

Pender Harbour Revitalization Project



2004
Community Project Award Nomination
Community Futures Development Corporation of the Sunshine Coast

Submitted by

Pender Harbour Growth & Development Partnership

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How it Started

Pender Harbour is a small community on the Sunshine Coast which used to be a major tourist destination because of its natural beauty and its vibrant sports fishery. The natural beauty remains, but the decline in salmon stocks not only devastated the commercial fishery, it also dealt a crippling blow to the local tourism economy, much of which was dependent on recreational fishing. Boat charter companies and fishing resorts were losing business, and other local tourism operators were suffering. Also, cutbacks in forestry added further stress to community sustainability. There was little employment and the general feeling of malaise was mirrored in the look of the community itself. Buildings were deteriorating and the village centre area was not enticing to the few boaters who stopped to take on provisions and then went on their way. The people of the community knew they needed to act.

The local Harbour Authority had already ignited the spark by undertaking a major revitalization of the government dock in Madeira Park and creating Millennium Seafarer Park but that turned out to be just the beginning.



In 1999, the Pender Harbour Growth & Development Partnership (PHGDP) was born. It included representation from small business, the Chamber of Commerce, commercial fishers, fire protection & rescue, Sunshine Coast Tourism Association, Pender Harbour Health Centre, the Pender Harbour Community Club, the Pender Harbour Community School, Community Futures Development Corporation of the Sunshine Coast, and the community at large. Its mandate was to develop and implement strategies for the revitalization of the Pender Harbour area and its overarching vision was:

“To make the Pender Harbour area one of the finest places to live, work, and enjoy for residents and visitors alike. We will achieve this by enhancing the area’s visual appeal and encouraging economic growth, while preserving the heritage and uniqueness of the community.”

The group brainstormed several priorities, including:

- landscaping the village centre
- refurbishing the community hall
- creating a more inviting highway entrance to Madeira Park
- better parking and signage for visitors
- creation of a walkway through the village starting with a boardwalk through a local marsh
- creation of a combined museum and boat-building centre

An Industrial Adjustment Services Agreement (IAS), negotiated with the assistance of and in partnership with, Community Futures, provided a small budget for moving forward, but the vast majority of work was done by volunteers from the start. The IAS funding also made possible the leveraging of much more funding from a variety of sources. And thus began a process which, over the next few years, involved hundreds of people in the community, financial support from a variety of sources, and countless hours of volunteer labour.

What Took Place

In the Winter of 2000

- Students from the Landscape Architecture program at UBC carried out a planning project for Madeira Park, creating a plan for a walkway which would follow the course a spawning creek. The objective was to restore the creek, “daylight” portions that had been culverted, and make it a central feature of the village, crossed at intervals by wooden pedestrian bridges. A raised wooden walkway with observation platforms and ecosystem displays would give access to the wetlands at the saltwater end, while a floating dock was envisioned for the freshwater end, creating, together with the stream restoration, a unique environmental education resource and tourist attraction that will wend its way through the village.

- Together with the local Wildlife Society, PHGDP starting applying for funds for the Marsh Boardwalk component of the project, the initial step in the plan created by the UBC students.

- An army of volunteers led by a local landscaper, an ornamental rock worker, and an avid gardener started work on the Community Hall, and the “Bargain Barn” (a thrift shop run by the Auxiliary as a fund-raiser for the local Health Centre), and various ornamental rock features and gardens throughout the community.



Community members, inspired by the very visible changes taking place, donated materials and cash to cover purchase of materials, and even dropped by to wheel a barrow of earth, paint a wall, or pull a weed. Over 6,000 hours of volunteer time were logged, more than \$30,000 in cash was donated, and these efforts are continuing.

These before and after pictures illustrate the transition.

In the Spring/Summer of 2000

- PHGDP applied for and received \$8,731 in funding from the Provincial "Community Enterprise" funding program for Phase 1 of an Eco and Cultural Tourism Project, to begin the process of needs analysis and community consultation aimed at revitalizing the tourism industry.
- On June 3, 2000, the Pender Harbour Growth & Development Partnership together with Community Futures of the Sunshine Coast, sponsored a large-scale community event called *Visions of our Future*, to enable the community as a whole to give feedback on these ideas. The Partnership showcased its various projects and invited 15 other community-based organizations to do the same, communicating their "Visions for the Future" to the community at large and most important of all, listening to the hopes and dreams of community residents. Over 300 people attended the event, voicing a level of support for the initiatives that far exceeded expectations.

