

CCEC
2013 Conference Report
Bursary Recipient – Shelley Wall, Burns Lake Chamber of Commerce

I was very fortunate to be chosen as the bursary recipient this year and attend the annual conference in Kelowna BC. I had never attended a chamber of commerce conference since becoming manager in June of 2012. I was not sure what to expect upon arrival, would a new manager from a small chamber in northern BC have anything to contribute, so with great trepidation I went over to the Delta Grand Resort Hotel for the CCEC New member orientation. I was met in the hallway by Bruce Carter who came right over, introduced himself and welcomed me to the conference, this seemingly small act, made me relax, breathe and feel welcome at the conference. Thank you Bruce.

The new member orientation was very educational; I had no idea of the resources that were available at the click of a mouse. I am a great supporter of the theory "Do not reinvent the wheel" and until that workshop I did not know where to find the wheels. The first thing I did upon returning to work was find my password and check out the resources that are offered by CCEC. The sample documents, shop local programs, by laws it is all there to learn from and read. I will be visiting the resource center weekly from now on, I have blocked out a regular 2 hour time slot to just sit down and go through the different sections of the resource center. I have participated in the past in webinars and will certainly be doing so again in the future. The webinar is such a valuable training and educational tool. I can avoid the high cost of travel, fees, and wondering how to run an office from afar by closing my door and taking a webinar.

"Why Accreditation Makes Sense" that to steal a phrase from Oprah was my Aha moment of the conference. Our chamber during the past two years has struggled and overcame many obstacles, but if the board of directors would have had an up dated accreditation binder to fall back on things would have been so much easier. The 5 pillars of accreditation are the key fundamentals to moving forward in your chamber. The added value of being able to show your membership that you have a measuring stick to show the forward progress of not only the board but staff as well. This binder puts all the documents in one location for easy access by staff and board members. Our chamber has had many discussions lately about succession planning and I will definitely be sharing the accreditation program with them as step number one.

The welcome reception and networking dinner were so much fun and the truth/lie game was certainly an ice breaker. I met so many of my colleagues and came away feeling that I had been rescued from my desert island. It has made such a difference to know that you are not alone and that you can reach out for help. When struggling with the stresses that come with the job of chamber manager it is nice to know that somewhere a colleague has already dealt with a similar situation and can offer many solutions. The people I met are truly remarkable in their own unique way and I will remember them all.

Master or Victim that you have a choice not only as a chamber but as a community. Start looking ahead where do we want to be in 5 years or 10 years and go for it. The 12 Big Reasons why do you live here or why would someone else want to live here make sense. I think sometimes we need reminded of the basics and that by working together in a collaborative way we can move not only our business community but our entire community forward. It was great of Keith to remind us of the importance of a chamber but also of our responsibility to help our community in a progressive, positive way. I personally after his workshop made a note to myself that is on my bulletin board "Master not Victim" remember to collaborate, communicate, have a vision for positive change, be civil, and be willing to change. Another quote that stood out for me is "Members are the reason you exist not membership, be a value to your members". I am going to challenge our board to think of this when we do strategic planning, that sometimes we forget about the member when thinking only of the membership. I have been reaching out to members asking them how can we be more valuable to you? What can the chamber do for you? The round table discussion on what are the key issues in your chamber was educational; to realize though on a different scale we are all facing the similar challenges.

Deathbed confessions the deadly sins and virtues of a chamber, even in my short time with a chamber I could relate to these. Chamber Basics the course offered by the ACCE, would be so helpful, board of governance can be taken on line. These are things that we struggle with in smaller communities the cost of getting someone in, how many can attend, but with on line tools all of your directors can take these courses at home on their time schedule. Burn out from working 60 hours weeks and still feeling that you need to do more.

Success Leaves Clues, that you need not only a committed staff but a committed board. That everything starts at the top and your directors need to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Board nominations are so important to the success of your chamber, that a clear concise description of a director's role and what is expected of them is needed. Talk to the new directors and provide them with the resources and training. As a manager I was never sure until this workshop what my role was with new directors, do I give them the binders, does the president, who should orientate them, this workshop brought clarity to that issue. The Best 60 in 60 was amazing to listen to what some chambers are doing and what they have accomplished. The entire conference was a learning experience and has helped not only me but my staff and board of directors. It helped restore my passion for the job and reminded me of the reasons why I love my job. With the new tools in my tool kit I can continue to make positive change for our members. This conference was the best thing that has happened to me since becoming a chamber manager, it showed me the road to resources and help is only a mouse click away, and most importantly you cannot do it all one day. Thank you!!