

WHERE THE COMMUNITY,
THE COAST, AND CULTURE MEET.

TOURISM NANAIMO

COMMUNITY SHARED VALUE REPORT

Prepared by Tourism Nanaimo | Year One of the 5-Year Destination Development Strategy
Reporting Period: January 1 – December 31, 2025



NANAIMO



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge with gratitude that our work takes place on the territories of the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as, and Stzuminus people. Tourism Nanaimo is committed to advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, with a focus on those directly tied to the tourism sector. We support Call to Action 92 by actively seeking meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities, ensuring that tourism contributes to economic reconciliation and respects Indigenous rights and protocols. We support Call to Action 79 by ensuring that Indigenous histories and living cultures are shared in close collaboration with First Nation governments, honouring their guidance on how their stories and teachings are shared.

INTRODUCTION

OUR TOURISM STRATEGY

In 2024, Tourism Nanaimo worked with local residents, businesses, Snuneymuxw First Nation, community organizations, and the City to build a long-term plan for tourism. The result is a 5-Year Destination Development Strategy that serves as the shared roadmap for how tourism can benefit everyone who lives in and visits Nanaimo.

2025 was Year One. It was also Tourism Nanaimo's first full year of independent stewardship of the Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT), following the transition from the Nanaimo Hospitality Association.

The Strategy is built on a simple idea: tourism should work for the whole community — not just the industry. Delivering on that requires the partnerships of local businesses, Snuneymuxw First Nation, the City of Nanaimo, regional and provincial partners, and residents working together.

OUR VISION

A welcoming, year-round, culture-led coastal destination where Snuneymuxw heritage, resident pride, and authentic local experience define how the world meets Nanaimo — and how Nanaimo meets the world.

OUR BRAND PROMISE

Welcoming. Bold. Inclusive.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARDS

The Strategy sets out five goals to guide our work through 2030:

- Diversify Nanaimo's tourism offerings to create a year round visitor economy and strengthen resident pride of place
- Become a premier accessible and sport-tourism hub by 2030
- Strengthen industry collaboration and align development across sectors
- Elevate Nanaimo as a vibrant cultural hub and premier destination for meetings and events
- Establish Nanaimo as a model city for inclusivity and community cohesion with Snuneymuxw First Nation partnership at the centre



HOW WE GET THERE

FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

1.

BETTER TOGETHER

Industry collaboration, partner toolkits, joint campaigns, and shared infrastructure that lift every operator.

2.

BE A STRONG ALLY

Snuneymuxw partnership, Indigenous-led tourism, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, accessibility, and DEIA in every decision.

3.

BUILD OUT THE REAL NANAIMO

Product and experience development that reflects who Nanaimo actually is — coastal, culture-led, year-round.

4.

ELEVATE THE DESTINATION

Brand visibility, meetings & events, sport tourism, and the storytelling that puts Nanaimo on the map.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Every action in this strategy is guided by four cross-cutting commitments — the standards we hold ourselves to in everything we do.

DATA-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

Invest in capturing and analyzing quality data at every turn

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

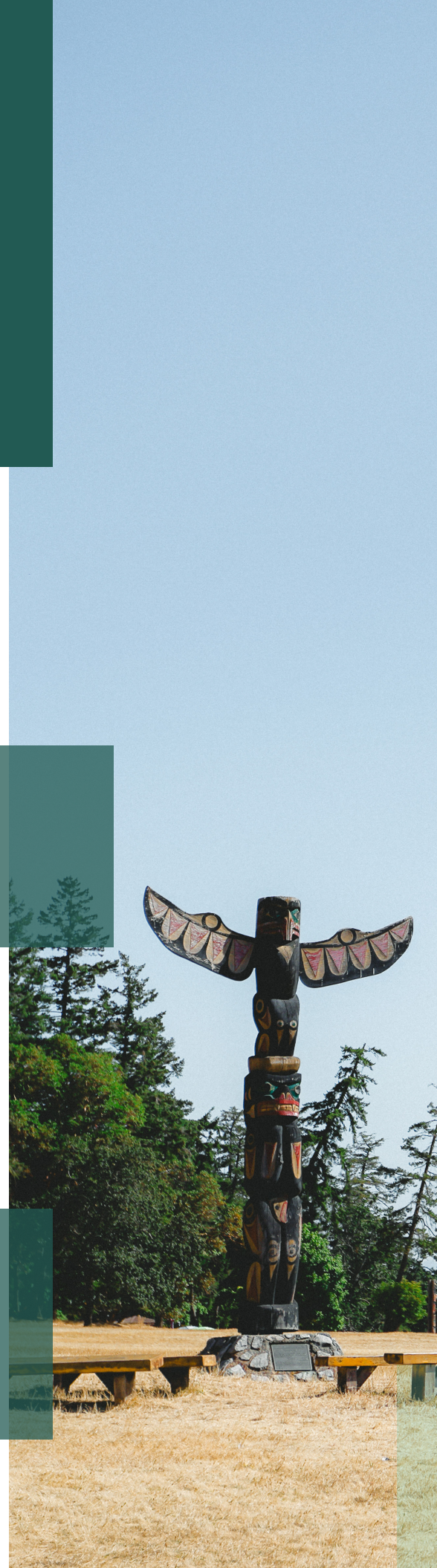
Measure resident sentiment and centre community voice

