

2022

ARE YOU READY FOR
A CHANGE OF SCENE?

OK GO

Discover One of
Canada's Most
Entrepreneurial
Regions

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OPPORTUNITY AWAITS IN THE OKANAGAN.

At the heart of the Okanagan Valley sits Kelowna, the anchor of the Central Okanagan. As Canada's fastest-growing metropolitan area, the region allows entrepreneurs, leaders, and businesses to thrive in its supportive, collaborative environment.

Primed for economic growth, Kelowna's business ecosystem is leading the way in Canada's job recovery post-pandemic. Pioneering companies in some of the region's key economic sectors have cultivated an international presence and global recognition thanks to their innovative products and services.

The region's thriving business community, supported by a competitive tax climate, is just the tip of the iceberg. In Kelowna, you'll find all the amenities of a major city with the close-knit feel of a small town. The region's four-season playground and balanced lifestyle mean it's easy to unwind and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

Launched through a partnership between the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, Tourism Kelowna and Accelerate Okanagan, OKGo invites you to discover Kelowna and imagine your team here.

Whether you're looking to select a destination for your next event, launch a startup, or find a home for your expanding business, OKGo's partner organizations have the expertise to make the process seamless.

You'll soon agree that Kelowna is the change of scene you've been searching for.





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TOP OF THE CLASS IN INNOVATION



LEADING RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES ARE NOT GENERALLY CONSIDERED STARTUPS; HOWEVER, THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S OKANAGAN CAMPUS (UBCO) IS JUST THAT.



With many of the hallmarks of a successful startup, including pushing boundaries, nurturing creativity, and fostering community engagement, UBCO has been cultivating and inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators since opening its doors in 2005.



“To be part of this growth trajectory as a startup, not many opportunities like this exist in North America,” says Associate Vice-President & Vice-Principal of Research, Dr. Philip Barker. “Everyone knew it would be a great thing to have a university [in Kelowna],

but the impact of having a top 40 university in your city, you can't underestimate it.”



Thanks to top-notch faculty and close to 10,000 degree-seeking students hailing from more than 100 nations around the world, UBCO's work has led not only to economic prosperity but also to what Barker calls social prosperity: bringing in new perspectives and broadening the ways of thinking about what can be accomplished in the region.

“We have embedded ourselves in the community in a really profound way,” says Barker. “Knowledge that sits on the shelf doesn't help anybody, so we're trying to be deliberate with the kinds of programs and the research that we're doing.”

One such program, Entrepreneurship@UBCO, is an incubator run out of Kelowna's Innovation Centre, offering mentorship, training, and other support so students and graduates can dream big and start their entrepreneurial journey off on the right foot. Since its launch in 2018, early-stage companies that have completed the program have raised more than \$2.5 million in capital and hired over 100 employees.

To further its research and development activity in the region, UBC recently launched its Innovation Precinct on a 60-acre

parcel of land at the Okanagan campus, bringing together some of the University's best and brightest minds to advance ground-breaking research.

These are just two examples of the programs and research being conducted at UBCO that support and encourage growth in the region's key sectors, growth that is plain to see, as Barker notes.



“We're seeing the results manifest in what you see when you walk through Kelowna and see the companies that are here. It feeds forward towards a more vibrant community.”

A HOME FOR EXCELLENCE



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, HANDS-ON TRAINING, AND APPRENTICESHIP ARE FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF MANY OF THE PROGRAMS OFFERED AT OKANAGAN COLLEGE. ON CAMPUS, THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND INDUSTRY INTERSECT, RESULTING IN A SYNERGISTIC PARTNERSHIP.



“We listen to the needs of the region and respond through tangible, applied learning,” says Okanagan College President, Dr. Neil Fassina. “That close connection to the community and industry ensures our programs stay relevant and graduates are ready to meet the skill gaps of today, tomorrow, and years down the road.”

Okanagan College, which has fostered talent in the region since

1963, is the second-largest trades training institute in BC, with four campuses in the province. Graduates are primed for careers in the Central Okanagan thanks to training in areas like engineering, science, viticulture, wine studies, animation, aerospace and commercial aviation.

Applied learning and apprenticeship opportunities with more than 1,300 co-op employers help, too. The college is even encouraging future generations of students through Camp OC, where kids can take part in STEAM-oriented camps.

In 2023, thanks to funding from the Royal Bank of Canada and Accelerate Okanagan, the School of Business plans to launch its new Experiential Entrepreneurship program pending ministry approval,



allowing students to not only imagine their business but set it up as well.

The School of Business faculty are also conducting applied research in areas like rural and social entrepreneurship, as well as in the non-profit sector through the Centre for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Research.

“We are incredibly heartened to see Okanagan College’s mission come to life—and while it may start in the classroom, lab or shop, it certainly doesn’t end there,” Fassina says. “The creativity, talent, ideas, innovation, and commitment of our students and team members truly does transform lives and shape communities for the better.”



WHERE MAKERS MAKE THEIR MARK





HOW DO KELOWNA MANUFACTURERS MAKE THEIR MARK ON THE GLOBAL STAGE?

For starters, the region’s diverse manufacturing sector harnesses the depth and breadth of more than 600 firms that specialize in everything from wood products and composite materials to cannabis and agri-food. The handiwork of the Central Okanagan’s skilled makers is on display in countries around the world. Want a firsthand look at how it all comes together? Let OKGo’s partner organizations host you in Kelowna or bring your team here for your next event so you can get a behind-the-scenes look.

