



Annual Report 2019

Fernie Chamber of Commerce
102 Commerce Road, Fernie, BC

Prepared: May 2020

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Fernie Chamber of Commerce

VISION

A vibrant organization recognized for its valuable contribution to the community.

MISSION

Strengthening commerce in the Fernie area.

THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

The strong, valued voice of the Chamber ensures that your business is heard, and collectively we make a difference. Our board is always watching the business landscape and calling together stakeholders when concerns or opportunities arise.

What does this mean for your business? It means you can get busy building your business while the Chamber champions the needs of business in the community. It may be local issues, provincial, or federal. The Chamber works on knowing the needs of its members and going to bat for them. In the words of one member – *the Chamber has my back.*

#FernieSuccess #FeelinFernie

THREE LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – ANITA PALMER

It is my honour to deliver a review of the 2019 year for the Fernie Chamber of Commerce. I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their dedication, hard work and their commitment to the mission and goals of the Fernie Chamber in helping our members grow their businesses in the Fernie area.

2019 was certainly a pivotal year for our organization. We had a change in the Executive Director role early in the year and welcomed Brad Parsell onto the team in April whose quick learning helped us keep our momentum through this crucial role succession. I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of former Executive Director Patty Vadnais, and I want to thank all our current staff – Brad Parsell, Jesse Ross, Kalina Whitelaw and Sandra Robertson, for all their hard work in growing the services of the Fernie Chamber and the Visitor Information Centre in 2019. Your dedication to our local business community is always appreciated.

Back on November 26, 2018, the Fernie Chamber Board of Directors gathered for a strategic planning session with a view to setting some new goals for 2019. The strategic plan that came out of this session identified several key areas of action for the Fernie Chamber. Top of mind were the labour shortages experienced by many Fernie businesses and the need to attract more workers to our area. Much discussion was had on how best to address this issue as a Chamber. The other major initiative that was agreed we embark upon, was the opening of a coworking space in downtown Fernie. The demand for such a facility was demonstrated in a feasibility study commissioned by the Fernie Chamber in 2017.

These big picture strategic priorities guided the Fernie Chamber through the 2019 calendar year.

Access to a stable and reliable workforce continues to pose a challenge for local businesses and is a major barrier to our local economic development. This issue has been clearly identified in places such as Fernie's Tourism Master Plan engagement process. During 2019 the Board adjusted their approach to the issue acting on a staff recommendation to explore a workforce attraction website and online job board managed by the Fernie Chamber. This project received funding from the Province of BC's Rural Dividend Fund in late 2019, and we look forward to launching this initiative at our 2020 AGM.

There was significant progress on another long-standing Fernie Chamber project – the establishment of a coworking space in downtown Fernie. In March 2019, the Fernie Chamber was informed by the Province of BC's Rural Dividend Fund that funding in the amount of \$77,430 was approved for the coworking space project. After exploring many options, a decision was made at the first Board meeting of 2020 to sign a lease at 342 2nd Avenue in downtown Fernie – the historic home of the Fernie Free Press newspaper. The Free Press has agreed to stay on in the building as a founding member of the new coworking space, and we look forward to further exciting announcements regarding the grand opening of this facility later in 2020.

Of course, all the usual programming and events put on by the Chamber continued apace in 2019. Despite some frigid weather, Griz Days 2019 was a great success raising money as it does every year for local charities and organizations. The 2019 Fernie Show 'n' Shine brought all the spectacle to main street with over 70 cars participating, and the 2019 Fernie Business Excellence Awards were sold out once again. These community events and animation are a win for our local economy and are a great way to feature local businesses.

The Fernie Chamber of Commerce remains committed to strengthening our businesses by providing education and networking activities such as lunch & learns, workshops, information sessions, and the always-popular Business Banter & Beer (BBB) networking events.

The Fernie Ambassador Program continues to offer a dynamic vehicle to enhance customer service and visitor messaging across our businesses. We had another 124 certified Fernie Ambassadors in 2019 – including most of the staff from the City of Fernie.

Internally, the Fernie Chamber of Commerce remains in a strong financial position as it prepares to embark on some major capital

projects in 2020. We continue to be a membership-driven organization that listens to its members and advocates strongly on your behalf.

Looking forward – we have never been faced with so much uncertainty and hardship as we are today. The global COVID-19 pandemic, and the various response measure to it that were implemented in mid-March have changed the way we do business forever. Now more than ever is a time to come together as a business community. Our economic recovery will be slow and uncertain, and many of our members will be vulnerable for a long time to come. Know that the Fernie Chamber of Commerce is working tremendously hard in the background on your behalf. We are here as a resource for you as you navigate your own organizations through these unprecedented waters. But history has shown we are a resilient town, and we will come back stronger than ever.

Wishing you all the best,

Anita Palmer

Board President
Fernie Chamber of Commerce

FERNIE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2019 IN REVIEW

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hosted nine information sessions and professional development workshop opportunities for our members, to help strengthen their businesses.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Held ten Fernie Ambassador sessions with 124 participants from the Fernie community. The net promoter score for the program based on participant surveys remains high at 9. This program continues to improve Fernie's overall customer service levels.

BUSINESS BANTER AND BEER

Co-hosted ten Business Banter and Beer (BBB) networking events with member businesses showcasing their space. These continue to be a popular networking opportunity for our membership.