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Protect the natural environment and the coastal place that draws people here

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA)

Activate in every program, every department



THE STATE OF TOURISM IN NANAIMO

Year One of the 5-Year Strategy | Year One of MRDT Stewardship

2025 was not measured by volume of activity. It was the year Tourism Nanaimo's work shifted from tactical promotion to strategic destination management. The single clearest learning of the year: demand for Nanaimo is not seasonal — perception is. When experiences are framed authentically and told through trusted voices, the off-season converts.

Across every measured channel, authenticity, inclusion, and resident voice consistently outperformed branded promotion. That finding is now embedded in the 2026 strategy and in how Tourism Nanaimo guides industry partners.

YEAR ONE HEADLINES

First Full Year of Independent MRDT Stewardship Delivered

Operational independence, audit progression, dashboard reporting, financial transparency

Two New Dashboards Launched at Year-End

Industry Dashboard (Occupancy, ADR, RevPAR, Tourism Spending, Visitor Arrivals, benchmarked to 2019) and Organizational Dashboard (programmatic performance since 2022)

Three Survey Programs Scaled Materially

Visitor Experience Survey (280 responses), 2SLGBTQ+ Travel Experience Survey (300 responses, three-year trend now established), Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (12 → 46 responses YoY, >200% growth)

Two New Microbrands Launched

Meet in Nanaimo and Play in Nanaimo — with dedicated destination videos, toolkits, and sales infrastructure

Snuneymuxw Partnership

Continued foundational work on an SFN-led Indigenous Tourism Marketing; Snuneymuxw Days and Saysutshun Shoulder Season delivered as integrated multi-channel campaigns; Ay Lelum Coast Salish art permanently installed at the Visitor Centre

Inaugural Sport Hosting Grant Deployed

\$45,970 invested across 14 events delivered \$3.9M economic impact (an approximate 85:1 return)

ECONOMIC VALUE

\$371.6M

TOTAL TOURISM SPENDING IN
NANAIMO (2025)

+3.7% YoY | +57.7% above 2019
pre-pandemic baseline

\$180.50

AVERAGE DAILY RATE (ADR)

+5.5% YoY · +25.1% above 2019

\$121.31

REVPAR

+10.2% YoY · +12.8% above 2019

67.2%

HOTEL OCCUPANCY

+4.35 pts YoY · recovering toward
73.5% 2019

\$16M

ECONOMIC IMPACT FROM
CONFERENCES

50 conferences hosted (+25% YoY) ·
32,163 delegate days

194%

GROWTH IN CONFERENCES
SINCE 2023

17 conferences (2023) → 50
conferences (2025)

\$891K

GROUP INCENTIVE PROGRAM
IMPACT

2,807 actualized room nights · 6 groups

\$3.9M

ECONOMIC IMPACT FROM SPORT
HOSTING

14 multi-day events on a \$45,970
investment

\$187.5K

DESTINATION BC CO-OP
FUNDING SECURED

Delivered with SFN, Petroglyph
Development Corp., Saysutshun,
Gabriola, YCD, NPC

66,842

OUTBOUND CLICKS TO
INDUSTRY PARTNERS

From 19,279 unique users
— direct traffic delivered to
local businesses

Q1 2026 leading indicators confirm the trajectory: hotel occupancy +10.32% YoY, RevPAR +13.5%, and website sessions +118% over Q1 2025.

SOCIAL VALUE

Tourism in Nanaimo is a coalition function. Year One of the Strategy was deliberately built to embed Tourism Nanaimo across the destination ecosystem — local, regional, provincial, national, and within the Snuneymuxw First Nation relationship — so that the social value of tourism is felt across the whole community.

300

RESPONSES TO 2SLGBTQ+ TRAVEL EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Scaled from 180 (2023) → 200 (2024) → 300 (2025). Three-year sentiment trend now established.

4.07 / 5

"NANAIMO IS 2SLGBTQ+ FRIENDLY"

Strong growth from 3.65 (2023) → 3.77 (2024) → 4.07 (2025). Would Recommend score: 4.00 / 5.

