



Northern Sunshine Coast Regional Signage Renewal Report and Strategy 2014



**Tourism Powell River
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Objectives

In April 2013, Tourism Powell River submitted an “Economic Readiness” application to Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICE T), to initiate the process of a signage review for the Northern Sunshine Coast region. In that report, the proponents noted that “Powell River, and most other areas of the Northern Sunshine Coast region, hold a wealth of natural and historical attractions that are not readily accessible, nor are they actively contributing to the growth of tourism, due to the lack of adequate and attractive signage.”

Tourism Powell River outlined a three-phase plan, the intent of which was to identify the scope of and support for the potential project.

The phases involved:

- 1) A comprehensive inventory of existing signage and gap analysis
- 2) A comprehensive regional strategy for signage through identifying key locations and categories, establishing a consistent visual identity through graphic design and choice of materials, and establishing priorities for allocation of funding and resources
- 3) Determination of immediate priorities, construction and installation of signage at three major sites as a demonstration project.

From April 2013 to January 2014, the proponents completed Phases 1 & 2.

Accompanying this report are the following documents:

- A photographic inventory of signage in the entire Powell River region, including every commercial and public sign.
- A book of maps indicating the location of all signs in the inventory with GPS co-ordinates.

These extensive support documents are designed to fill two roles; first, as a reference for potential funders, to illustrate the gaps identified by stakeholders; second, as a reference for planners as this project moves forward, and for other uses in the future.

This report also includes:

- A summary of current signage initiatives within the immediate and wider region
- A summary of the stakeholder consultation and gap analysis
- Priorities, as they were identified by stakeholders
- Preliminary design for the high-priority signs
- A list of potential funders

In the April 2013 application, the proponents noted that “Completion of the mapping, inventory and prospective site identification plan will provide tangible demonstration of having met the measurable

objectives stated in this project outline, and installation of the first signs as part of the delivery and implementation phase of the project will provide representative examples of the projected signage.” We are pleased to present the completion of the “Economic Readiness” tasks associated with this project, and we look forward to installing the first signs, based on the research and consultation we conducted over the past year. An application to the ICE-T Infrastructure funding program will be forthcoming as we seek partnership funding to proceed with this project.

State of Signage in Powell River

Through the completion of the signage inventory, the maps, the stakeholder consultation, and interviews with several bureaucrats, the proponents can offer a thorough summary of the state of signage in the region.

Our research demonstrates that:

1. Damaged, decayed and inaccurate signs are commonplace
The signage inventory catalogues all signs. Visually, it demonstrates that many of Powell River’s most important “branding” signs are in need of repair or replacement. Included on this list (raised by and confirmed by stakeholders) are the “Welcome” signs, the area maps at the Little River and Earl’s Cove ferry terminals, and many others.
2. The region lacks basic informational signs and wayfinding
Consultations with stakeholders and government officials highlighted for the proponents that some signs are simply missing. They include access point signs to the region’s top public attractions, such as the Sunshine Coast Trail, Powell River Forest Canoe Route, and Mowatt Bay Park.

The proponents of this project are not alone in working for more effective and appropriate signage for the region, and hope now to provide the leadership that will result in a co-ordinated signage strategy. Signs are created, maintained and regulated by several agencies. They include the City of Powell River, the Powell River Regional District, the BC Ministry of Transportation, and Tla'amin First Nation. While the Powell River Chamber of Commerce does not regulate signage, it has introduced an award for commercial signage, to encourage investment in attractive and neighbourhood-appropriate commercial signs.

The following are summaries of revisions to local signage systems undertaken by bodies separate from the proponents of this project.

Analysis: Outside of this project, there is a high degree of institutional interest within Powell River and entire Sunshine Coast region in improving the aesthetics and functionality of signage.

City of Powell River – Sign By-Law Revision

Source: Diana Collicutt, MCIP RPP, Planning Coordinator, City of Powell River

The City of Powell River's planning department is currently reviewing its sign bylaw, which was last amended in 2002. The draft changes will go before City Council early this summer; it will move through four readings; the public hearings will occur this fall; and the new bylaw may be passed before the end of 2014.

The bylaw controls all commercial signage, including fascia (signs attached to buildings) free-standing signs, small signs (such as drive-thru signs), and awnings. The city's engineering department is responsible for street signs and traffic signs, but these are simply planned according to universal professional guidelines.

The intention of the sign bylaw rewrite is to make the bylaw less ambiguous, thus less open to interpretation. Collicutt notes that signmakers and marketers have a strong interest in pushing the boundaries of regulations, to permit the biggest, loudest, brightest sign possible. The city, for aesthetic reasons, pushes back. However, unlike some small seaside cities with very strict character-enhancing sign bylaws such as Qualicum Beach, Collicutt says that Powell River's planning department does not intend to be that restrictive.

