

# BC CRAFT BEER NEWS

VOL. 2 No. 1 JULY - AUGUST 2014 | [bccbnews.ca](http://bccbnews.ca) | @bccbnews

## Moody Ales to join community of 'competitors'

ADAM CRANDALL

**WE'RE** starting a brewery, but this isn't about start-up budgets, brewhouse configurations, or fund-raising. Nor is it a reality check about all the cleaning and paperwork. There are already plenty of excellent books, blog posts, and articles about those things. Instead, this is our personal story of opening a brewery and the unexpected help we got along the way. My business partner Dan Helmer and I have come to learn that this business is full of exceedingly generous people willing to share their knowledge—a remarkable trait for an industry that draws more and more 'competitors' every year. Yet competition seems to be the last thing on anyone's mind.

About a year ago, Dan and I decided to leave the IT career track we had each been pursuing since college. Our combined experience includes private and public companies in roles ranging from sales to software development. Most recently, we were co-workers at Habanero Consulting—one of the best companies to work for in Canada, which made the decision especially difficult. If we left, we wanted to make sure that we weren't doing it just because we liked the idea of making beer, but also because it was a viable business and something we

could manage on our own. We needed to know what it takes to open and manage a small craft brewery.

Who better to ask than professional brewers and brewery owners? We ventured off to a newly opened East Van microbrewery for some liquid research. We figured we might grab a drink, ask for a tour, and be on our way. After ordering a couple of pints from the owner who happened to be working the counter that day, we started peppering him with questions about running a brewery. He clued in pretty quickly and said, "Are you guys planning to start a brewery? If so, I will help you every step of the way."

So began our huge, informal advisory board. Encouraged that a new brewery owner would be so open and unselfish with his knowledge, we began approaching more craft breweries. South of the Fraser, we arranged to visit a brewery on the same day they happened to be testing out a new bottling system, which was being less than obedient. Despite their preoccupation with more urgent matters (that is, making beer), and after our offer to come back another day, they insisted that we stay. The brewer showed us his brewhouse equipment—from a supplier we were considering. It was an invaluable experience, since this equipment is usually made to order from manu-



All smiles, the faces of Moody Ales. Left: Dan Helmer, Right: Adam Crandall

SUPPLIED PHOTO

facturers often outside of BC and Canada.

Our emails with questions about budgets, equipment, requests for tours and visits, and so on never went unanswered. Dan was able to volunteer at a Vancouver brewery to run through full brewing, cleaning, and kegging cycles. In

Portland, we visited a brewery where we chatted with the brewer over several pints and—when we went to settle our bill—were told "brewers don't pay," even though we were still only a brewery in planning. On another occasion, we asked to have a meeting with a brewery owner in Vancou-

ver, who then suggested we meet at his/her house, but only after the kids were in bed. More recently, and out of the blue, another local start-up invited us to watch the delivery and installation of fermentation vessels. The vessels arrived in a truck on their sides. Who knew it could be so tricky

to stand up a 1,000-pound tank on three-inch posts without hitting the ceiling with a forklift?

Reading about starting a brewery is great, but there is no manual to cover it all. The only way to understand the ins and outs of a brewhouse, the logistics of equipment installation, or the rhythm of a brewing day is to go and experience them. Luckily, craft brewers and brewery owners are some of the warmest, most generous, and most open 'competitors' you could ask for as an industry beginner. This isn't to say they have all the time in the world to shoot the bull—they don't. It probably helped that Dan and I almost always brought beer with us, and we were careful not to push our luck when asking for their time. (We were keenly aware that there's always more cleaning and more paperwork for them to do.) Although we are still only building our brewery, Dan and I are forever grateful to everyone who has answered our questions and helped us out over the last year. However we can, we plan to pay this generosity forward.

## BC Beer Law: welcoming the world—the government pledges to work with industry to promote craft beer tourism in BC

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WITH the recent enactment of several amendments to the British Columbia *Liquor Control and Licensing Act*, the Province has taken an

important first step towards implementing a number of the recommendations contained in the "BC Liquor Policy Review Final Report".

While the Province continues to update the Act's Regulations and prepare policy statements, it's important [SEE PAGE 7]

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# #itsallhappening at Postmark



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WITH all the fanfare of breweries opening their doors in Vancouver these days, it's hard to believe a brewery could open quietly. Well guess what: Postmark Brewing is now open and pouring in the historic Railtown neighbourhood.

At the helm of this operation is managing director, Nate Rayment, formerly of Howe Sound Brewing. Two years ago, Rayment left Howe Sound to start his own brewery with friends Mike Macquisten and Steve Thorp, who had already opened the Vancouver Urban Winery. They wanted to make craft beer that was more sessionable—something that people could buy for a camping trip or day at the beach. And considering the amount of sessional beers other breweries are starting to produce, Postmark is definitely nailing the trend.

Currently there are four beers pouring: Postmark Pilsner (4.7%), brewed

with German malt and Czech yeast; Postmark IPA (6.2%), an American red IPA brewed with Simcoe, Centennial, and Citra hops; Postmark Hefe (4.8%), brewed with lemon zest and raspberries; and Postmark Stout (4.5%), a semi-light bodied stout with chocolate and coffee notes.

The man behind these beers is Craig Noble, who according to Rayment was the perfect man for the job. "It's not only his passion for beer, and his extensive background in beer" says Rayment. "He spent the last two years travelling North America visiting breweries, collaborating with other breweries all through the States. He's spent time on the west coast, the east coast—you name it."

Noble has just finished crossing North America once again, debuting his documentary CRAFT to thousands of craft beer fanatics, including a showing at Vancouver's Rio Theatre during the month of June.

