

OKANOGAN COUNTY TOURISM COUNCIL

HISTORY

The initial meeting (December 14, 1989) to discuss countywide tourism was sponsored by the Okanogan County Council for Economic Development (OCCED), the former Economic Development Origination. Prior to this time state tourism had the state divided into regions. Okanogan County was part of Region 3. This region covered a large area from Moses Lake and Wenatchee to the Canadian Border. With the large cities as part of that area, not much was being done for the more rural areas. The state cut the funding for Region 3, and Mary Henrie, Omak Chamber Manager, came to OCCED with a vision to establish an organization to promote the entire county. With help from Ron Nielsen, OCCED's Executive Director, Carolyn Davis, OCCED's Administrative Assistant, and Mary Henrie Okanogan County Tourism was formed. This new organization, consisting of Mary Henrie, Ron Nielsen, Mary Koch, John Andrist, and John Dermotte, operated under the umbrella of OCCED, with Carolyn Davis providing staff support for coordination and handling of finances.

Okanogan County Tourism Council's Bylaws were adopted on June 27, 1991. The group applied for 10% of Okanogan County Hotel/Motel Tax TAB funding, which was the major source of funding for the organization. The budget for the first few years was less than \$10,000.

Articles of Incorporation were signed on May 20, 1992. After many meetings, a mission statement written by John Andrist was adopted. The mission for Okanogan County Tourism Council is "To bring together the many individual tourism promotion efforts to achieve greater focus, effectiveness, and economy in promoting tourism for all of Okanogan County". The original registered agent was Carolyn Davis.

Following a study funded by a Washington State Tourism Grant, Roger Brooks, Chandler, Brooks & Donahoe, Inc., came to Okanogan County and surveyed the area to determine how receptive we were to tourism and how we marketed the area. As a result of this study and similar studies across the state, a change in the legislature allowed for the collection of an additional 2% Hotel/Motel tax. As the Okanogan County Commissioners began to realize that tourism was a big part of the Okanogan economy and at the recommendation of OCCED and OCTC, Resolution 51-98 was passed on May 12, 1998 allowing for the collection of this additional tax. The county commission authorized the use of these funds was to market the entire county for Tourism.

On April 12, 1999, Resolution 37-99 established the Okanogan County Marketing and Special Excise Tax Board for the purpose of marketing tourism in Okanogan County. The funds were

distributed with 40% going to the Methow Valley Community Trail System to complete trails and 60% to professionally market tourism throughout the entire county. Okanogan County Tourism Council was given the responsibility for carrying out this marketing in Okanogan County. At present OCTC contracts with Earth & Sky Studios for ad production and coordination with guidance from the OCTC Marketing Committee, which meets on a monthly basis. OCTC also contracts with the Economic Alliance for staff support and administrative duties.