The economic impact from the Central Okanagan’s manufacturing sector resounds throughout the province, too. In fact, the region

contributes to the \$51 billion in annual revenue generated by the sector in BC.

The sector’s strength is furthered by the region’s geographical location. The Okanagan Valley’s dry climate, for example, provides ideal conditions for fibreglass composites and wood manufacturing. Exporting goods worldwide is also seamless thanks to transportation routes to the Port of Vancouver, Calgary, Seattle, and San Francisco.

With UBCO and Okanagan College in their backyard, manufacturing companies can stay ahead of the pack thanks to the extensive research, development, and training taking place in their very own post-secondary institutions.

Makers, innovators, and leaders will find that Kelowna offers endless opportunities to go big and make their mark.

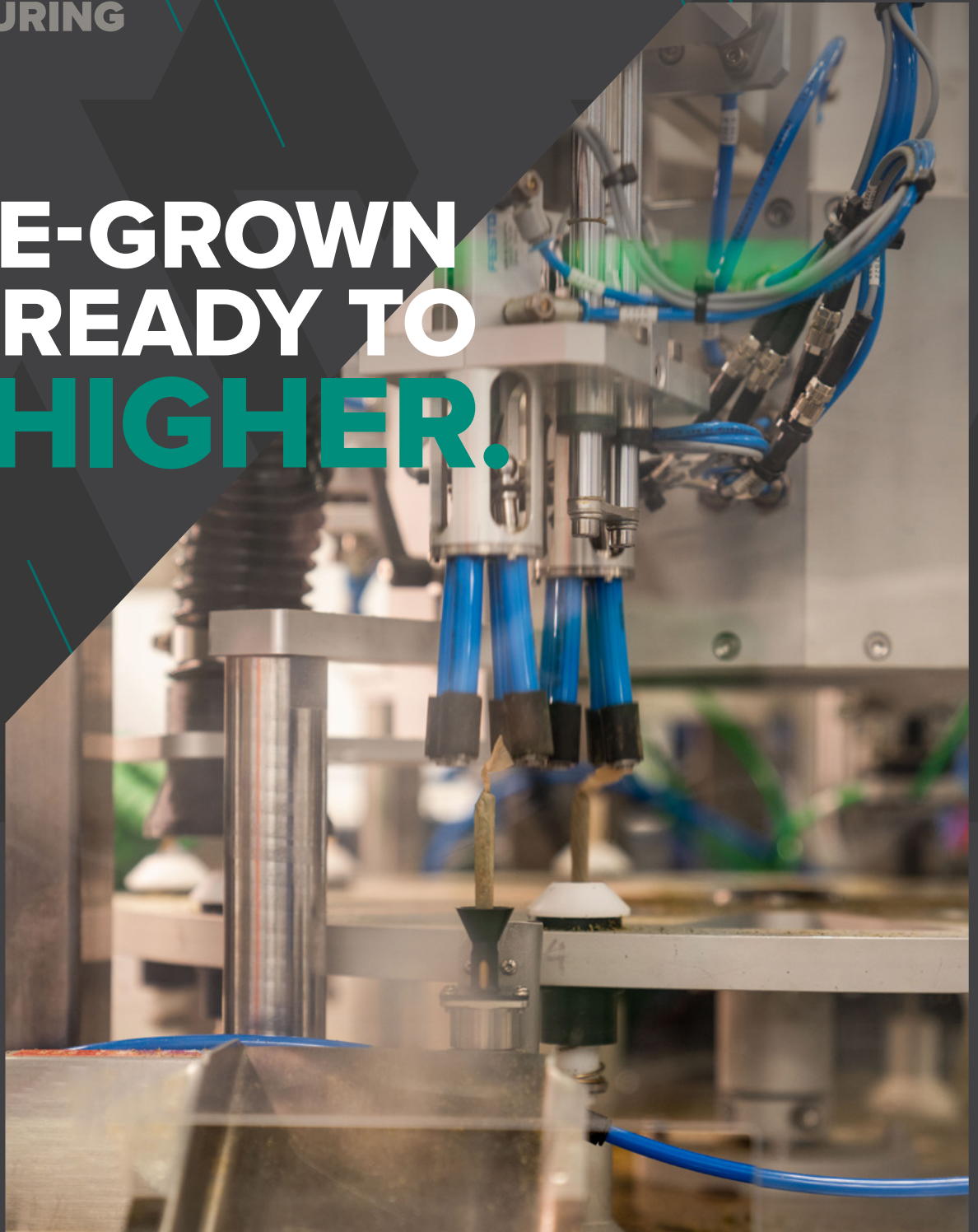
\$51B

IN PROVINCIALLY GENERATED REVENUE

600+

MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

HOME-GROWN AND READY TO GO HIGHER.



The Valens Company, which is one of Canada's most successful cannabis companies, knew that keeping things simple would be the key to their success when cannabis became fully legal.

"Some people overcomplicate cannabis," says Valens CEO, Tyler Robson. "We're really a consumer-packaged goods (CPG) company that manufactures cannabis. It's focusing on the fundamentals and getting out of your own way."

How Valens got to this point is a testament to the company's vision of positioning itself as a global consumer company connected to Kelowna, one of the most cannabis-centric places in the world.

The vertically integrated, publicly-traded company has grown to more than 370 employees with manufacturing facilities in Kelowna, Toronto, and Vancouver. Valens has a strong foothold in Canada and the United States, as well as 19 other countries—and counting.

