

EDG Bulletin Column

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Nanaimo Museum Celebrates 1 Year in New Location

July 18 marked the first anniversary of the Nanaimo Museum's new home in the brand new Port of Nanaimo Centre on Commercial Street downtown. To celebrate, staff opened the feature exhibit "Rocket" Richard: The Legend – The Legacy, announced the 2009 Sports Hall of Fame inductees, and helped cut the ribbon which opened the new Serious Coffee shop adjoining the museum.

The Nanaimo Museum first opened its doors in 1967, and much has changed since then. Starting out as a volunteer run organization, the museum now employs eight and a half full-time professional staff trained in their field and has been able to diversify, offering venue rentals, educational programming, historic pub tours, cemetery tours and a gift shop as well as quality permanent and travelling exhibits.

The opening of the "Rocket" Richard exhibition about one of Canada's hockey legends, organized by the Canadian Museum of Civilization, was a milestone for the museum. The previous facility was not suitable for such exhibits, which have strict space requirements and environmental standards. Since the new facility was built to these standards, the public can now learn about the exciting life and career of one of Canada's greatest sports heroes, and enjoy future exhibits of this calibre. Adding to the excitement on July 18, the 2009 Sports Hall of Fame inductees were announced. The Sports Hall of Fame is located in the lobby of the museum and pays tribute to Nanaimo's most accomplished athletes, teams, coaches, and others from the Nanaimo area who made a significant contribution to sport here or elsewhere. Other permanent exhibits in the museum feature the history of the harbour, Hudson Bay Bastion, and Snuneymuxw First Nation. Next year, a coal mine exhibit will open including a tunnel to give visitors an interactive experience of Nanaimo's early beginnings as a coal mining town.

According to the General Manager of the Nanaimo Museum, Debbie Trueman, there was a huge spike in visitor numbers and gift shop sales in 2008. She attributes this partly to the downtown pedestrian traffic from shoppers and conference-goers at the new location, as well as the positive exposure from venue rentals. "The museum offers a unique venue alternative for your next event," she says. "So far we have had everything from 300-person Christmas parties to business seminars and sit-down dinners."

A key component to the economic diversity and sustainability of any community is arts and cultural infrastructure. It increases the quality of life for residents and attracts and sustains a skilled workforce for existing and new businesses from which to draw. Having worked hard to establish the new location in the Port of Nanaimo Centre, the Nanaimo Museum is a positive contributor to Nanaimo's economy and also to the community's downtown revitalization efforts.