown land, where provincial transportation ministry regulations do not allow private signage in the highway right-of-way.

Exterior signage was placed on the building, facing the Byng Road entrance and on the front door of the building. A welcome sign was established at the intersection of Coal Harbour and Byng roads, near the entrance to the centre.



This welcome sign directs visitors from the Coal Harbour road intersection to the salmon centre



Signage was installed on the back side of the building facing the Byng Road entrance



Signage at the front door was developed and installed by a local sign company

Surveys:

Two different surveys were conducted of visitors to the centre, one determining their place of origin and reasons for coming to northern Vancouver Island generally and the centre specifically, and another gauging how they learned about the centre, eg. website, brochure, word of mouth, print medium, etc.

The results of these surveys indicate that many of the visitors learn about the centre through accommodations providers in Port Hardy, and through the tourism infocentre. The majority of visitors who responded to the surveys come from Vancouver Island and the coast of British Columbia. The biggest attraction for visitors are the outdoor tanks and displays and guided tours.

Guestbook responses indicate that the majority of visitors are from coastal British Columbia and that the majority of these have come from Vancouver Island. Of the American visitors who come to the centre, the majority are from California and Washington State. Of the European visitors, the majority are from Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Overall, Canadians account for 76% of the current market, Europeans 13% and Americans 9%. This, to some extent, reflects the origins of campground visitors.

Group visitorship, including school and youth groups and tourist groups of over ten people, was highest in September, as was visits by seniors. Visits by adults peaked in July and August and family visits were highest in August.

Website:

During the spring of 2011, the association's website was extensively rebuilt to integrate the campground, hatchery and salmon centre operations. The home page, with a focus on 'Welcome to the Quatse' and featuring the 'Q' brand logo, invites visitors to 'one-stop-shop' by offering information on camping opportunities, salmon centre tours, admissions and operating hours and updates on the hatchery operations and administrative background on the parent organization, NWISEA.

The centre engaged Chameleon Creative of Campbell River to undertake the website development. This attractive website has content management, that allows the staff to make regular updates on events and activities. The site also offers the opportunity to sign up for membership, receive a newsletter, and has the capacity for future online sales from the gift shop.

Phase Two: Administration

NVISEA originally budgeted \$15,000 for administration of this project. These administration services were to include handling of project claims and coordination of committee work and contract management. The society carried on with the services of a project management consultant retained during Phase One.

As the project progressed, it became very apparent that one of the NVISEA staff, Erin Wright, was best suited over anyone who the exhibit designer could hire or contract to assist with the development of storylines and review and writing of text, for example. It was agreed that Erin would be seconded from her duties for NVISEA in fish production and her position filled by replacement staff for the duration of her work with the exhibit designer. This increased the administrative costs of the project to NVISEA significantly, and it was agreed to reduce the promotions budget from \$35,000 to \$30,000 and increase the administration budget from \$15,000 to \$20,000. This figure was still less than 6% of the total project cost and well below standard administrative costs for a project of this size.

Final costs for administration came in only slightly over budget at \$22,600.

Phase Two: Financial Summary:

In the original Stage Two application to ICET, NVISEA had projected that matching funds of \$175,000 would be raised from a variety of sources, including the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, BHP Billiton and Pacific Salmon Foundation, with in kind contributions from the Vancouver Aquarium and Orca Sand and Gravel. After considerable fundraising efforts, matching funds were in fact secured from the West Coast Community Adjustment Program (\$118,000), Pacific Salmon Foundation (\$10,000), Hayes Family (\$12,500, including the in kind donation of Corey's Wall), various community and corporate contributions and NVISEA's own financial resources (\$34,500).

A total of \$300,000 was budgeted for the design and development of Phase Two exhibits. \$319,053, including HST was invested overall in the design and development of Phase Two exhibits.

The ocean exhibit was projected at \$52,500 and was closer to \$74,965. The mini theatre and mezzanine were projected at \$155,200 and were to include a local video production. There weren't funds to complete the video and it was determined that funds could be more easily raised for this in future. Total cost for the theatre and mezzanine came in at \$85,000. The salmon and salmonid enhancement exhibit was projected at \$38,450 and this exhibit, after considerable modification, came in at \$28,950. The remainder of the exhibit funds were invested in the design and development of a variety of interactive displays, including a Jenga game, children's feltboard, predator touch-screen and exterior interpretive signage. These displays replaced the proposed 'Redd Challenge' interactive exhibit, which proved too expensive and did not ultimately fit with the committee's desired approach to communicating the message of healthy salmonid habitat.