“We’ve achieved success because we’ve gotten so far ahead of everyone else. It took a while for the market to catch up. We hit the ground running once it went legal federally,” Robson says.

While the company starts with the product in mind, it ends with the needs of its customers. Since cannabis customers don’t fit into one box, Valens transitioned from being a sole extraction company to developing consumer products in the medicinal, wellness, and recreational sectors.

“It’s a personal experience that everyone uses for different reasons,” Robson says.

In a rapidly growing space like cannabis, thinking strategically is a major competitive advantage. Valens’ Chief Commercial Officer, Adam Shea, says that thinking five steps ahead is part of the company’s DNA.

“A lot of companies in the cannabis field are reactive... We go to where the puck is about to go, not where it is,” he adds.

Basing Valens in Kelowna was also a strategic move. Both Robson and Shea tout the cannabis culture in the Okanagan Valley and the local officials and businesses who supported Valens’ operations as Canada moved towards legalization.

The company also benefits from local talent who are tuned in to the needs of the cannabis sector and understand the market.



“You can hire accountants and lawyers, but finding seasoned cannabis talent is very tough,” Robson says. “The depth of experience here is second to none.”



“Being part of the Okanagan community has always been an asset to us. We are in the business of making products that can potentially enhance people’s lives—and we cannot think of a better place to do it.”

—
Tyler Robson
Valens CEO

As they grow, Valens is looking forward to more countries opening up to cannabis and more consumers looking for safe, high-quality products that are effective for their individual needs. This forward-looking mentality combined with the fusing of deep knowledge of cannabis and consumer goods makes Valens a force to be reckoned with.

“Look out, we’re just getting started. The bar is quite high, but we have the team to achieve it.” Shea says.





THE SOUND OF SUCCESS



While it may seem hard to believe, Geometrik, one of the largest wood ceiling manufacturers on North America’s West Coast, started out as a children’s furniture shop. The Kelowna-based company was operating in a 3,500 square foot workshop when Vladimir and Natasha Bolshakov purchased it in 2007.

The furniture production was soon phased out to focus on incoming orders for wooden acoustical panels, a craft Vladimir learned in his native country of Ukraine and honed while working in the U.S. for four years before settling in Kelowna.

The shift in business brought exponential growth to Geometrik—they’ve twice moved to larger manufacturing facilities to keep up with demand. The company’s fully customizable and ready-to-install products are now manufactured in an efficient 30,000 square foot factory.

As an active participant in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Geometrik is focused on reducing or eliminating the

environmental impacts of its manufacturing process.

“Our mission is to be a sustainable business—not just by using raw/recyclable materials, but in a broader sense, by providing sustainable employment and sustainable relationships with our suppliers and community,” Bolshakov says. “This focus for the last 14 years has resulted in enduring relationships both internally, within our company, and externally with our customers.”

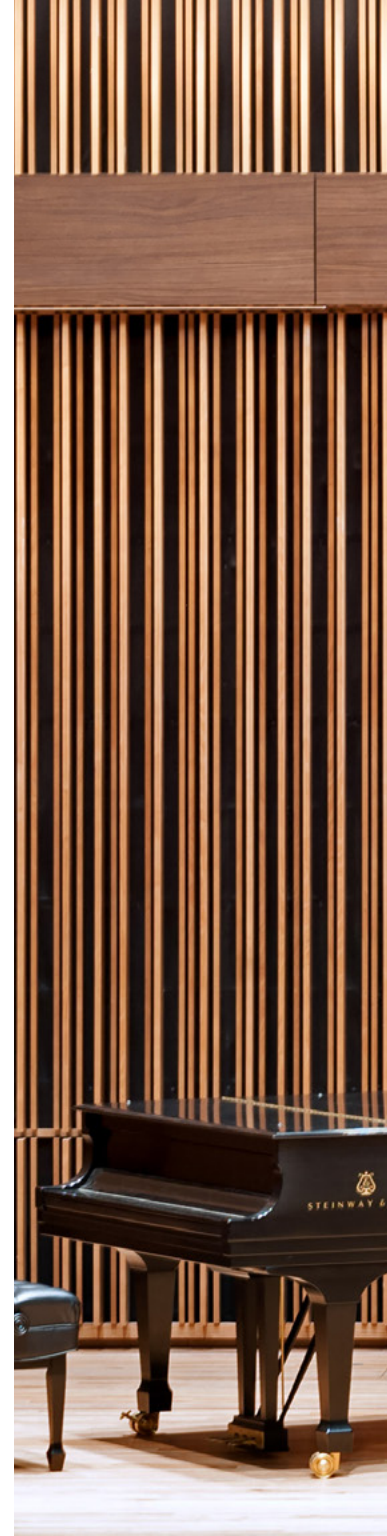
This commitment to sustainability, along with Vladimir and Natasha’s combined experience in industrial engineering and economics respectively, have been integral to Geometrik’s success. Add to that the combination of their talented, highly skilled workforce and leading-edge industry technology, and it’s no wonder they’ve been able to consistently add to their impressive portfolio of projects.

This portfolio includes close-to-home projects like the Okanagan College

Center of Excellence and UBCO Teaching and Learning Centre, as well as international projects like the Law building at Stanford University and the Illumina Campus at Lincoln Centre. With their array of completed projects and a continued focus on growth, you just may be admiring Geometrik’s work firsthand the next time you’re in a building with beautifully designed acoustical panels.

“We fell in love with the Central Okanagan on our first visit in 2007. It was then and there we made the decision to build a company and commitment to the Okanagan Valley.”