In the Fall of 2000

- A total of \$25,328 was received for the Marsh project from the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Fisheries Renewal BC, and the BC Real Estate Foundation; work on getting foreshore permits commenced.
- Completed Phase 1 of Eco & Cultural Tourism project, with direction from the community to move forward in 3 key areas, and prepared proposal for Stage 2

In the Winter/Spring of 2001

- Granted \$71,050 for Phase 2 of Eco & Cultural Tourism which was designed to develop the cultural tourism sector and marry it with the current eco tourism industry in order to make Pender Harbour a unique destination for visitors seeking to take part in outdoor activities while also learning a new hobby or enjoying a major cultural event. The aim of this project was to find ways to extend the tourism season and provide more and longer-term employment. The E&CT Project commenced with 3 working groups: Maritime Heritage Centre group; Theme-based Marketing group; Trails & Public Access group.
- A local women's group, called Women's Connection, started work on an oral history project. They are interviewing pioneer women of Pender Harbour, and taping and transcribing these interviews in preparation for publishing a collection of women's stories. These might also have application in the museum component of the Maritime Heritage Centre to be developed for Pender Harbour.

In the Fall of 2001

- Theme-based Marketing group of E&CT project initiated new marketing campaign for Pender Harbour and launched a new brochure (copy included).
- A new event, 1st annual Pender Harbour Fall Faire was launched; a new non-profit society has now been formed to convene this event on an annual basis and it is going into its 4th year.



- Initiated daffodil campaign, a program whereby individual and businesses purchase and plant daffodil bulbs in the fall to create a spring showing; each year, more are planted in anticipation of eventually creating a daffodil festival in the early spring.



In the Spring of 2002

- Created PH Living Heritage Society as a spin-off from Eco & Cultural Tourism project to carry on work of creating the Maritime Heritage Centre after E&CT project finishes
- PH Living Heritage Society held the 1st Annual April Tools Wooden Boat Challenge, which serves as a fund-raiser for the Maritime Heritage Centre and also creates a tourism draw in late April. This event has also become an ongoing festival and, together with the Fall Faire, helps to expand our tourism activity into the shoulder seasons.



In the Fall of 2002

- Completed feasibility study for Maritime Heritage Centre
- After much delay, Sunshine Coast Regional District and local MLA facilitated foreshore lease for Marsh project and construction began; grants provided materials and volunteers provided the labour; Wildlife Society recommended naming it Iris Griffiths Park, after a recently deceased community member who was a long-time supporter of wildlife and naturalist projects.
- Eco & Cultural Tourism project wound up, leaving a small legacy fund to help with community priorities, including creation of a new website. In the final report, it was noted that community members working on each of the sub-groups had accumulated over 3,543 hours of volunteer work, valued at \$70,860 to match the \$71,050 in funding which had been provided by the provincial government.

In the Winter/Spring of 2003

- Chamber of Commerce erected two new “Welcome to Pender Harbour area” highway signs south of Madeira Park.
- PHGDP hosted community brainstorming meetings to elicit project ideas for possible funding through Softwood Industries Community Economic Adjustment Initiatives funding program; PHGDP provided assistance with initial proposal development for two of these.
- PHGDP provided support to PH Seniors Housing Society to help them research alternative approaches to seniors housing for the community.



In the Spring/Summer of 2003

- Fishing boat was chosen as the symbol for a new Madeira Park highway entrance sign. A suitable boat was found, purchased, and work on restoring it commenced. The PH Living Heritage Society took the lead and organized community work parties. Local high school students created new window frames as a school project.



- Pender Harbour achieved 4 Blooms (second highest category of recognition) in the Provincial competition of "Communities in Bloom"
- Private collection of fishing and logging artifacts donated to PH Living Heritage Society to form basis of museum. Cataloguing of Mackay collection for Maritime Heritage Centre begins with help from Capilano College students and SCR D grant-in-aid

In the Fall of 2003

- Grand opening of Iris Griffith Park (Marsh Boardwalk project) in conjunction with 3rd annual Pender Harbour Fall Faire



- Stage 1 proposals submitted to SICEAI seeking funding for the Maritime Heritage Centre and Skookumchuck Interpretive Centre projects.
- Presentation of Seniors Housing Society's "Vision for the Future" to community, resulting in very positive response. Local developer comes forward to help with making the dream a reality.