The new bylaw might include further limiting animated signs; banning illuminated signs along Marine Ave., in Townsite and Cranberry; and strengthen the clause that allows the city to remove obsolete signs. Generally, only large businesses ask for variances to the bylaws, she noted.

Signs have a great impact on the impression the city makes, Collicutt reports, so the city takes an interest in the "look" of signage, as well as its function.

"Aesthetics represent the character of the business, and of the neighbourhood," she said, noting that sign design follows trends. "They're identifying the people who are in this place. If signs are in rough shape or tattered or tired looking, there's a level of professionalism that's not being upheld. It's important to make us look modern and up to date and recognize who we are as a little town – a seaside community."

Collicutt welcomes citizen plans to use signs and sign regulations to brand Powell River's four neighbourhoods: Westview, Townsite, Wildwood and Cranberry. She is very open to working with Tourism Powell River to use signage to enhance the city.

Powell River Regional District – Parks and Beach Access

Source: Jason Gow, MLA, BEnds, Planner, Powell River Regional District

The PRRD administers non-municipal land throughout the Northern Sunshine Coast, plus Savary, Texada and Lasqueti islands. However, it has very little "owned" land, and works in partnership with the City of Powell River, the Lasqueti Island Trust, the BC Ministry of Highways and BC Ministry of Forests, to deliver services.

PRRD is only directly responsible for signage in regional parks – and so will control any signage Tourism Powell River places in regional parks.

In response to a recommendation in the 2010 PRRD Parks and Greenspace plan (<http://www.powellriverrd.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/PRRD-Parks-Greenspace-Plan-Text1.pdf>), planners started working with the BC Ministry of Transportation to mark 17 underused beach access points. By the end of 2013, 13 have signs and trails cleared. Another 12 sites will open over the next few years, for a total of 29.

“We’re getting lots of positive response,” said Jason Gow. “It does a lot in a waterfront community to provide access... to the waterfront.”

Southern Sunshine Coast

Source: Based on an interview with Emanuel (Mani) Machado, CAO, Gibsons



In 2012, ICET extended \$330,000 to the Gibsons Landing Harbour Authority Project, a revitalization of Gibson’s core tourism district. The total cost of the project was \$1.3 million. Part of that amount funded a signage project designed to attract visitors to Gibsons Landing.

Gibsons’ tourism sector suffers from “passing-through-without-stopping” visitor traffic. Machado noted that the shops, restaurants, galleries and coastline at Gibson’s Landing were being missed by many potential visitors, as they’re not visible from the new route of Highway 101.

In the fall of 2013, Gibsons erected about 50 signs directing visitors to Gibson’s Landing. This number includes six large signs, placed along the roads. The yellow and blue signs are branded with a seastar visual. The images correspond to other tourism marketing materials, aiding visitors to identify sites of interest.

Provincial Ministry of Transportation and the former S&A Signing Program

Source: Based on an interview with Clint Monson, Powell River Area Manager, Development Tech, BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

The BC MOT controls signage along Highway 101 stretching from Saltery Bay to Lund, and within the Powell River city limits along Highway 101, Thunder Bay Street, Marine Avenue, Arbutus Avenue and Lund Street.

Billboards are not allowed; neither are animated or other “distracting” signs such as realtor boards. Avoiding sign clutter is a concern. Private advertising is not allowed.

Since 1989, the MOT and Tourism BC have administered the Service and Attraction (S&A) program, in various forms. This is the province’s most ubiquitous tourism signage program; the blue and white signs dot highways throughout the province, and travellers can easily recognize upcoming attractions.



(left – Townsite Brewing “tours” sign along Highway 101)

This program is largely defunct. At one time, private businesses such as galleries could apply to have their own S&A sign. Many of these still exist, though the MOT no longer funds or maintains them. Now, individual tourism-oriented businesses can apply for a sign, but must pay for it themselves — about \$450.

The program was intended to replace the mish-mash of unauthorized tourism signage along provincial highways, with a tidy, recognizable, branded standard.

The changes to the S&A program put new pressure on agencies such as Tourism Powell River to coordinate signage in support of tourism.

Gap analysis

In the April 2013 application to ICE-T, the proponents’ strategy for determining regional needs involved a “consultation with other community stakeholders and partners to ensure that no opportunities for enhanced information and directional signage are being overlooked.”