80%

VISITOR TRIP SATISFACTION

First-time visitor positive experience rate also 80% (60% "Very Satisfied")

4 nights

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

Overnight stay rate 64% (+21 pts YoY) — directly delivering longer stays

+10,182

NET NEW SOCIAL FOLLOWERS IN 2025

Across IG, FB, TikTok, LinkedIn — 72,387 total followers

757

VOLUNTEER HOURS ACROSS COMMUNITY EVENTS AND ACTIVATIONS

10,998

VISITORS TO THE NANAIMO VISITOR CENTRE

+9.7% YoY — outperforming Comox (-10.7%) and Port Alberni (-44.1%)

47

AMBASSADOR VOLUNTEERS

Across 15 community events and 3 cruise visits

INDUSTRY CAPACITY BUILT FOR THE COMMUNITY

1 Industry-Wide Engagement Workshop (53 attendees) and 25 One-to-One Industry Interviews

4 DEIA Training Workshops (35 attendees)

Customer service, accessibility, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, BIPOC-inclusive service delivery

5 Stakeholder Toolkits Developed and Distributed

Nanaimo Infusion, Pride, Recommendations Guide for Frontline Staff, Not a Resort Town, The Off-Season is Never Off

Tourism Nanaimo Joined the Downtown Nanaimo Business Association and Old City Quarter Association as Ex-Officio Member

Formal embedding of the DMO in the downtown and Old City Quarter business community for the first time

Quarterly Presentations to Nanaimo City Council; Monthly Stakeholder Newsletter (43.8% Average Open Rate); 15 E-Blasts; First Tourism Nanaimo Holiday Breakfast Hosted December 12

CULTURAL & INDIGENOUS VALUE

Tourism Nanaimo's relationship with the Snuneymuxw First Nation is foundational to growth and alignment in the approach to the 5-Year Strategy and to the destination Nanaimo is. Year One advanced this relationship from intention to regular cadence.

SNUNEYMUXW PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION (2025)

- Snuneymuxw First Nation Holds a Seat on the Tourism Nanaimo Board, Ensuring SFN is a Part of Governance Decisions
- Snuneymuxw Days - Asset development and integrated multi-channel campaign with SFN and Petroglyph Development Group, spanning radio, billboards, social media, email, print, and digital
- Saysutshun Shoulder Season - Co-developed campaign with SFN, Saysutshun, and Petroglyph Development Group; 1M+ digital impressions and 31,500+ landing-page clicks in a 3-month window
- Ay Lelum Coast Salish Art - Storm Covers replica art displayed and front-desk wrap permanently installed at the Visitor Centre, centering Snuneymuxw cultural presence at the front door of the destination
- Foundational Work Continued on SFN-led Marketing Campaigns; 5 potential Indigenous Sport-Hosting Opportunities Identified
- Active Engagement with Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC) and the Indigenous Sports, Physical Activity & Recreation Council (ISPARC) aligned with City Integrated Action Plan #153



PRIDE, INCLUSION & ALLYSHIP

Nanaimo Pride Parade & Festival

Drew 22% of surveyed visitors as their primary reason for visiting; 37% identified attending Pride Week as a reason for visiting

3 Paid 2SLGBTQ+ Creator Partnerships Supported the Pride Campaign

Rainbow Registered Info Card Designed and Distributed to Local Businesses

2SLGBTQ+ Travel Experience Survey

Three-year trend identified a clear safety-versus-friendliness gap (90% feel welcomed but 74% perceive Nanaimo as safe). This is Tourism Nanaimo's clearest 2026 community development priority — and is being co-designed with the City on safety-marker implementation



CULTURAL ANCHORS OF THE DESTINATION

Nanaimo's cultural institutions are not amenities. They are pillar products of the visitor economy. The Port Theatre, Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo Museum, Vancouver Island Military Museum, and the professional arts companies that work with them generate room nights, anchor downtown weekends, and provide the year-round programming that the Not a Resort Town and The Off-Season is Never Off campaigns depend on. They are how Nanaimo is becoming a culture-led destination in fact, not just in positioning.

These organizations are also among Tourism Nanaimo's most active partners. Each is named in the 2025 Annual Performance Report under OCP Action 131 — "work with local cultural organizations such as Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo Museum, Port Theatre, and Vancouver Island Regional Library to increase opportunities for working together to share resources and build capacity."

THE PORT THEATRE

Why it Matters for Tourism

Touring artists, regional ticket buyers, and pre/post-show downtown spend make the Port Theatre one of Nanaimo's most reliable demand generators. Spotlight Series and VIS audiences come from across central Vancouver Island; touring company stops bring out-of-region production crews. A 100,000-attendee venue downtown is exactly the year-round anchor the visitor economy needs.

Nanaimo's 800-seat performing arts centre on the downtown waterfront — one of the busiest theatres in British Columbia.

