

ACCESS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

April - June 2001

PUTTING THE RIGHT FOOT FIRST: MAKING A GO OF A NEW BUSINESS

By Leigh Ratcliff



Vancouver offers some of the most spectacular scenery in North America and Kate Milne provides a way for runners, or those new to the area, to enjoy the scenery and stay healthy. The idea came to her through her own experiences of traveling to foreign cities and attempting to go for a run or exercise. She found it was very frustrating running outside on strange streets and the gym facilities were either full or inadequate. Her idea was to offer those traveling a way to exercise without the frustration: a guided run through the city.

After pondering the idea for some time, Kate has now made it a reality: **Pacific Running Guides**. The company is unique in that it that offers various types of running services in Vancouver, such as scheduled runs and one-on-one training.

Kate discovered a niche market of running enthusiasts who are extremely dedicated to the sport. As Kate says, "I challenge you to find any other sport that could get 44,000 participants (referring to the popular Vancouver Sun Run) out of bed on a Sunday morning!" Kate also found that local runners were also interested in their services and she was able to expand her services to cater to these customers, offering clinics and marathon training.

Pacific Running Guides is continuing to grow — now with seven people giving guided tours and future plans for expansion. Kate is looking forward to offering three-day trips to Whistler and eventually offering guided services in other major cities on the West coast, such as Portland, Seattle and San Francisco.

With the help of Western Economic Diversification (WD), she was able to develop a business plan and gain financing through the Self-Reliance Loan Program, a partnership between WD and VanCity that helps small businesses access alternative financing. The **VanCity Self-Reliance Loan Program** is designed to provide loans for projects not normally financed by traditional lenders, such as lines of credit for business operations.

Kate found the one-on-one attention at WD very valuable. She was given advice on her business plan and her Web site, as well as valuable resources for information. According to Kate, the team at WD was the "single most comprehensive resource for the business start-up phase of Pacific Running Guides."

You can visit Pacific Running Guides on the Web at www.pacificrunningguides.com or call (604) 684-6464, toll-free: 1-877-72 TO RUN (728-6786). ♣



NEW TOURIST ATTRACTION FEATURES ANCIENT RUINS AND OLD GROWTH FORESTS

By Leigh Ratcliff

Mystery, intrigue and beauty surround Pike Island/Laxspa'aws. This island, located in Prince Rupert Harbour, was home to native tribes over 1,800 years ago. Now you can take a guided tour of these ruins and admire the astounding beauty of the coastal rainforest on Pike Island/Laxspa'aws. Laxspa'aws is the native name for Pike Island.

The tour shows visitors three ancient village and petroglyph sites that are accessible via a well-groomed trail system. Great care was taken in building these trails to preserve the natural habitat, which calls your attention to the magnificence of the forest.

This is a must see for those interested in natural history and cultural education. The project will also bring significant benefits to the community by raising greater awareness of the immense history within this region. It is expected that people will travel from far and wide to get a look at this incredible site, giving the community the added boost it needs to grow.

Pike Island may also be incorporated into the curriculum of the local elementary school, giving kids an interactive way to learn about the history of the area. Other benefits for visitors include local accommodations and other tours such as kayaking, whale watching and bus tours. 🍁

INFAMOUS SHIPS BECOME UNDERWATER MONUMENTS

By Leigh Ratcliff

Get out your mask and snorkel because there is soon to be a new playground for those of you who enjoy scuba diving. **The Alberni Reef Society** has acquired four Chinese fishing vessels that were seized off the British Columbia coast. Yes, these are the same vessels that made headlines last summer for bringing in almost 600 refugee claimants.

These ships will make headlines again when they are sunk to form an artificial reef, creating a safe haven for marine life and a dive site. This is sure to bring lots of excitement to Port Alberni, as well as lots of tourists!

Currently, the Alberni Reef Society is preparing the ships to meet Environment Canada's Standards for Ocean Dumping. In spring 2001, two of these ships will take the plunge to their final resting place in the Alberni Inlet. This spot is great for novice and expert divers alike and an abundance of



marine life that can find homes on these ships.

The Alberni Reef Society hopes that people will visit from far and wide to get a look at what these reefs have to offer and Port Alberni will reap the benefits. Since diving is also a winter sport, this will help extend their tourist season.

Other benefits to the community include: acquiring the skills and tools to clean other vessels of this nature, spin-off industries such as boat charters and tours, and added interest in other Port Alberni tourism attractions, such as the McLean Museum, which also received **Community Economic Adjustment Initiative** funding. ♣

Columbia

TOURISM TAKES FLIGHT IN REMOTE AREAS

By Leigh Ratcliff

B.C. has much to offer for those who like to travel, and more small businesses are capitalizing on this by coming up with exciting new ways to entice tourists to their communities.

Tourism is a growing industry in B.C. that can significantly help communities hit by the downturn in the fishing industry to diversify their economies. With the vast number of activities available to tourists in these communities, B.C. is quickly becoming a key vacation destination. Given its growing importance to the B.C. economy, it is no wonder that coastal communities are looking towards this industry to rejuvenate their communities.

To encourage this transition, the **Community Economic Adjustment Initiative's** steering committee recently approved \$950,000 in non-repayable contributions towards tourism-focused initiatives, for an initiative total of more than \$7.3 million for this sector.



The Honourable Ron J. Duhamel, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Francophonie).

“Coastal communities are looking at new ways to diversify their economies. Many are opting to diversify into new areas, such as tourism and aquaculture,” said Ron J. Duhamel.

Under the initiative, WD is working with the rural Community Futures Development Corporations to build local adjustment capacity and provide assistance to community adjustment projects. 🍁