In January 2014, the proponents hosted an in-person consultation event . Approx. 24 stakeholders attended, representing business, civic and regional government, citizen groups, the non-profit sector, and tourism. Those unable to attend were invited to submit a feedback form.

Attendees included: *see appendix 1 - attached*

A summary of stakeholder feedback:

1. The region is underserved by informational and directional signage, such as maps.
2. There is an urgent need / desire for both regional and neighbourhood branding.
3. Many current signs are shabby or defunct, and should be fixed or removed.
4. Some parts of the region suffer from over-signage – a kind of clutter, or visual pollution that detracts from the ability to read any one sign.

Participants in the stakeholder consultation expressed strong thoughts about the region’s signs. For example, the facilitator asked the group “What impression do Powell River’s signs give visitors?”

Stakeholders responded:

- They’re dated

- They're hodge-podge
- This looks like a fading small town
- "The first time I got off the ferry at Saltery Bay, I didn't realize there was still a 30 minute drive into town!"

Analysis: The proponents were surprised and gratified by the stakeholders' extremely strong interest in improving regional signage, and in participating in setting priorities. Many stakeholders stated that their businesses and agencies are negatively impacted by the state of signage.

Top government and emergency services concerns:

- Remove sign clutter (Diana Collicutt, representing the city, noted that the draft sign bylaw going to council this spring will include a clause strengthening the city's ability to deal with defunct signage and signage hardware)
- Improve directional signs
- Improve signs that "represent" Powell River to visitors, such as the "Welcome" signs.

Top business concerns:

- Use signage to theme the four neighbourhoods in the city and distinct areas outside the city limits
- Signs should be appealing and consistent
- Natural materials are preferred to internally illuminated signs
- Maps illustrating the commercial districts should be available in kiosks

Top citizen group and non-profit concerns:

- Signage should be consistent and easy to read by those with visual impairments and for whom English is not their first language.
- Salish language signs should also incorporate English
- Maps at bus stops

Top tourism concerns:

- Aesthetic: signs should be coordinated and modern-looking
- Map kiosks at the ferries, in the neighbourhoods, in Lund and on Sliammon, etc.
- There's a gap in signage at gateways, at historic and natural points of interest
- Remove the signage clutter

At the end of the stakeholder consultation, participants were asked to write about "sign gaps" in each region. This is what they noted:

- An info kiosk at the Texada Island ferry terminal waiting area
- An info kiosk at Ash and Marine (Highway 101) (in Townsite)
- Unique shape, colour and text for street signs in Townsite, to give the neighbourhood a sense of identity appropriate to its status as a designated National Historic District
- An info kiosk at the boardwalk in Lund

- Wildwood and Sliammon: need directional signage to parks
- Saltery Bay ferry terminal: need a map in a kiosk
- South of town and along Marine to Willingdon: points of interest signage with consistent aesthetics and character
- Joyce Ave: need directional signage to the recreation complex
- Remove sign clutter on Joyce Avenue

Priorities

As was noted in the April 2013 application, the proponents sought to explore the value of a large-scale, long-term signage overhaul for the Powell River region, with the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of significant recent investment in tourism and other emerging sectors. “The lasting legacy [of this project] to our region will be a cohesive and consistent visual identity supported by an inventory of signage that has been created with intensive stakeholder consultation to ensure that all the needs of the community and of the visitors on whom the region relies for economic diversification are met more than adequately,” reads the application.

“The tools that will be created through the mapping and inventory process will provide a dynamic plan for future signage expansion as needs emerge, and the effort invested now in the visual “branding” of the Sunshine Coast and all its communities will provide guidelines that should eliminate the uncoordinated, hit and miss signage that currently is in place.”

The proponents are now ready to propose primary and secondary priorities for investment in signage, based on the stakeholder consultation, signage inventory, mapping and knowledge of signage activities undertaken by the City, the Regional District, the Ministry of Transportation, and our colleagues on the Southern Sunshine Coast.

Primary priorities are as follows: *see appendix 2 - attached*

- **Ferry terminal signs at Earl’s Cove and Little River, Powell River’s two gateways**



Goal: to brand the Powell River region before visitors arrive; to convince visitors to stay and play in the region, and enhance their time on the upper coast.

(left – blue sign) former Little River Ferry Terminal sign in Comox was decrepit and the map removed by BC Ferries terminal staff in spring 2014. The structure has been temporarily re-purposed to showcase terminal construction and upgrading plans.



(left – wood sign) current Earls Cove Ferry Terminal sign is still in decent condition, but needs cleaning, refinishing, and a new updated map.

- **New welcome signs**

Goal: to enhance the visitor experience, civic pride, and new town image which no longer revolves around the mill and cold water diving.