The original projections were based on conceptual designs that were prepared at the end of Phase One. Further discussions regarding the integrity of the existing exhibits in relation to the

gallery space as a whole, the experience gained during the one full season of operation before Phase Two moved ahead, and further discussions amongst committee members regarding the messages that they wanted to convey about salmonid habitat and survival led to changes in the costs and nature of individual exhibits, but the overall cost of exhibits was very close to what was budgeted.

A total of \$26,708, including HST was invested in promotion and marketing efforts, well within the \$30,000 budget, and a total \$22,600 (no HST), just slightly over the budgeted amount of \$20,000, was spent on administration. Much of this administration time was invested in exhibit development and review.

Phase Two: Management Capability

A project of this scope and cost is a challenge for any organization, but particularly so for a non-profit society. NWISEA is fortunate to have not only a dedicated but skilled set of Board volunteers, volunteers, staff and contractors to ensure that things moved ahead in a timely and professional fashion.

Cash flow is always a factor for any organization, but particularly so for a non-profit society. NWISEA's long term tenure as a society, its long term management track record in fish production and campground management and the depth of its financial resources were crucial to the success of this project.

Non-profits should be very mindful of the impacts of HST on cash flow in projects of this scope. Paying up front costs of 12% for HST and only being reimbursed for these on an annual or quarterly basis makes carrying cash flow all that much more challenging and non-profits who receive a 100% HST rebate should know that \$350,000 can mean \$392,000 in terms of cash flow, as HST is considered 'flow through'.

Phase Two: Economic Benefits:

Early forecasts given in the Stage Two ICET application were that that this initiative would extend the time tourists stay on the North Island by one day, broaden the shoulder season during which visitors come to the North Island, encourage ecotours from locations throughout Vancouver Island and build on the markets already developed by the stewardship centre's partners, the Vancouver Aquarium and Quatse Regional Campground.

It is too early to confirm any of the forecasts given above with detailed visitor statistics, but Tourism Coordinator for Vancouver Island North, Joli White, commented as follows:

"Being located on the Quatse Loop nature trail supports the strong connection between the Centre and salmon habitat, making a visit to the Centre while walking the trail a natural combination. Events that capitalize on the Centre's partnerships (Aquavan, planned Rivers Day Celebration) have indicated that this type of activity will create even more of a draw to the Centre."

The proposal projected that 8-10 short term contracts would be generated for work on Phase Two exhibits and this was target was exceeded, as more than 30 contractors, including the following list of North Island contractors, were engaged either for work on the exhibits or to carry out promotional or administrative efforts.

Kathleen Cheetham
Formare Design

Jeanne Alley
Graphics West
Port McNeill Construction
Jim Noakes
Andrew Hory
North Island Glass
K&K Electric
Marshall Welding
Lisa's Pro Signs
Tina's Hobby Nook
Heather Brown
Web World
Your Garden Angel
Janke Services

The proposal also projected that this initiative would retain the four existing positions at the centre and have the potential to generate one new FTE, as a result of interpretive gallery operations educational initiatives. The four positions at the centre have been retained, and there remains the potential that an additional FTE will result from the operation of the centre's interpretive and educational programs. NWISEA will be hiring up to two First Nations' summer student this year to work during the operating season (May- August) and engaging a mature individual to work at the centre through to the end of September. As the centre develops tours and events and begins to generate additional operating revenue, NWISEA will consider taking on either employees or contractors to assist with the delivery of these products.

The proposal forecast the addition of 10 FTE's in the service sector in Port Hardy as a result of the addition of this Provincial calibre attraction. It is too early to document this increase in FTE's but, again, Tourism Coordinator for Vancouver Island North, Joli White, had this to say:

"The Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre has become an important part of the tourism product mix available in the region. It is a top attraction recommended to visitors through accommodation and activity operators, as well as the Visitor Centres, on Vancouver Island North. Earning the Tourism Vancouver Island "Raising the Bar" award at the 2010 Tourism Industry Awards recognized the Centre at a provincial regional level as a tourism product that captures the attention of travelers and increases the desirability of the Vancouver Island region as a destination. With an even broader reach, a visit to the Centre is recommended to virtually every travel writer that visits the area.

The type of recognition the Centre is receiving is a reflection of the facility and its high performance. This, in combination with the focus of other operators to extend their season, is beginning to show results. Tourism operators expressed a stronger September in 2010 than previous years, and the Visitor Centre stats from Port Hardy support this by showing an 8% increase from September 2008 and a 15% increase from September 2009."