

Small Business Spotlight:

Anna Beddie

Owner/Operator

Misty River Books, Est. 1988

Misty River Books is located in Terrace B.C. and has been serving Northern B.C. for the past 35 years.

How Misty River Books came to be

Terrace's previous bookstore closed in the late 1980s. Anna's husband and his business partner thought Terrace needed a bookstore; knowing books can inspire, educate and entertain. They felt a bookstore could be an opportunity to share a love of reading with the community. Misty River Books was born. After a year of operation, Anna joined and became the primary operator of the business. Their desire to succeed and the community's support has been proven time and time again, as Misty River Books celebrated its 35th birthday earlier this year.

The best part about selling books

What Anna and her staff enjoy most about the bookstore are the personal relationships they develop with their customers - knowing customers by name and what is happening in the community. Anna says there is no better feeling than when a book recommendation is well received and a customer says they loved it, particularly if it was a new genre they have not explored before. According to Anna they are not just selling books, they are providing an essential service to their community, a community which has supported them for decades.

Adapting to the changing business environment

One of the biggest changes Misty River Books has seen is the need for an online presence and the use of social media. They now have a social media specialist, something they never had before, and their customers are pleased to see their business online with more purchase options. Their online presence keeps the bookstore top of mind, strengthening its customer relationships and making new ones. Anna has also seen a greater emphasis on shopping locally, which aligns with the abundance of talented writers, artists and illustrators in the region which they love to promote.

On operating a business in a rural part of the province

Anna has never considered themselves rural, they just have a larger than normal selling catchment which means getting known throughout the area they serve is vital. Social media and community connections are critical to their success. Since they can't rely on foot traffic alone, Misty River Books needs to be proactive with its marketing. One of the many ways they do this is through a flier released every fall to the surrounding region. It includes book suggestions, an art contest and prizes! When a customer needs a book that Anna is unable to supply, they will leverage their community contacts to try and find the book in another nearby community, ensuring the region sees the benefit of the sale.

The importance of the community for business success

Anna states that the community is their lifeline. The strong sense of community was evident during the pandemic, as customers adapted to the new ways Misty River Books served them. For example, Misty River Books offered contactless shopping and at times allowed one customer in the store at a time to browse and connect. In addition, communication with customers, other business owners, and people in their industry helps strengthen Misty River Books. Whether it is locally, provincially or nationally, they learn and share with others in the book industry, creating a strong community which transcends their geographical area.

A final word from Anna, owner of Misty River Books

"Most importantly, I am proud that Misty River Books is a welcoming and inclusive environment where people feel comfortable exploring their love of reading and asking for advice on books or any topic under the sun. It's a place where people can come together, discover new titles, attend author events and source their book club books. It's become a hub for the community fostering a sense of connection and belonging."