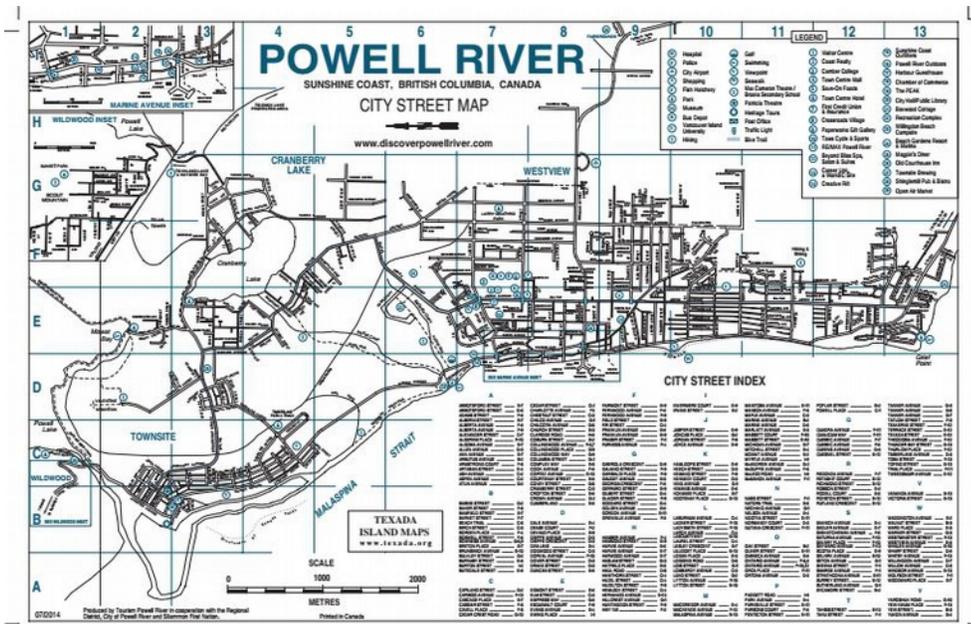
(left – current City welcome signs do not reflect the diversifying local economy, once fully supported by the mill)



(left – current City welcome signs do not accurately reflect the key tourism attractions that have shifted from cold water diving and fishing to the hiking Sunshine Coast Trail, mountain biking trails, kayaking, rock climbing etc)

- **Visitor information kiosks** including a map, attraction briefs, a shopping guide and other way-finding information, at Texada, Lund, the Westview waterfront, and Tla'amin First Nation

Goal: to engage visitors and locals on the ground, and invite them to a richer exploration of each neighbourhood and region



(above – new updated and geo-referenced tourism recreation map)

(left – new updated city streets map and business finder)

- Sunshine Coast Trail head access signage
Goal: Ease of access and to enhance user safety
- Signage for the Powell Forest Canoe Route
Goal: Ease of access and to enhance user safety
- Signage for Duck Lake Protected Area
Goal: Ease of access and enhance user safety

Secondary priorities are as follows: *see appendix 3 - attached*

- Outdoor interpretive signage for the coastal wilderness and for First Nations history
Goal: to respond to tourism surveys which indicate that wildlife viewing, hiking and First Nations cultural learning are key reasons for their visit; to enhance local identity and the visitor experience.
- Seawalk access signage and interpretive signage relating to historical First Nations presence in this particular area.
Goal: ease of access, enhanced visitor experience
- Millennium Park trail head
Goal: Ease of access and user safety
- Mowat Bay directional signage
Goal: ease of access
- Inland Lake directional signage
Goal: ease of access
- Neighbourhood branding (colour coded)
Goal: identity-building, to enhance visitor ease of negotiating the region

Preliminary design:

The proponents engaged local designer/carpenter/fabricator Colin McRae to create a preliminary foundational design for the large information signs. He proposed a package which features regional timber and a Pacific Rim-inspired frame. The maps and images will be printed on a weather-resistant aluminum-vinyl substrate, which will offer many years of professional, modern-looking communication with little maintenance. The sign will be illuminated at night by solar-powered LED lights (not shown in design below).



Funding:

We anticipate the total cost for completing our highest priorities to be \$126,500. We anticipate the total cost of completing our secondary priorities will be \$107,500. The total to complete all signage identified in this report would be \$234,000.

The numbers presented include planning, consultation, design, materials, construction and installation. Long term maintenance is NOT included in this cost.

