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Positive Trends in Destination Marketing, Small Business Support and Visitor Services released by CVEDS

Comox Valley, BC: After a busy tourist season, Comox Valley Economic Development & Tourism (CVEDS) has collated exciting trends and outputs that have resulted from efforts and projects undertaken since the spring across key areas including small business support, destination marketing and visitor services.

The 2017 BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival, held in June, demonstrated unprecedented growth across all facets, establishing itself as western Canada's largest seafood Festival. The Festival expanded from 45 events in 2016 to over 70 events & tours in 2017, boasting 45 BC and international chefs that participated. CVEDS secured more than \$200k in leveraged dollars to support marketing and event development and saw notable increases across all key performance marketing indicators including 75% increase year over year clicks to the Festival microsite, 78% increase in online contest entries, 12%+ increase in calls to the Visitor Centre, \$1M in earned media coverage and a 19% increase in Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT, formerly known as the Additional Room Hotel Tax).

Visitor numbers at the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre, located on the Comox Valley Parkway, continue to grow with true visitor numbers increasing by 14% and over \$46k in tour and event online bookings occurring via its booking engine since the start of the year. In August alone the Centre saw over 5000 visitors, having welcomed over 170k visitors through its doors since opening in early 2012.

Moving into the fall, with October being Small Business Month over 17 events and workshops are being held via CVEDS' "Business Counts Workshop Series" with a range of partners including Small Business BC, Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of International Trade, Innovation Island Technology Association, Certified Organic Association of BC, Small Scale Food Processors of BC, the Comox BIA and MNP. The sessions reflect focus areas that are outlined in CVEDS 2017 Strategic Plan from tech, tourism, agrifood, and exporting, to small business enhancement.

Supporting regional businesses who are exporting continues to be a focus for CVEDS which has recently been renewed for an additional 6 month term as an Export Navigator Community. This is a partnership with the Ministry of International Trade, Small Business BC, and 5 other BC communities to support connecting participating businesses to key market information, export programs, financial services, and business development experts.

To review CVEDS 2017 Strategic Plan and for more information on these and other initiatives visit InvestComoxValley.com.

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