- 250+ events annually, drawing 100,000+ attendees, making it one of the busiest theatres in BC
- \$6–8 million in annual community economic impact (Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation study)
- A strategically important stop on the Canadian national touring circuit — many national tours either begin or end their journey in Nanaimo
- Home venue for Vancouver Island Symphony (currently in its 32nd season, one of only two professional orchestras on Vancouver Island), Crimson Coast Dance, TheatreOne, and the Nanaimo International Jazz Festival
- Co-managed by the Port Theatre Society and the City of Nanaimo since 1998 — a 25+ year public-cultural partnership
- Named the 2025 BC Live Performance Network Presenter of the Year for programming, reconciliation, and leadership
- Nationally-acclaimed Spotlight Series brings Canadian and international touring artists to the Nanaimo stage

NANAIMO ART GALLERY

Why it Matters for Tourism

Gallery exhibitions are precisely the kind of authentic, culture-led experience that the 2025 marketing research identified as Nanaimo's highest-converting content type. Vancouver Magazine's day-trip editorial coverage and BC Business' "reinventing itself" feature both leaned on Nanaimo's gallery and creative scene. The Gallery is a year-round anchor with a national-calibre programme — the kind of product that justifies a destination trip.

NANAIMO MUSEUM

Why it Matters for Tourism

The Museum's physical adjacency to the Visitor Centre, VICC, and downtown hotels makes it part of the conference and cruise visitor journey by default. Snuneymuxw, coal mining, and diverse cultural heritages are the stories that differentiate Nanaimo from every other Vancouver Island stop. For the 32,163 delegate days delivered in 2025, the Museum is a walkable cultural anchor that extends time and spend downtown.

A 16,000 sq ft heritage and cultural facility located inside the Vancouver Island Conference Centre — directly adjacent to the Tourism Nanaimo Visitor Centre — managed by the Nanaimo & District Museum Society.

- Permanent exhibits include the Snuneymuxw living culture gallery, the Coal Mine experience, and the Sports Hall of Fame — five categories recognizing the achievements of Nanaimo's sports community
- Operates The Bastion (the oldest surviving wooden Hudson's Bay Company fortification in North America), the Miner's Cottage, and a restored Steam Locomotive — a network of heritage assets
- 2025 feature exhibit Grow Nanaimo (April–September 2025) explored the city's agricultural and food heritage; community gallery features rotating local programming
- School programs delivered to SD 68 and SD 69 students — reviewed and refined in partnership with Snuneymuxw Elders and Cultural Knowledge Keepers
- Non-profit gift shop features local Indigenous art and supports educational programming through all proceeds
- Hosted Tourism Nanaimo's 2025 Pre-Season Ambassador Meeting — a direct example of resource-sharing under OCP Action 131

HOW THESE ANCHORS DRIVE YEAR-ROUND VISITATION

Each of these institutions operates year-round. None depend on summer alone. Together, they are the reason Nanaimo's off-season campaigns can credibly promise something to see and do — and they are why Q1 and Q4 visitation grew faster than peak quarters in 2025.

→ ROOM NIGHTS

Port Theatre touring artists, Vancouver Island Symphony (VIS) performers and guest soloists, Fringe Festival touring companies, and visiting curators, scholars, and exhibiting artists at the Gallery and Museum all require accommodation in Nanaimo. A 100,000-attendee Port Theatre, a 103-performance Fringe Festival, and a Gallery and Museum that present internationally-recognized artists generate measurable hotel demand on top of resident attendance.

→ SHOULDER-SEASON AND OFF-SEASON STRENGTH

Port Theatre programmes through every month of the year; VIS performs across a full October-to-April season; the Art Gallery programmes a continuous rotation of exhibitions; the Museum holds long-run feature exhibits. The cultural calendar is, by definition, an off-season demand engine, and the data shows it converting (Q1 VIC visitation +52.3% YoY, Q4 +66.9% YoY).

→ PILLAR PRODUCT, NOT AMENITY

These institutions deliver against multiple goals of the 5-Year Strategy simultaneously: Goal 1 (diversify offerings, resident pride of place), Goal 3 (industry collaboration), Goal 4 (cultural-hub brand visibility), and Goal 5 (inclusivity, Indigenous visibility). They are pillar products of the Nanaimo destination; Tourism Nanaimo's job is to package, promote, and protect them as such.



PROGRESS AGAINST THE STRATEGY

YEAR ONE IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

The 5-Year Strategy is organized under four pillars and a set of cross-cutting commitments. The table below reports Year One status across each pillar, with the major activities delivered in 2025 and the priority focus for 2026.