—
Vladimir Bolshakov
Geometrik CEO and President



FORMING AN ALL- NATURAL SOLUTION



Many entrepreneurial journeys start out of a founder's home, often the garage or basement.

For Barbra Johnston, the journey started at her kitchen sink, where she launched Natures Formulae Health Products Ltd. more than 30 years ago.

As a pioneer in Western Canada's health and wellness industry, it was Barbra's vision and dedication to developing all-natural products that laid the foundation for the company's success.

"We are one of a few Western-based manufacturers in the cosmeceutical and nutraceutical industry," says President, Alison Yesilcimen.

Today, Natures Formulae has moved on from Barbra's kitchen sink, now occupying a 30,000 square foot facility in Kelowna. More than 80 team members work at the facility, developing and manufacturing the company's own line of

branded products, as well as private label and custom all-natural products for national and international brands.



"We are honoured to have developed thousands of products in our in-house research and development lab," says Yesilcimen. "Our formulators seek out products and ingredients that can drive new innovation."

The search for unique and innovative natural ingredients is a global endeavour but starts in the company's backyard. In fact, Kelowna's official flower, the Arrowleaf Balsamroot, or Okanagan Sunflower as it's

"Many organizations have supported our business throughout the last thirty years. More recently, we have worked with UBC [Okanagan] and Okanagan College to find graduates looking to start their careers. Many of our employees have graduated from these incredible institutions."

—
Alison Yesilcimen
Natures Formulae President

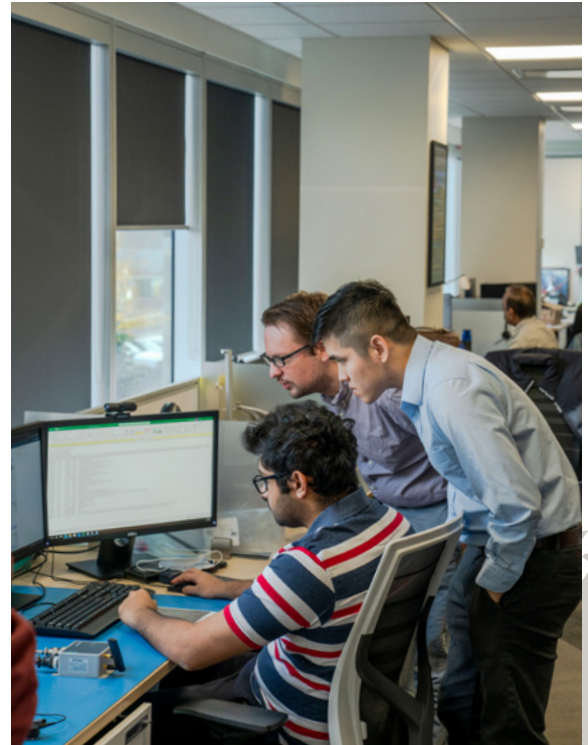
known to residents, is just one of the local ingredients making its way into Natures Formulae's products.

"We are all about health and wellness, which is why living in nature's playground has been instrumental in shaping our organization," Yesilcimen says. "Natural is our niche. Full stop."



WE'RE FLYING TO NEW HEIGHTS





TAKING THE WORLD'S SKIES BY STORM

If you want to see an aerospace powerhouse in action, set your GPS to 49 degrees North and 119 degrees West.

When you land, you'll find yourself in Kelowna, where 18% of British Columbia's aerospace sector resides. Some of the world's leading helicopter support centres are located in the region, with startups and well-established companies in the sector creating cutting-edge avionic technology.

Soon, Kelowna will also be home to the KF Aerospace Centre for Excellence. This sustainably-built, 60,000 square foot facility, shaped like the fuselage and wings of an aircraft, will house a state-of-the-art aviation museum,

showcasing the region's rich history within Canada's aerospace sector. Plus, the Centre's conference facility will provide plenty of opportunities to connect with thought-leaders and industry experts when your team meets in Kelowna.

The best part is that the talent for aerospace is hometown. Thanks to UBCO and Okanagan College, graduating engineers and developers can launch their careers working for startups and companies right in their own city, putting their talent towards expanding what the Okanagan Valley offers.

If you're ready to discover some of the world's best in aerospace, just follow the coordinates.



\$2.4B

IN ANNUAL REVENUE GENERATED PROVINCIALY

18%

OF BC'S AEROSPACE COMPANIES ARE LOCATED IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

TRACKING THE FUTURE FROM ABOVE



As a global leader in satellite communications and intelligent connectivity, SKYTRAC was ready to take on the challenge of developing an innovative solution to address the issue of missing aircraft, for good.

This challenge was put forward by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in response to the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in 2014. The ICAO also established the Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) requirements, which come into effect in 2023.

SKYTRAC

SKYTRAC's Autonomous Distress Tracking (ADT) was the first GADSS-compliant product to go to market. From there, the Kelowna-based company signed a partnership with Embraer, the third-largest aircraft manufacturer in the world, to add GADSS technology to all new E1 and E2 jets.

This ADT system is just one example of SKYTRAC rising to the challenge for its customers and the industry.

"The reason Embraer selected us was for our superior technical expertise and commitment to quality. We stood out as the only company working with previous years of flight data and aircraft tracking. We were the only company agile enough to meet the rapid timelines required for such a project.