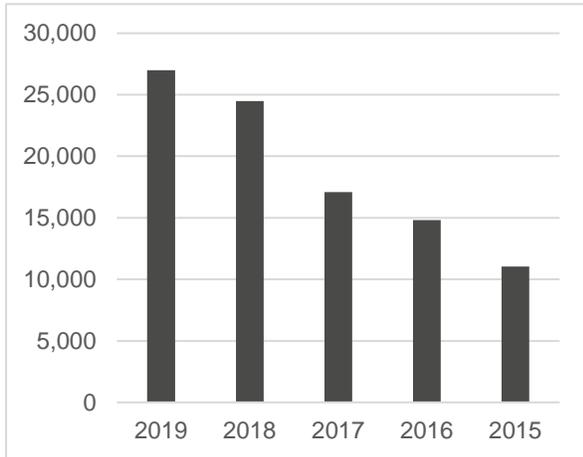
EVENTS

- Show n' Shine - Well attended and successful despite inclement weather
- Griz Days - Raised \$5,900 for community groups
- Business Excellence Awards - Sold out with over 150 people in attendance

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Funding secured for new Coworking Space in Fernie
- Funding secured for new workforce attraction website project titled WorkInFernie.com
- Improvements to visitor experience at Fernie Visitor Information Centre

2019 IN REVIEW: VISITOR SERVICES & VISITOR INFO CENTRE



Number of annual visitors recorded in the Fernie Visitor Information Centre year-over-year

The Fernie Chamber of Commerce continues to see great success with its visitor services program. The Fernie Chamber has a partnering agreement with the City of Fernie (and Destination BC) to provide visitor services in Fernie and is part of a province-wide visitor services network. The Fernie Visitor Information Centre (to the north of town adjacent to Highway 3) has seen a steady increase in visitation over the past five years.

In the fall of 2019, some further renovations and improvements were carried out in the interior of the Fernie Visitor Information Centre to create an enhanced visitor experience. Some additional office space was created for the staff of the Fernie Chamber and Tourism Fernie (who both operate out of the building) and will be better situated to serve the needs of their memberships and local businesses. An improved gift shop and new displays for visitor information were installed at the end of 2019. We hope to add interpretive displays featuring downtown Fernie and the Ktunaxa people in 2020.

As part of the visitor services program, the Fernie Chamber also operates a pop-up visitor information tent at key community events. In 2019, trained Fernie Ambassadors provided visitor information at Wednesday night summer socials, Griz Days, the Chautauqua Fall Festival, Wam Bam Dirt Jump Jam, and the Show n Shine car show, among others.

2019 IN REVIEW: VISITOR SERVICES & VISITOR INFO CENTRE



Brochure racks were upgraded to allow for on the floor storage.



New sweatshirts and T-shirts designed.



A new cougar added to the natural history collection

2019 IN REVIEW: COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Chamber is proud to be a community partner delivering Griz Days and Show n' Shine and The Fernie Business Excellence Awards.

Show N' Shine 2019

The Show and Shine held at the end of Wapiti weekend brought out around 70 cars. This remains a popular event for visitors, businesses, and local with over 1,000 people in attendance throughout the day. In 2020 this event will continue however it will be organized by the Royal Canadian Legion Fernie branch, who are very excited to be taking this event on as a community builder and organizational fundraising opportunity. The Chamber will provide support to the new organizers to ensure this event continues to be a success.



Griz Days 2019



The 42nd staging of the Fernie Griz Days festival took place March 1-3, 2019 and featured events across town and at Fernie Alpine Resort.

The Pub Crawl and Extreme Griz continued to be popular draws, and the parade was a success despite the bitterly cold temperatures.

The event once again had a large community impact raising about \$6,000 for community organizations including Fernie Food Bank, Fernie Child Care Society, Connections/kindergym, Christian Youth Association, Wildsight Elk Valley, Fernie Friends for Friends, Fernie Heritage Library, Elk Valley Dolphins Swim Club and BC SPCA.

Business Excellence Awards 2019

The 10th annual Fernie Business Excellence Awards took place October 25th, 2019 at the Best Western Plus Fernie Mountain Lodge. A hugely successful sold-out event with 153 people in attendance representing all sectors of the Fernie business community. This is not only The Chamber's biggest fundraising events of the year; it is important to pause from the daily grind to connect with and celebrate all of our amazing local businesses who contribute so much to our community.



2019-2020 FERNIE CHAMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anita Palmer	President	College of the Rockies
Norman Fraser	Vice President	Teck
Jaime Hanson	Treasurer	Return to Earth Concepts / GPI Accountants
Graeme Nunn	Past President	Rockies Law
Mark Troniak	Director-at-large	Fernie Brewing Co.
Andrew Hayden	Director-at-large	Fernie Distillery
Sydney Salvador	Director-at-large	The Chopstick Truck
Dennis Djonlich	Director-at-large	The Vogue Theatre
Ryan Frazer	Director-at-large	Elk Valley Remax
Andre Labine	Director-at-large	Twisted Timber Bed & Breakfast
Mel Mackay	Director-at-large	Cinch Homes
Derick Berry	Director-at-large	Fernie Central Reservations

PARTNERSHIPS

Canadian Chamber of Commerce
British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
British Columbia Chamber Executives
City of Fernie
Tourism Fernie
Fernie Tourism Master Plan Champions Group
Kootenay Rockies Tourism
Destination BC
Columbia Basin Trust
Elk Valley Economic Initiative
Imagine Kootenay
Regional District of East Kootenay
Fernie Alpine Resort
Resort Development Strategy Advisory Working
Group (City of Fernie)
Canadian Adaptive Network

STAFF LISTING

Brad Parsell	Executive Director
Kalina Whitelaw	Membership Services Coordinator
Jesse Ross	Visitor Services Coordinator
Sandra Robertson	Visitor Information Counsellor
Lori Bradish	Griz Days 2020 Coordinator (winter 2019-20 contract position)
Denna Valcourt	Visitor Information Counsellor (summer 2019 contract position)
Austin Cardell	Visitor Information Counsellor (summer 2019 contract position)

THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 VIRTUAL AGM SPONSORS



Island Lake Lodge

Patti's Party Tent Rental