STRATEGIC PILLAR	STATUS	KEY ACTIONS TAKEN IN 2025	PRIORITIES FOR 2026
Better Together (Industry Collaboration)	ON TRACK	Joined DNBA & OCQA as ex-officio member MOU-based 'Team Nanaimo' with Accommodators & VICC active year-round Sport Tourism Committee (7 mtgs + 2 grant reviews) and M&E Advisory Committee restructured for sector focus Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey: 12 → 46 responses (>200% growth)	Launch Industry Portal as single stakeholder destination Formalize quarterly sector calls and bi-monthly Tourism Roundtable Deepen Outside the Box BC partnership with Kamloops and Penticton Increased cadence for mixers, workshops, and networking opportunities
Be a Strong Ally (Snuneymuxw, 2SLGBTQ+, DEIA)	ON TRACK	Foundational SFN-led Indigenous Tourism Marketing work advanced Snuneymuxw Days + Saysutshun Shoulder Season delivered as integrated campaigns Ay Lelum art installed at the Visitor Centre 4 DEIA training workshops, Pride Sponsorship, 2SLGBTQ+ Travel Survey scaled to 300	Co-design 2SLGBTQ+ safety-marker strategy with the City Identify 5 Indigenous sport-hosting opportunities with SFN Targeted IDEA-stream outreach to drive statistical significance Support for inclusive product development
Build Out the Real Nanaimo (Product & Experience)	ON TRACK	Maffeo Sutton Kiosk acquired and activated (40%+ of all visitor interactions occurred at events/kiosk) Harbour Air harbourfront window wrap installed Nanaimo Unlocked Delegate Pass launched (April 2025) — 13+ participating local vendors Hotel Quiz Microsite: 752 newsletter subs, 1,969 quiz completions, 21.44% conversion on Google Hotel Ads 23 itineraries and 39 blogs added to TourismNanaimo.com	Expand bookable group-experience portfolio (BUILD pillar 2026–2028) Activate Maffeo Sutton Kiosk across full shoulder season Continue product diversification through Visitor Services retail 1:1 Business meetings to identify opportunities for product/experience development
Elevate the Destination (Brand, M&E, Sport)	EXCEEDED	Meet in Nanaimo and Play in Nanaimo microbrands launched 194% conference growth since 2023 (17 → 50); World Leisure Congress 2028 bid won with VIU Sport Hosting Grant: \$45,970 → \$3.9M EI (≈85:1 ROI) Not a Resort Town and The Off-Season is Never Off campaigns repositioned destination identity	Rebuild national-tier M&E business development Adopt Destinations International Economic Impact Calculator Q2 2026 Plan for FIFA World Cup 2026 visitation and Beyond Van Gogh Build business story library for media to showcase Nanaimo
Data-Informed Decision-Making (Cross-Cutting)	EXCEEDED	Industry Dashboard launched Organizational Dashboard launched (since 2022 inception) GA4 / GTM analytics rebuild validated — 2025 is the new benchmark year Three surveys scaled materially; resident NPS scoping advanced with Rove and DBC	Launch formal Resident NPS instrument (Year-2 commitment) Incorporate YCD and cruise data into Industry Dashboard Establish Media/Influencer Hosting ROI as standing KPI

DELIVERING ON CITY PRIORITIES

ALIGNMENT WITH REIMAGINED NANAIMO, THE CITY'S OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Tourism Nanaimo's 2025 work is directly delivering against the actions in Reimagined Nanaimo. Every major activity in the Annual Performance Report cross-references to a specific Official Community Plan action, and every funded program advances both the MRDT mandate and the City's vision for quality of life, inclusion, and economic resilience.

REIMAGINED NANAIMO ACTION	5-YEAR STRATEGY LINK	2025 DELIVERY
Action 152 Attract shoulder-season and off-season events such as the BC 55+ Games	Goal 2 Premier sport tourism hub by 2030	Hosted Nanaimo 2025 55+ BC Games (Sept 9–14); TN joined Games Board as liaison Sport Hosting Grant supported 14 multi-day events: \$3.9M EI on \$45,970 invested
Action 187 Coordinating visual brand and narrative + comms strategy with TN and NPC	Goal 4 Brand visibility & destination recognition	Meet in Nanaimo and Play in Nanaimo microbrands launched Not a Resort Town and The Off-Season is Never Off campaigns Partner media kits and 5 stakeholder toolkits distributed
Action 188 Market Nanaimo as a Meetings & Events destination using the 'Team Nanaimo' MOU (NHA/TN/VICC)	Goal 3 Industry collaboration, M&E expansion	50 conferences hosted (+25% YoY); World Leisure Congress 2028 bid won with VIU 21 RFPs secured for 2026–2028; 8 conferences confirmed from 2025 FAMs (80% conversion) Group Incentive restructured: \$891K EI from 2,807 actualized room nights
Action 189 Work with Snuneymuxw First Nation and BC Parks to develop Saysutshun as a tourism destination	Goal 5 Inclusivity; 'Be a Strong Ally' pillar	Saysutshun Shoulder Season campaign with SFN and Petroglyph Development Group 1M+ digital impressions, 31,500+ landing-page clicks
Action 190 Signature off-season events drawing regional southern BC, Puget Sound, and Alberta markets	Goal 2 & 4	Q1 Visitor Centre visitation +52.3% YoY; Q4 +66.9% YoY Paid-media data confirms Lower Mainland/Alberta as most efficient markets (\$13.40–\$14.35 CPA) Luminous Paths, Not a Resort Town, Off-Season is Never Off
Action 131 Work with cultural organizations to share resources and build capacity	Goal 3 Industry Collaboration	Active partnerships with Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo Museum, Port Theatre, Vancouver Island Regional Library Nanaimo Museum hosted Pre-Season Ambassador Meeting Editorial placements featuring local cultural organizations (Vancouver Magazine, Narcity, BC Business) Promotion and asset development support provided to Snuneymuxw Days
Action C2.2.3 Comprehensive wayfinding for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and visitors	Goal 4 Brand visibility & wayfinding	Harbour Air window wraps with QR codes Maffeo Sutton Kiosk activated with year-round branded presence Thrift Shop Map, Day Trips trifold, Fishing Information poster Frontline staff transit navigation guide developed
Action C4.3.26 Exceed minimum requirements for universal accessibility	Goal 5 Inclusivity & accessibility	Rainbow Registered info card distribution Recommendation Guide for frontline accommodator staff Accessibility & inclusivity gap assessment scoping
Action 153 Sport / physical activity alignment (ISPARC pathway)	Goal 2 Premier sport tourism hub by 2030	ISPARC engagement initiated to align Sport Hosting Grant with Action #153 5 Indigenous sport-hosting opportunities identified with Snuneymuxw