A certified cicerone and former apprentice at Crannóg Ales, Noble was originally brought on as a consultant. In the end they couldn't let him go, appointing him Chief Brewer. "He has quite an extensive food background," says Rayment, "which lends itself to brewing, but also with having the kitchen here, he can work with our chef Reuben Major



L to R: Mike Macquisten, Jack Davidson, Nate Rayment, Steve Thorp, and Craig Noble THE SETTLEMENT BUILDING PHOTO

on creating pairing dinners and recipes."

And that is where this brewery is especially unique: when most breweries around Vancouver have a food truck parked outside, Postmark operates more like a brewpub.

Situated on Dunlevy Street in The Settlement Building, Postmark shares a

roof with Vancouver Urban Winery and the recently opened Belgard Kitchen. Executive Chef Reuben Major sources his ingredients from local suppliers, and offers lunch, dinner, and weekend brunch. The menu has a variety of items to be paired with both wine and beer, and the plan is to have a weekly beer-focused fea-

ture. This can include foods like tacos, mussels in beer broth, or other beer-related nosh.

Rayment admits it's a little bit different, but he sees Postmark fitting in well with Vancouver's craft beer community. "It opens up another element to the brewery tour scene that's not possible out there right now; it's adding

in that real exploration of food with beer."

That brewery tour scene now includes Vancouver Bike Tours, whose beer tour will be anchored by Postmark as the final stop—and a good place to take in nourishment after all the beer indulgence. Vancouver Brewery Tours will be visiting Postmark as well, adding to their already diverse collection of brewery stops.

The fun begins right at the brewery's entrance, where two holding tanks welcome visitors to the brewing floor. Guests can sample beer directly from these tanks while on the guided tour. Postmark also boasts a conveniently located growler takeout window, which keeps the tasting room clear of lineups—a much-needed service in a city where most tasting rooms are maxed out by people just waiting for beer to go.

Postmark Brewery and The Settlement Building is a gorgeous space where all three of the big indulgences come together, so the foodie, the wine connoisseur, and the beer nerd may all consume in harmony. You start to re-think the brewery stereotype when one is serving wine flights and offering gourmet food pairings: it's really all coming together down at Postmark. Or, as their official hashtag puts it: #itsallhappening.

[ FROM PAGE 3, BEER LAW ]

to remember that not all of the Report's recommendations will require legislative or policy changes before they can be put in place. The government's pledge to promote craft beer tourism is one notable example.

Recommendation # 24 of the Report provides that, "Government should work with industry and tourism associations to develop promotional materials such as maps, apps and brochures on BC wineries, breweries and distilleries." Like many industry observers and advocates, I was really pleased to see this recommendation in the Report. The current disparity between the infrastructure that supports wine tourism in our province and the limited tools available to promote craft beer tourism is pretty significant, so any efforts by government to close this gap are definitely welcome. As Don Farion, part owner of Vancouver's BierCraft restaurants and Bomber Brewing recently told me, "Government at every level is perhaps the most important player in the growth of beer tourism. If provincial and municipal governments begin to see the possibilities and get behind the breweries with support and incentives, then the possibilities are endless."

The inclusion of Recommendation # 24 in the

Report also provides further evidence that the Province is finally beginning to notice the huge economic benefits that BC's craft brewers bring to the provincial economy. Indeed, the role that breweries play in driving economic growth was a key message that Ken Beattie, Executive Director of the BC Craft Brewers Guild, brought with him when he and his team met with John Yap, Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, during the liquor policy review process last fall. Along with a number of other recommendations in the Report that could really benefit BC's craft beer industry and its customers, Recommendation # 24 was originally proposed by the Guild, the industry organization which represents many of the province's craft brewers. As Beattie recently told me, "We, along with other industry stakeholders, met with Mr. Yap as part of the liquor [policy] review in September and presented our position on a number of key points that our membership felt needed [to be] addressed in the review. One of our key messages was the role that the BC craft brewing community plays in 34 communities in every corner of our province. The jobs created directly in these communities by a brewery opening have a

tremendously positive effect in terms of job creation, spinoff industries and plain old community pride. The fact that this growth has really occurred on its own with no formal support makes the opportunities all the more exciting."

Indeed, much like the growth of BC's craft beer industry, despite a lack of government support or the availability of key tools like maps and brochures, the number of tourists visiting our province's brewery lounges, tasting rooms and tap houses has really exploded over the last few years. For Anthony Frustagli, part owner of Vancouver's Parallel 49 Brewing Company and St. Augustine's Craft Brew House & Kitchen, the steady increase in the number of tourists visiting his establishments has been really noticeable. "It is definitely a regular occurrence now, and one that is becoming much more frequent" he told me. "The growth is especially evident when we analyze interactions through social media. When we first opened up, everyone who checked in through the various social [media] sites was local. Now we regularly see posts and 'check-ins' from people from all over Canada and the US, as well as a few from Europeans and South Americans." The trend has also been noted by Farion in his

restaurants and his brewery, which opened earlier this year and has been working hard to keep up with huge demand.

However, despite the recent gains that craft beer tourism has experienced in our province, there's still some pretty significant opportunity for improvement. "Right now it is a fledgling industry which has developed organically without any marketing or formal organizational help," noted Frustagli, "There is HUGE potential for growth as evidenced by our Cascadian neighbours down south, especially Portland." Beattie agrees, and similarly sees Portland as the example for BC's craft brewers and tourism authorities to emulate. "The obvious example is the success Oregon has realized over the last 25 years, where the beer tourism industry is estimated to contribute over 2.2 billion dollars in revenues annually. We have an abundance of opportunity to work with tourism boards to create more effective awareness programs. I believe all the [current available] information comes from bloggers and beer enthusiasts who have taken on the cause as a result of their passion for the BC craft brewing community."

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