The company was founded in Penticton by a group of experienced aviators who wanted to explore the possibilities of GPS technology being used for non-military purposes. Since its humble beginnings, SKYTRAC has brought to market products in tracking, flight data monitoring, and satellite communications. Their work touches law enforcement, aerial firefighting, emergency medical services, the oil and gas industry, and government sectors.

In addition to its work on GADSS, SKYTRAC partnered with Iridium to offer some of the fastest Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite connectivity to manned and unmanned aviation through the Iridium Certus service.

As one can imagine, these game-changing technologies have led to exponential growth for the company. SKYTRAC now has more than 120 employees in its Kelowna, Ottawa, and Victoria offices.

"It has really been a success story going from a startup in a basement to a globally-renowned aviation data company," Manson says.

Even as they have gotten bigger, SKYTRAC keeps the same level of expertise, says



"I've travelled with this company and been to a lot of places. In the Okanagan Valley, there's a culture with the talent we hire that is different from other locales. It's a hidden gem."

—
Jarrod Manson

SKYTRAC Program Manager

Head of Marketing, Reuben Mann. "We're a true all-in-one provider. We don't just give you the box, we give you the connectivity, all the different capabilities. If someone wants a new capability, we're literally creating it for them and going to market with it," he says.

But what makes SKYTRAC unique amongst other large avionics companies is its commitment to the Central Okanagan. Manson himself is a product of Okanagan College. "We're not shipping people in from other markets. We're hiring locally and training people up," he says.

The future of aerospace is fast paced, and the real-world implications are truly lifesaving.

"It is definitely an interesting ride. Buckle up. Every day is exciting and there's always something different," Mann says. "I can't imagine working somewhere else, it's fun and challenging and I feel like we're making a difference."

OUT OF THIS WORLD LIFT OFF

Renowned worldwide for the aircraft audio communications equipment they design and manufacture, Jupiter Avionics has been recognized as one of Canada's fastest-growing companies for each of the last three years.



Jupiter was founded in 2011 after Northern Airborne Technology (NAT) closed due to restructuring. Several senior executives from NAT saw a new door ready to be opened as one was closing and assembled the Jupiter team with well-respected avionics professionals who had previously contributed to NAT's success.

The products Jupiter designs and manufactures, which are produced mainly for mission-oriented helicopters (think medical transport, firefighting, law enforcement, and emergency search and rescue), include audio controllers, wireless intercoms, and a multitude of accessories and interfaces.

"Virtually all our products are exported, and our customers hail from every corner of the globe," says President, Mitch Stinson. "Although we do not have a high local profile, we are well-known worldwide in our market."

Stinson adds that the company's strategy is to provide highly customizable products while maintaining short lead times. They have developed a "nimble and adaptive approach to meeting market needs," he says, which combined with the longstanding expertise of its founders, is surely a contributor to the company's reputation and success.

As Jupiter Avionics carries on its growth trajectory, there is no doubt that the impact of the company's work will continue to be felt throughout the world.



"The core of our team has lived in the Kelowna area for more than 30 years. When we decided to form our own company, it was a no-brainer to base ourselves in Kelowna... we knew we'd be able to attract new employees to the area given its wide range of year-round activities."

—
Mitch Stinson

Jupiter Avionics President

LANDING ON QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE



Starting with just four employees in 1990, Alpine Aerotech is a perfect example of the success that can be achieved in the Okanagan. Today, the company is one of the largest helicopter customer support centres in the world, employing 150 people between their two BC facilities, including their main headquarters in West Kelowna.



“We chose the Central Okanagan because of the many established helicopter operators in the region; the Okanagan is also home to

some of the longest-standing operators in Canada,” says President, Jeff Denomme. “The region has a variety of companies that work internationally but still call the Okanagan home, providing a significant contribution to our local economy.”

It was these established helicopter operators that contributed, in part, to the company’s success, adds Denomme.

“There was a need to provide heavy maintenance and overhaul services to help support the local industry, providing innovative solutions through our manufacturing capabilities and fostering relationships with our customers has made [Alpine] Aerotech what it is today.”

Thanks to its best-in-class reputation, Alpine Aerotech now provides services to some of the most successful companies in the world from its almost 100,000 square feet of combined manufacturing and office space. The company has

been a recognized service centre for Italy’s Leonardo Helicopters since 2017 and is one of the largest and most reputable support facilities for Texas-based Bell Helicopters.

“The Okanagan is full of opportunity and continues

to grow,” adds Denomme. “All you have to do is take a drive through the Valley to see the diverse industries and companies that have succeeded here.”

Of course, you can always see it by helicopter, too.

“The Okanagan offers a great work/life balance. You don’t have to travel far to take in all the amenities the region has to offer. The local community is also very personable and very willing to work together.”

—
Jeff Denomme
Alpine Aerotech President



OUR TERROIR IS FILLED WITH HISTORY AND INNOVATION





VITICULTURE IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN IS MOVING TOWARDS A NEW SEASON.

As the birthplace of BC’s wine industry, the Okanagan continues to lead the way as one of Canada’s top winery and tourism destinations.

In addition to the hard work of area viticulturists and winemakers, the Summerland Research and Development Centre, located 40 minutes south of downtown Kelowna, along with research facilities at UBCO and Okanagan College, allow the industry to consistently improve its production and offerings.

These improvements include a concentrated effort to be more

sustainable in all aspects of the business, from farming to winemaking. Being mindful of the effects of climate change, both established and new wineries are making the move towards organic practices and certification. Limiting the use of pesticides and capitalizing on the natural ecosystem on each farm, area wineries are closing the loop to preserve and protect the region.

