



BC IDEAS EXCHANGE



ELK FALLS SUSPENSION BRIDGE PROJECT Campbell River

FACTS



Location: Vancouver Island B.C.
Economic Base: Tourism, Forestry, Fishing

SYNOPSIS

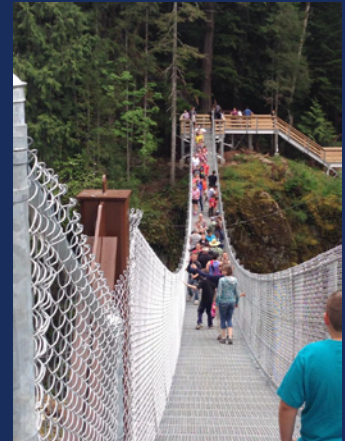
The vision of the Rotary Club of Campbell River, the Elk Falls Suspension Bridge was developed in partnership with BC Parks and BC Hydro. With funding from community, government, business and ICET, it is a demonstration of the important role non-profits can play in rallying support for economic development. The bridge will provide opportunities for new target markets such as bus tours, mobility challenged visitors, more adventurous thrill seekers as well as other new hospitality and business opportunities to service and grow these new markets.

THE CHALLENGE

The Elk Falls Suspension Bridge Project began in 2009 as a vision by the Rotary Club of Campbell River to create an attraction to showcase this natural wonder. The challenge was to construct a world class suspension bridge with viewing areas to showcase Elk Falls and Elk Falls Canyon inside a class A Provincial Park. The goal was to increase the day use of Elk Falls Provincial Park and create a unique and accessible visitor experience that would attract a wide range of tourists.

THE SOLUTION

The Rotary Club developed a strong working relationship with BC Parks and BC Hydro where each party clearly understood the proposal and how it would be done. The resulting MOU served as the foundation for a comprehensive contract between BC Parks and the Rotary Club of Campbell River and detailed steps to be completed to achieve our goal.



The connecting trails were constructed with blue chip fines that compact down to very hard surface especially good for wheelchairs. The sloping trails were designed to allow for periodic flat resting areas and have an average grade less than 5% which met BC Parks accessibility standards. The Accessible Viewing Platform has a dropped railing allowing those in wheelchairs an unimpeded view of Elk Falls.

Completed in 2015, the Elk Falls Suspension Bridge spans 60 meters and, along with a cantilevered viewing platform, provides spectacular views of Elk Falls never before possible. One of the highest pedestrian suspension bridges in Canada, it hangs more than 64 metres above the canyon floor. Access is free in perpetuity.



For more information: gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment

BENEFITS

- More than 240,000 visitors viewed Elk Falls and Elk Falls Canyon in the first year of operation, three times more than the average annual visitor count of 70,000 visitors per year.
- Visitors originate from all over the world. Many visitors travel initially to see the suspension bridge and then proceed to other sites.
- Social media has allowed for tremendous marketing opportunities with the Facebook page viewed by more than 40,000 visitors from 47 different countries.
- Tour bus operators include Elk Falls Provincial Park and the suspension bridge on their itinerary based on the positive feedback from customers.
- Positive impacts on the economy of Campbell River and Vancouver Island with ripple effects in accommodation, restaurants, fuel and other purchases.
- Local entrepreneurs are selling t-shirts, postcards and other souvenirs related to the Elk Falls Suspension Bridge.

LESSONS LEARNED



Significant collaboration will help realize a community vision.



Need for a comprehensive construction and financing plan.



The Project Lead must stay involved at every step during construction.



Every obstacle has a solution - you just have to find it.



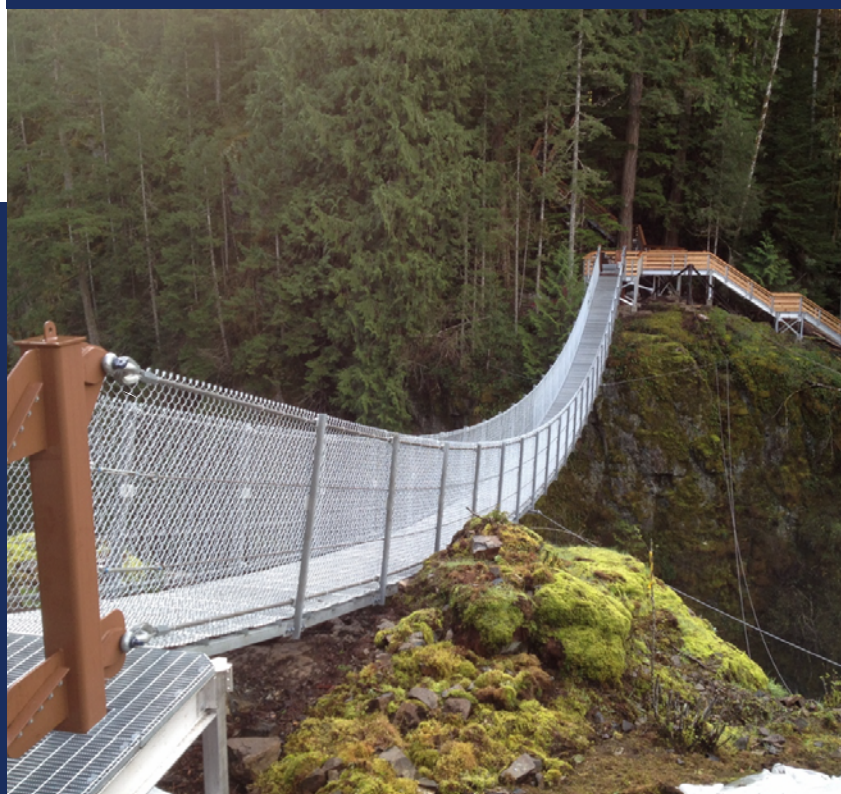
Be open and transparent with the public right from the beginning.



Partnerships and public support are critical to success.

OUTCOMES

- Direct employment during construction is estimated at 12,864 hours. Further employment involved contractors and employees needed for the tourist information office located in the new parking lot.
- Amazing cooperation, information sharing and funding from BC Parks and BC Hydro from beginning to completion in 2015.
- The new 83 unit parking lot with washrooms, bus and RV parking, a new trail and pedestrian bridge across the Penstocks that allow all visitors' access to Elk Falls Provincial Park.
- A permanent plaque thanks all contributors of this project.
- The Rotary Club of Campbell River awarded a Paul Harris Fellow (Rotary's highest honour) to Brent Blackmun, BC Parks and Stephen Watson, BC Hydro.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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