In the Winter/Spring of 2004

- Skookumchuck Museum and Interpretive Centre project received approval and funding in the amount of \$225,000 from the Softwood Industries Community Economic Adjustment Initiative (SICEAI) of the Federal government. Work commenced on a Museum and Interpretive Centre located at the trail head leading into the famous Skookumchuck Rapids near the community of Egmont, just north of Pender Harbour. This will meet the need for improved visitor services in this community as well as enticing visitors to spend an extra day in an area sorely in need of a boost to its tourism industry.

In the Summer of 2004

- Installation of new entry sign at the Madeira Park highway turnoff will take place, incorporating fully restored fish boat
- Launch of new community website (www.penderharbour.ca)
- Communities in Bloom judges visit again in July; the community is hoping to gain 5 blooms and the right to go on to the National Competition.
- Students at the Elementary School, under direction of a parent/teacher group are growing evergreen seedlings and are planting 20 of them near the school as an ongoing learning project to understand the life cycle of evergreen trees.
- Several segments of on-location shooting by a film production company making a feature film are happening in Madeira Park in June 2004.
- New event, "Show 'n Shine" (antique car show) scheduled for August in Garden Bay.
- Local artist is painting mural in village centre
- Search for location and funding for Maritime Heritage Centre is ongoing.



Who was Involved

Within the community, the following groups and individuals made contributions:

- Pender Harbour Growth & Development Partnership
- Pender Harbour Community Improvement Foundation
- The Harbour Authority of Pender Harbour
- Pender Harbour and Egmont Chamber of Commerce
- Pender Harbour Fire Protection District
- Pender Harbour and District Health Centre Society
- Pender Harbour Tourism Association
- Sunshine Coast Trails Society
- Pender Harbour Community School
- Pender Harbour and District Wildlife Society
- Pender Harbour Golf Club
- Pender Harbour Garden Club
- Pender Harbour Music Society
- Pender Harbour Local 16 UFAWU-CAW
- Pender Harbour Living Heritage Society
- Pender Harbour Fall Faire Society
- Area A Society for Seniors Housing
- Egmont Community Club
- Skookumchuck Heritage Society
- Don Fraser (landscaper)
- John & Marlene Rees (rock worker & gardener)
- The family of the late Bert Mackey
- Mary Freeman-Cain
- and countless other individuals, groups, and businesses

From outside the community, funding and support came from:

- Community Futures Development Corporation of the Sunshine Coast
- Industrial Adjustment Services (IAS) program of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
- Provincial Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, partner for IAS agreement
- Students from the Landscape Architecture program at UBC
- Community Enterprise funding program of the BC Provincial government
- Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Fisheries Renewal BC
- The BC Real Estate Foundation
- Sunshine Coast Regional District
- Capilano College

The Result

In a relatively short period of time, a lot of the initial priorities have been achieved and substantial progress has been made on others. In addition, some totally unanticipated activities have been launched, simply because of the renewed sense of enthusiasm in the community.

These components - taken together - constitute a major economic revitalization thrust for Pender Harbour. Things started small but the dreams were big and to date, many of them have been realized. The momentum generated at the outset sustained efforts throughout the next few years. The most visible part – the village center beautification efforts - has inspired other individuals and groups to initiate new ideas and these in turn reinforce each other. The community already had a highly successful autumn Jazz Festival, but in 2004 another group launched the first annual Pender Harbour Blues Festival, and now the Pender Harbour Music Society (which initiated the Jazz Fest) has decided to begin planning for a Chamber Music Festival.

The tourism sector is improving. New commercial money is being invested in buildings. Some businesses are expanding. With all of this there is a corresponding rise in real estate values and sales.



Taken together, all these activities have resulted in no less than a “rebirth” of Pender Harbour. Residents have a renewed sense of community pride, visitors who return year after year comment on the differences, and new initiatives are popping up all the time, characterized by a “can-do” attitude that is changing the way people live their lives in this community. The enthusiasm is contagious and will sustain continued efforts in the future.



As Margaret Mead said,

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Note: A local Photographer has documented the metamorphosis of this community and has kindly made available a copy of a PowerPoint presentation which chronicles these and other critical transitions in the community's recent history. It covers everything from the initial work on revitalizing the government dock, the remarkable transformation of the village centre, various festivals and events, as well as the recent film shoot, the marsh project, and the mural project. A copy is included with this submission.

Nominator

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