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Tourism Nanaimo's 2025 stakeholder and visitor research surfaced consistent community feedback. The table below documents what we heard — and how the industry, in partnership with the City and Snuneymuxw First Nation, is responding.

WHAT WE HEARD

Summer is busy and the off-season is underused. Residents and partners want a year-round visitor economy that smooths seasonality.

2SLGBTQ+ visitors feel welcomed but not always safe. 90% feel the city is welcoming; only 74% perceive it as safe. 16.7% explicitly feel unsafe.

We want Indigenous culture more visible in the destination experience. Residents and visitors both raised this through 2025 surveys.

Inter-connected transportation between BC Ferries, YCD airport, bus, and active modes needs work.

Visitor Centre signage and parking access need work — residents and operators flagged this in survey responses.

Small businesses want simpler ways to participate in tourism programs and access Tourism Nanaimo's reach.

More events that anchor neighbourhoods and showcase local culture — without overwhelming the community.

HOW THE INDUSTRY IS RESPONDING

The Not a Resort Town and The Off-Season is Never Off campaigns actively repositioned Nanaimo as culture-led and year-round.

Result: Q1 VIC visitation +52.3% YoY, Q4 +66.9% YoY — both grew faster than peak quarters. Off-season itinerary pages became the highest-performing content on tourismnanaimo.com.

The safety-versus-friendliness gap is now Tourism Nanaimo's clearest 2026 community development priority. A safety-marker strategy is being co-designed with the City for implementation (well-lit pathways, transit access, visible queer/trans staff, Safe Space certifications).

Ay Lelum Coast Salish art was permanently installed at the Visitor Centre so every visitor encounters Snuneymuxw cultural presence at the front door. Snuneymuxw Days and Saysutshun Shoulder Season were delivered as fully integrated multi-channel campaigns. SFN-led Indigenous Tourism Marketing work continues.

Tourism Nanaimo is engaged with the Nanaimo Airport Authority, BC Ferries for connectivity advocacy, and Hullo Ferries as a key funding partner. Wayfinding additions (Harbour Air window wrap, Maffeo Sutton Kiosk, QR codes) directly support OCP Action C2.2.3.

Direct engagement with the City on Visitor Centre signage and parking access is on the 2026 action list from the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

Five stakeholder toolkits distributed in 2025 (Infusion, Pride, Recommendations Guide, Not a Resort Town, Off-Season is Never Off). Tourism Nanaimo joined DNBA and OCQA as ex-officio member. An updated Industry Portal launches in 2026 as a single destination for dashboards, training, and toolkits.

Events are used as destination-storytelling vehicles, not one-off visitor spikes. Luminous Paths, Pride, Snuneymuxw Days, Bathtub Weekend, World's Largest Nanaimo Bar, and the Commercial Street Night Market each anchored ongoing narrative throughout the year. The 55+ BC Games activated venues, hotels, restaurants, and public spaces across the city.

STORIES OF COMMUNITY IMPACT

AY LELUM AT THE FRONT DOOR OF THE DESTINATION

In 2025, replica Ay Lelum Storm Covers and a colour-matched Ay Lelum-designed front desk wrap were installed at the Nanaimo Visitor Centre. The installation means that every visitor entering the Centre — and every conference delegate, sport-event attendee, and cruise passenger who stops in — encounters Coast Salish design and Snuneymuxw cultural presence at the front door of the destination. The Centre's physical environment is now aligned with Tourism Nanaimo's commitments to Snuneymuxw First Nation and the reconciliation pathway in the 5-Year Strategy.