We will be approaching the following agencies for financial contributions:

- Island Coastal Economic Trust – Infrastructure Program
- City of Powell River
- Powell River Regional District
- Rotary Club
- Powell River Community Foundation
- Western Forest Products
- Island Timberlands
- Powell River Community Forest Foundation
- Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- BC Highways BC Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure
- Powell River Education Services Society
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- First Credit Union

Conclusion:

From April 2013 to January 2014, the proponents undertook a sustained wide-ranging study of the state of signage in the Powell River, and beyond. The intention of the process was to gather information and gauge support for an overhaul of signage in the region.

At the time, proponents proposed that “Primary benefits to the community will be increasing the ease with which attractions and amenities are located and accessed, and celebrating the unique flavour of the community. Professionally produced and exceptional signage has the ability to enrich the lives of residents as well as providing increasing the ease with which attractions and amenities are located and accessed, or celebrating a necessary introduction to the area for visitors.”

Nearly one year later, we are pleased to offer ICET a package which, we are confident, demonstrates that Tourism Powell River and our community supporters are ready to move to the next phase of this project.

APPENDIX 1 – STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPANTS			
Tourism Powell River	Ann Nelson	thepatricia@shaw.ca	604-483-9345
Townsite Ratepayers & Townsite Brewing	Karen Skadsheim	karen@townsitebrewing.com	604-344-0127
Model Communities Project	David Morris	Dgm_mcp@shawcable.com	604-485-2688
Townsite Heritage Society	Peter Sansburn	thetownsite@shaw.ca	604-483-3901
Powell River Regional District	Al Radke	administration@powellriverrd.bc.ca	604-485-2260
RCMP: PR Detachment	Sgt. Rod Wiebe		604-485-8567
Powell River Museum	Bert Finnamore & Teedie Kagume	museum@powellrivermuseum.ca	604-485-2222
Department of Transportation	Clint Monson	Clint.monson@gov.bc.ca	604-485-3610
Parks & Rec: city and region	Bill Reid	breid@cdpr.bc.ca	604-485-8907
Nicholas Simons MLA	Nicholas Simons & Maggie Hathaway	Nicholas.simons.mla@leg.bc.ca	604 485-1249
Transition Town Powell River	Kevin Wilson	kevcombo@gmail.com	604-483-9052
Powell River Diversity Initiative	Sara Blum & Cynthia Barnes	prdi@prepsociety.org	604-485-2675
Sliammon First Nation	Clint Monson	Clint.monson@gov.bc.ca	604-485-3610
City of Powell River	Diane Collicutt & Larry Price		604-485-6291
Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society	Eagle Walz	walz@shaw.ca	604-483-9565
Powell River Regional Economic Development Society	Scott Randolph (now with the City)	srandolph@cdpr.bc.ca	604-485-6291
Community Living BC	George Sartori	George.sartori@gov.bc.ca	604-660-2100
Paramedics	Rob Southcott	rsouthcott@shaw.ca	604-485-9112

APPENDIX 2 – Primary Sign Priorities			
Sign	Location	Type	Estimated Cost
Vancouver Island	Little River Ferry Terminal	Gateway - Large Rec Map	\$10,000
Southern Sunshine Coast	Earls Cove Ferry Terminal	Gateway - Large Rec Map	\$10,000
Welcome	City limits – Hwy 101	Welcome – lrg vertical x 2	\$25,000
Visitor info - Westview	Westview harbour	Information kiosk	\$15,000
Visitor info - Lund	Lund harbour	Information kiosk	\$15,000
Visitor info - Texada	Blubber Bay terminal	Information kiosk	\$15,000
Visitor info – Saltery Bay	Saltery Bay	Information kiosk	\$15,000
Sunshine Coast Trail	Hwy 101 + roads	Trailhead Access Signs	\$7,000
Canoe Route	Hwy 101 + roads	Canoe Route Access Signs	\$7,000
Duck Lake A	Duck Lake FSR	Information kiosk	\$5,000
Duck Lake B	City roads	Directional signage	\$2,500
		Total	\$126,500

APPENDIX 3 – Secondary Sign Priorities			
Sign	Location	Type	Estimated Cost
Seawalk A	Hwy 101	Seawalk Trailhead Access	\$5,000
Seawalk B	Seawalk	Interpretive Signs	\$7,500
First Nations Interpretive	Sliammon, Seawalk, Townsite	Information kiosks	\$45,000
Millennium Park	Rec Complex, Willingdon Beach	Trailhead Access Signs	\$5,000
Mowatt Bay	City Roads	Directional Signs	\$2,500
Inland Lake	City Roads	Directional Signs	\$2,500
Neighborhood	Cranberry, Townsite, Westview, Wildwood,	Welcome Signs	\$40,000
		Total:	\$107,500