To meet BC VQA (Vintners Quality Alliance) standards, wineries work to ensure that each vintage matches what is expected of the varietal. When you drink one of Kelowna’s award-winning wines, you can take comfort in knowing it’s exactly how it should be.

Uncork the Central Okanagan, swirl it around, and take a sip of everything the region has to offer.

84%

OF BC’S VINEYARD ACREAGE IS LOCATED IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

\$2.8B

IN ECONOMIC IMPACT IN THE BC WINE INDUSTRY

\$476M+

IN ECONOMIC IMPACT GENERATED FROM WINE TOURISM IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

AN ORGANIC TRANSFORMATION



As one of the original eight wineries in the Okanagan Valley, CedarCreek Estate Winery is a seasoned veteran who happily works with the other wineries in the region's developed viticulture sector.

But CedarCreek isn't one to rest on its laurels. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

The Central Okanagan winery, which has been named Canadian Winery of the Year at the InterVin International Wine Awards three times (most recently in 2019), is undertaking a significant transformation to be a fully organic vineyard.

According to Winemaker, Taylor Whelan, it's a fundamental shift in how they're thinking about their wines and their connection to the land they've farmed for more than 40 years.

"Everything you spray on the vineyard goes back into Okanagan Lake," Whelan says. "The lake is our drinking water. As we conceptualize the closed loop, we want to make an effort to leave this place a little bit better than how we found it."



The closed loop Whelan speaks about is the holistic philosophy of cultivating the natural ecosystem of the 50-plus acres on which CedarCreek resides. The winery doesn't use anything that wouldn't be found outside the natural area and relies on animals and plants to naturally combat disease and pests. In addition, CedarCreek employs an

extensive composting program, leaving nothing to waste.

The shift in thinking can be summarized this way: in order to go forward, CedarCreek is going back.

"Conventional agriculture is something that started in the last century, and it changed the way people farmed. A similar thing happened with vineyards. We're on the journey back to what we were doing 100-150 years ago," Whelan says.

"People can say viticulture is pretty natural but once you look under the hood, often it's not," he adds. "So, we're making the commitment to say we're going back and trying to be as natural as we can."

In 2019, CedarCreek became certified organic in its farming and winemaking, part of a growing movement. In fact, when CedarCreek started the organic process, 4% of the Okanagan's wineries were organic. Now, it's close to 18%.

And what about the quality of the wine? Did the move to organic maintain CedarCreek's strong reputation?

CedarCreek's Organic Viticulturist, Kurt Simcic, says it's even better. In his



"Many tourists who come to the region are surprised at what we can produce here. I love to see more international recognition for the Okanagan happening because there are amazing wines here."

—
Kurt Simcic

CedarCreek's Organic Viticulturist

mind, going organic "led to a new range of wines, a tier above platinum. It's been a natural evolution—the grapes grow differently, the flavour profile is changing, Taylor is producing more unique and more valuable wines."

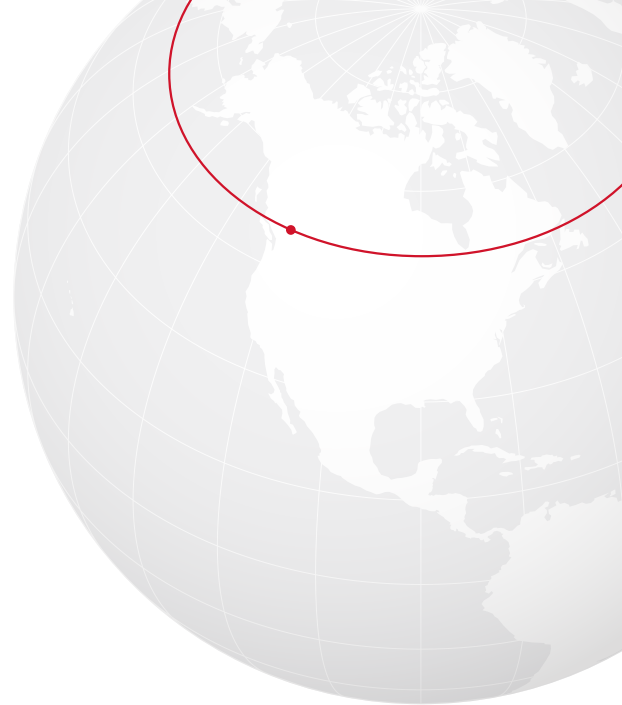
Whelan and Simcic point to organics as the first major achievement in a journey. CedarCreek is also partnering with Regeneration Canada, a national movement with a focus on regenerative land management, to see how they can further care for the ecosystem in which they farm.

"We're not going to sit back and say, "We're organic."

We can always do more and do it better," Simcic states. "That's an important piece to how we're carrying on. It's a super fun and exciting project to be a part of."

If the winery's track record over its 35-year history is any indication, there is sure to be more excitement, innovation, and award-winning wine in CedarCreek's future.

AN UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE



After some lakeside contemplation, self-professed Glamour Farmers, Curtis Krouzel and Sheri-Lee Turner-Krouzel took the plunge to build their “slice of heaven,” 50th Parallel Estate Winery, on a 61-acre estate in Lake Country, north of Kelowna.

“The Central Okanagan provides one of the most diverse regions in the world in which to produce world-class wines and boasts uncompromised beauty and complementary tourism experiences that draw guests from around the world,” says Krouzel.

