

# BACKGROUND



## A Brief History of the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre

The creation of the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre on the Sidney, B.C. waterfront is an example of community activism, visionary thinking, and a profound respect for the ocean.

Two organizations were the stimulus to creating the new educational facility: the Sidney and Marine Mammal Museum and the Marine Ecology Centre.

The Sidney Marine Mammal Museum opened in the 1980s, was a popular destination on the Sidney waterfront welcoming more than 12,000 visitors a year. It was well known for its hand-painted murals, interesting artifacts, orca whale and other skeletons, and volunteer-produced puppet shows for school visits.

The Marine Ecology Centre, started by Dr. Bill Austin in 1990, moved to Sidney in 2001. The Centre offered year-round education programs for thousands of school children and individuals in its floating lab.

In 2004, the Town of Sidney approved a development proposal submitted by Marker Group for a hotel and condominium project overlooking the Salish Sea. Former Mayor Don Amos and Chief Administrative Officer David Bartley requested the development proposal include 930 square metres of space on the main floor to house the Marine Mammal Museum and Marine Ecology Centre.

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*Our Ocean Lives Here*

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The board members of these two organizations saw the enormous opportunity this expanded space would provide with its spectacular views of the ocean and snow-capped Mt. Baker, the Canadian Gulf Islands and American San Juans. They also knew the amazing diversity of marine life in the Georgia Basin, an inland sea known as the Salish Sea, from the giant Pacific octopus to microscopic plankton. And, they accurately predicted that the public's interest in the ocean was growing more each year.

They decided to join forces, incorporate the best from each organization, and build a unique ocean discovery centre.

They established the non-profit New Marine Centre Society with a six-member volunteer board. These board members along with Sidney Councilor Peter Wainwright, spent the next 18 months preparing an economic feasibility study and plan, conducting a survey of potential designers, and developing a vision.

In 2006, Angus Matthews was appointed Executive Director and a \$5-million capital fund-raising campaign was kicked off by well known volunteers Murray and Lynda Farmer.

In just 30 months, thanks to the amazing generosity and commitment of the community the \$8-million Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre was designed built and opened to the public on June 20, 2009.