WINNING THE WORLD LEISURE CONGRESS 2028

Tourism Nanaimo, in partnership with Vancouver Island University, won the bid to host the World Leisure Congress in 2028 — an international academic and professional conference that will position Nanaimo on the global stage. The win directly advances Goal 4 of the 5-Year Strategy (premier destination for meetings and events by 2030) and Goal 3 (industry collaboration). It also validates the 'Team Nanaimo' approach in OCP Action 188 and demonstrates the value of academic partnership as a replicable model. More broadly, it reflects the growing strength of Nanaimo's meetings and events sector as a driver of economic impact and year-round visitation, helping attract visitors during traditionally quieter periods.

SPORT HOSTING GRANT: \$45,970 IN, \$3.9M OUT

The inaugural Sport Hosting Grant launched in June 2025 with two intake periods. 23 applications were received; 14 multi-day events were funded for a total of \$45,970. Those events delivered an estimated \$3.9 million in economic impact — an approximate 85:1 return — primarily through overnight stays in local hotels. The Grant supported the Nanaimo 2025 55+ BC Games directly, advancing OCP Action C3.6, C4.8, and one local event organizer specifically credited the grant as the difference between hosting and not hosting in 2025.

SNUNEYMUWX DAYS AND SAYSUTSHUN CAMPAIGNS - CONNECTION DRIVES ENGAGEMENT

Two of the most successful marketing partnerships of the year were co-developed with Snuneymuxw First Nation, Saysutshun, and the Petroglyph Development Group, and shared a common theme - they didn't ask people to buy something, they invited them to be a part of something. Both the community facing support for Snuneymuxw Days and the Saysutshun Shoulder Season campaign proved an appetite for meaningful cultural connection. The Saysutshun campaign alone generated more than 1 million digital impressions and 31,500+ landing-page clicks in a three-month window — the year's top quantitative campaign. The campaign confirmed strong demand for culturally grounded short-distance experiences and directly advanced OCP Action C5.6.4

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM — INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT AND MEETING VISITORS WHERE THEY ARE

The ambassador program continued to expand the reach of Visitor Services in 2025 through a combination of inclusive recruitment practices and increased community presence. Working with the Nanaimo Association for Community Living (NACL), the program supported volunteer opportunities while building a team that reflects the community it serves.

The addition of the Maffeo Sutton Kiosk strengthened that community presence, creating a year-round touchpoint in one of the city's busiest public spaces. Together, the kiosk and attended events accounted for more than 40% of all visitor interactions, demonstrating the value of bringing visitor services directly into the community and meeting visitors where they are.

LUMINOUS PATHS - ARTS AND CULTURE AS A TOURISM ASSET

Led by the City of Nanaimo, Luminous Paths transformed Maffeo Sutton Park into a winter destination, demonstrating how public art and cultural programming can activate community spaces during the off-season. Packages were built in partnership with accommodation, transportation, and dining partners around the event, helping extend its reach beyond local audiences. The festival highlighted the potential for arts and culture to support year-round visitation, generate economic activity during quieter months, and create a recurring reason to visit Nanaimo. Following a successful inaugural year, Luminous Paths will return in 2027, directly support OCP policy C4.8.12.

PARTNER ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT THE TOURISM STRATEGY

Tourism is a coalition function. The work below documents how Tourism Nanaimo's principal partners in 2025 advanced the Strategy alongside us. The Strategy's progress is the sum of these contributions.