The couple hand planted the winery’s first 10 acres of vines in 2009. Krouzel used his engineering background

to improve the process by designing a planting machine that was able to navigate difficult slopes on the property. From there, the team took on the challenge of growing notoriously difficult Pinot Noir grapes and went all-in with the varietal. In fact, it is the only red wine produced onsite, making up about 35% of the winery’s production.



In 2020, 50th Parallel launched its Glamour Farming canned wine, aligning with consumer trends and offering a more sustainable, fully recyclable option.

50th Parallel’s original winery was expanded by 15,000 square feet in 2018. The architecturally stunning space includes a tasting room, flexible indoor-outdoor space for banquets and events, and BLOCK ONE Restaurant, which made OpenTable’s list of Top 100 Restaurants in Canada for 2021.

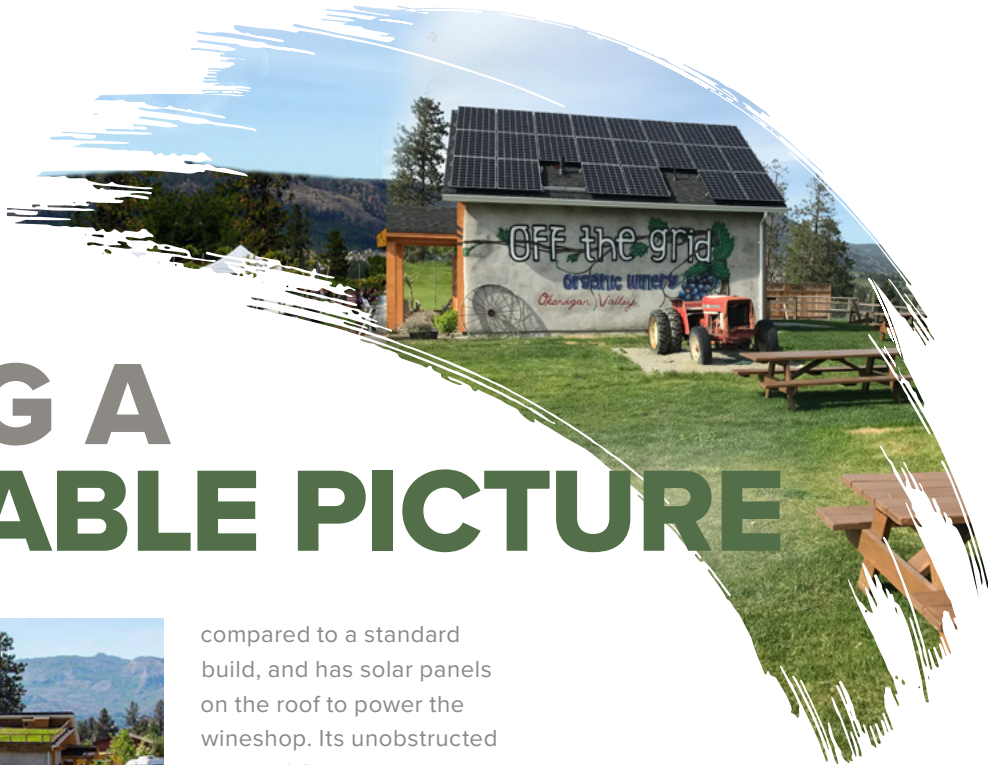
In addition to helping source and secure meetings and conferences, Krouzel notes that Tourism Kelowna’s team “was very helpful in the early years, helping bring

influencers and media to the winery to spread the word about our up-and-coming new business.”

“We have managed to achieve our goals of building a place where people want to come and visit and experience our wines, and most importantly we have built an incredible team that we are proud to call our 50th family.”

“Let’s be honest, there is no lakefront city in the world like Kelowna. We are not an emerging international destination... we have arrived.”

—
Curtis Krouzel
50th Parallel Estate Proprietor



PAYNTING A SUSTAINABLE PICTURE



For more than 100 years, farmers in the Paynter family have worked the same plot of land in West Kelowna. Today, brothers Nigel and Travis Paynter, along with their wives, Sheri—one of a growing group of female winemakers in the region—and Hayley (plus numerous family members who are employed full time) practice sustainable farming on the land to grow grapes that are made into premium, organic wine.

The Paynter's founded Off the Grid Organic Winery, which is certified through the Pacific Agricultural Certification Society, in 2015. Now producing about 2,500 cases of wine per year, Off the Grid was the sixth winery in BC to have both its grapes

and wines certified as organic. But producing amazing organic wine is just one facet of Off the Grid's existence.

True to its name, Off the Grid is committed to its sustainability efforts in all aspects of its operation. The wineshop was built out of straw bales, which offer double the insulation value



compared to a standard build, and has solar panels on the roof to power the wineshop. Its unobstructed views of Okanagan Lake and permaculture-in-action operation make it a must-stop destination for tourists and wine enthusiasts.

In addition to wine tastings, locals and visitors alike are also welcomed for yoga classes, live music, and fundraising events for the BC SPCA. A visit with the winery's flock of rescue animals, including goats, who can explore and play up on the wineshop roof, sheep, and chickens, round out the guest experience and their grazing also helps eliminate weeds.

When asked about the future of the business, Nigel says his goal is to keep the winery and vineyard going for another 100 years.

"Success for us is being able to educate people on sustainable farming practices, and of course, selling out of wine."

"The wine industry in the entire Okanagan has been so welcoming. Every winemaker looks to help one another, not just in starting [a winery] but constantly with ideas and tips should any problems arise."

