

EDG Bulletin Article
Economic Benefit of Festivals
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Local festivals do much more than generate economic spinoff for Nanaimo businesses. They also cultivate our labour force by providing valuable volunteer experience, foster our community identity, and create a positive reputation outside the region.

Some of the best festivals in Nanaimo are put together by EDG champions who work hard to ensure our community offers social and economic opportunity. Ed Poli, past chair of EDG, is the secretary of the Nanaimo Blues Festival. Nicole Langois, active member of EDG, is the executive and artistic director of L'Association des francophones de Nanaimo and the annual Maple Sugar Festival. These festivals, as well as others such as the Dragonboat Festival, Children's Festival and Shopping Festival, all contribute to Nanaimo's overall economic well-being.

The 2007 Maple Sugar Festival alone generated approximately \$1.2 million into Nanaimo's economy, with 8,000 people in attendance. Last year's Children's Festival generated another half million dollars, attracting over 9,000 people to the downtown. Another way festivals support the Nanaimo economy are by providing temporary, permanent, and contractual employment opportunities in areas such as catering, entertainment, event planning and child care. The Maple Sugar Festival employs over 140 people annually; the Children's Festival employs over 80.

Through local festivals hundreds of volunteer opportunities are created annually, giving those entering or re-entering the workforce valuable training in areas including hospitality, child care, event organization, audio visual, traffic control, marketing and promotion, and even supervision and management skills. 240 volunteers are recruited each year for the five-day Maple Sugar Festival, and 110 are recruited for the annual Children's Festival. Aside from providing work experience, volunteering also creates a sense of community pride. When asked what other positive impacts the Maple Sugar Festival has on the community, Nicole Langois answered "It brings the community together. Last year 55% of our volunteers were unilingual Anglophone." This annual event showcases French Canadian culture and invites all residents to come together and share in their traditions.

As well as being promoted within Nanaimo, many festivals target outside regions in their marketing campaigns, with huge success. Because of marketing targeted toward primarily Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and next the remaining western provinces, 41% of 2007 Maple Sugar Festival attendees were from out of town. This media attention has a positive impact on the way Nanaimo is viewed outside of the region, and brings visitors back year after year.

Local festivals do much for the Nanaimo economy: they create spinoff for our businesses and provide training for our invaluable work force. Our unique and successful festivals such as the Marine Festival and Blues Festival also help place Nanaimo as a festival destination on Vancouver Island, and ensure Nanaimo continues to be one of the most desirable, livable small cities in North America.