PARTNER	2025 ACTION	HOW IT CONNECTS TO TOURISM
SNUNEYMUXW FIRST NATION	SFN-led Indigenous Tourism Marketing work; Board seat; Snuneymuxw Days and Saysutshun Shoulder Season; 5 Indigenous sport-hosting opportunities identified.	Foundation of the 'Be a Strong Ally' pillar; advances the OCP Action C5.5.4, C5.6.4 and the reconciliation pathway central to the 5-Year Strategy.
CITY OF NANAIMO	Quarterly Council reporting; Maffeo Sutton Kiosk activation; sport infrastructure evaluation; alignment of MRDT activity with the Integrated Action Plan.	Direct delivery against multiple City Plan: Nanaimo Reimagined actions — C.5.5, C5.6, C2.2.3, C4.3.26.
NANAIMO HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION	'Team Nanaimo' MOU partner; Feasibility Study Grant administrator; M&E Advisory Committee, Board seat.	OCP Action C5.5.10— 'Team Nanaimo' approach. Hospitality industry voice in destination management.
VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CENTRE	MOU partner under 'Team Nanaimo'; Nanaimo Unlocked Delegate Pass; bathroom-stall wraps; Vendor Alley at CSAE; record year for VICC.	OCP Action C5.5.9, C5.6.1; Goal 3 / Goal 4 of the 5-Year Strategy; direct demand driver for downtown accommodation.
VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY	World Leisure Congress 2028 bid partnership; Visitor Experience Survey methodology (280 responses); Sport bid development.	Demonstrates the value of academic partnership; directly delivers Goal 4 (international convention) and supports research function.
NANAIMO PROSPERITY CORPORATION	Brand & narrative alignment; accessibility & inclusivity gap-assessment scoping.	OCP Action C5.6.1, C5.6.2 — coordinating visual brand and narrative + comms strategy with TN and NPC.
NANAIMO PRIDE SOCIETY	Rainbow Registered certification; 2SLGBTQIA+ Travel Experience Survey collaboration; IDEA workshops; Pride sponsorship.	Goal 5 — model city for inclusivity. Anchor of the 'Be a Strong Ally' pillar. OCP Action C5.5.9
DOWNTOWN NANAIMO BUSINESS ASSOCIATION & OLD CITY QUARTER ASSOCIATION	Tourism Nanaimo joined both as ex-officio member; Delegate Pass vendor recruitment; downtown revitalization.	Embeds DMO in the downtown and Old City Quarter business community for the first time — direct local industry collaboration.

PARTNER	2025 ACTION	HOW IT CONNECTS TO TOURISM
NANAIMO AIRPORT AUTHORITY (YCD) & NANAIMO PORT AUTHORITY	OTBBC partnership; air-route advocacy; cruise-sector recovery; Stewart Avenue corridor planning input.	Critical infrastructure for visitor access; supports the 'Touring & Exploring' DBC approach.
GREATER NANAIMO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey distribution; Tourism Roundtable participation; Tourism Nanaimo Board representation.	Cross-sector industry voice; helps achieve the >200% survey-response growth that anchored 2025 stakeholder engagement.
DESTINATION BC	\$187,500 DBC Co-op Marketing Partnership delivered with SFN, Petroglyph, Saysutshun, Gabriola, YCD, NPC; Iconics 'Infinite Coast' alignment; FAM hosting; Powerful Marketing Network participation.	Provincial brand alignment; access to shared resources; complementarity (not duplication) with provincial marketing.
OUTSIDE THE BOX BC (KAMLOOPS + PENTICTON)	Three-DMO co-operative; two third-party meeting-planner contracts secured rotating conferences across all three destinations 2025–2028; CMEE Hall of Fame nomination.	Direct inter-DMO coordination with peer MRDT recipients; produces a combined offering none of the three could deliver alone.
4VI / 4 TOURISM VANCOUVER ISLAND REGIONAL DESTINATION ORGANIZATION	Regional press trip coordination; sustainability planning; Stewardship Summit.	Vancouver Island regional alignment; sustainable tourism cross-cutting commitment.
INDIGENOUS TOURISM BC; ISPARC; SPORT TOURISM CANADA	Engagement on Indigenous business promotion, the SFN-led strategy, and sport-hosting alignment with City Action #153.	National-level alignment for Indigenous tourism and sport tourism — foundational for Goals 2 and 5.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Tourism in Nanaimo is more than an industry. It is a shared investment in the places, people, and experiences that make this city worth living in, and worth visiting.

Year One of the 5-Year Strategy was deliberately built as the baseline year. The dashboards, the surveys, the toolkits, the microbrands, the partnerships, the Snuneymuxw relationship moving from intention to standing infrastructure, the City's Reimagined Nanaimo actions threaded through every funded program - these are the foundations Years Two through Five will build on.

What was strategic intent at the start of 2025 is now standing infrastructure. The progress reflected in this report is the result of Snuneymuxw First Nation, the City of Nanaimo, local businesses, hospitality and conference partners, sport organizations, cultural organizations, residents, and provincial and national partners all working toward the same goal. That coalition is our greatest asset, and it is what will carry us into Year Two and the three years that follow.

YEAR TWO PRIORITIES (2026)

- Re-Launch the Industry Portal as the single stakeholder destination for dashboards, training, and toolkits
- Adopt the Destinations International Economic Impact Calculator in Q2 2026 for standardized M&E and Sport Tourism reporting
- Launch formal Resident Net Promoter Score (NPS) instrument per the Year-2 Strategy commitment
- Co-design 2SLGBTQ+ safety-marker strategy with the City of Nanaimo for implementation
- Formalize the SFN-led Indigenous Tourism Strategy with an agreement-in-principle for partnership delivery
- Capitalize on FIFA World Cup 2026, Beyond Van Gogh, and continued shoulder-season demand
- Rebuild national-tier Meetings & Events business development; convert the 21-conference forward pipeline





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