

The Price is Right! Cranbrook Venture Provides Affordable Fun

Profile of Russ Peebles and Funhogz Gear Exchange of Cranbrook

Written by Pauline Swanson

Right from the beginning, self-professed 'funhog' Russ Peebles, had a hunch he'd found his niche in the marketplace with a business that catered to the region's many outdoor enthusiasts. An avid skier, snowboarder, cyclist, and whitewater kayaker, Russ had shopped at consignment stores many times in search of affordable gear for his own recreational passions.

On this mid-winter Saturday afternoon, the friendly proprietor of Funhogz has greeted nineteen customers in the space of half an hour. They represent a cross-section of the population: parents with young children looking to upsize hockey and ski equipment, youths looking at snowboards and sportswear, and adults looking for good deals on X-Country skis. Spring through fall Russ's stock in trade naturally switches to other outdoor items, the bulk of his transactions relating to bikes, bike parts and bike maintenance.

While, initially, stocking the shelves was challenging and took some time, eighteen months later Funhogz is packed to the rafters with pretty much anything a sportsman/outdoor type could want. With competitive consignment rates, Russ is able to keep stock turning over. "The challenge is always there, though, and the search is always on for reliable sources of quality used items," says Russ.

A qualified Forest Technician, Russ was forced to consider his options when the downturn in the forestry sector hit British Columbia hard a couple of years ago. With his characteristic love of adventure and confidence in a half-formulated business idea, he applied and was accepted into the Self Employment Program, sponsored by Service Canada. Subsequent training in the Planning to go into Business

program taught him that there was a bit more to going into business than he'd anticipated. "The training that I got through CFEK managed to dispel any illusions I might have had and I don't think I would have been able to pull it off, or at least do this well, without that help."

Some early decisions, based on that training, paid off. For instance, locating Funhogz at the highly visible spot on Baker Street in Cranbrook, though Russ lives in Kimberley, made his business more central, drawing more customers from a larger area. He was also not overly optimistic in forecasting his first year's income and, instead of running into difficulty, was pleasantly surprised to have underestimated what he would make. Russ continues to live by the mantra that helped get him started: "Pay all your bills the day you get them and don't buy anything unless you have the money."

The store is open 6 days a week, Monday to Saturday, 10 – 5:30. With a couple of casual employees who cover shifts here and there, Russ can now enjoy a little well-earned time off. In the middle of his second year in business, it's easy to see that Funhogz customers are not the only ones having a good time.

Note: store has relocated and business hours have changed