—
Nigel Paynter
Off the Grid Proprietor

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF SUCCESS





KELOWNA PUTS ITS BEST FOOD FORWARD.

Thanks to the planting of the first apple trees more than 160 years ago, Kelowna's agriculture industry is now known worldwide for its exceptional tree fruits.

The region is also home to thriving cannabis and value-added food and beverage processing industries.

Farms in the region benefit from the Central Okanagan's unique soil, topography, and hot, sunny, dry climate. Moderate temperatures and higher altitudes in the region also create longer harvests for several varieties of fruit. When other parts of the world have completed their season, the Central Okanagan is still going strong.

Agricultural innovation has moved forward thanks to the work being done at the Summerland Research and Development Centre. Scientists at the centre breed new varieties of apples, while also conducting research on high-value crops like wine grapes and tree fruits, both of which contribute significantly to BC's economy.

With the infrastructure and facilities in place to support the industry, as well as related post-secondary programs, it's no wonder Kelowna and the Central Okanagan are an agricultural powerhouse.

It's undeniable that the future will be tasty and well stocked thanks to Central Okanagan farmers and innovators.

794
**AGRI-FOOD
BUSINESSES**

300+
**FRUIT AND TREE
FARMING BUSINESSES
IN THE CENTRAL
OKANAGAN**

\$130M+
**GENERATED IN
WHOLESALE REVENUE
FROM BC'S TREE FRUIT
INDUSTRY**

BE JEALOUS: MARKETS COVET OKANAGAN CHERRIES



When it comes to farming, it's all about timing. That's what makes Okanagan-based Jealous Fruits the envy of cherry farms throughout the world.

The company capitalizes on the higher altitude of its orchards and Okanagan Lake's moderating effect on temperature to extend cherry harvest into mid-September, so they can export product long after others have completed their seasons.

"There's a big gap between Northern Hemisphere production and when the Southern Hemisphere production starts out of Chile and Argentina, as they don't start until November," says Jealous Fruits' Sales Manager, Julie McLachlan.

jealous fruits

“If we can pick fruit in early September, store it or put it on a boat to China, it’ll be sold in mid-October, when there will be literally nothing available in the world except us.”

Launched as a fruit stand in the early 1900s, Jealous Fruits is owned by the Geen family, with David Geen serving as the company’s CEO, running the operation with his two sons, Eric and Alex. The company is now the only vertically-integrated

their years of experience and David’s reputation as one of the top cherry growers in the world, they went all-in. That was when their international business took off.

Growing cherries can be a risky investment, though. McLachlan notes that “cherries are a high-value crop because of its finicky relationship to heat and rain.”

Moreover, to compete as an international agricultural exporter, farms have to produce a significant volume. To meet international demand, Jealous Fruits has invested heavily in its infrastructure.



cherry grower in Canada, meaning they have the capacity to grow, process, and package their crops in-house—controlling the process from blossom to box, as McLachlan notes.

“When you buy from us, you know you’re getting our fruit,” she says.

In the 1990s, David Geen saw an opening in the global market for cherries. With

In fact, the company opened its new, state-of-the-art 140,000 square foot facility in 2020.

The facility offers highly precise weight accuracy thanks to automatic box fillers. The latest technology, including the first UNITEC automatic palletizers in North America and optical sorting equipment, means gentler handling and quick identification of damaged product.



At its busiest, Jealous Fruits employs up to 1,200 staff, with more than 1,000 pickers throughout their 1,100 acres of cherry trees.

In 2021, the company produced its largest crop to date: nearly 7,000 tonnes, a 250% increase from the previous year. McLachlan says they are processing about 18 tons an hour.

jobs created and seeing our products shipped to markets around the world.”

“We’re very proud of the reputation that we have in the Central Okanagan and worldwide,” adds McLachlan. “It’s a testament to what David and his wife Laura have been putting into the company since the 1990s. It’s been a long time coming.”

“There’s no place like the Okanagan. There’s a great sense of community, a lot of growth happening in the Valley. There’s quite a future for us.”

Julie McLachlan

Jealous Fruits Sales Manager

In addition to mainland China, the farm has a sustained presence throughout Asia, including Taiwan and Japan. Jealous Fruits also exports to Europe and in 2022, they hope to enter the Korean market.

Geen says it’s extremely gratifying to see all of their hard work bearing fruit. “I take personal satisfaction in the



BEST IN BREED

Here in the Central Okanagan, industry-leading companies can be found in a multitude of sectors, including the booming cannabis industry. Having received its Nursery Cultivation licence from Health Canada in 2021, Kelowna-based Klonetics is one of those companies, offering an extensive selection of proprietary cannabis strains that medical growers and licensed producers can use to increase revenues.

“Klonetics has a portfolio of in-demand cannabis strains and will provide licensed producers and growers with plantlets or Ready to Flower™ plants, resulting in increased crop yields and higher quality genetics,” says the company’s CEO, David Brough. “We will be the premier cannabis cloning company that is cultivating in Canada.”

Once they reach full capacity in 2022, Klonetics will employ 50 people and produce nearly four million Ready



to Flower™ plants out of its almost 25,000 square foot Kelowna facility, where each room is sealed and ventilated to the highest Goods Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards.

The Klonetics team is made up of world-class specialists who have access to the best technology in the field.

“We did consider multiple locations throughout Canada; after comprehensive due

diligence, Kelowna provided us with the best opportunity to thrive,” says Brough. “We continue to attract the industry’s top scientific talent from all parts of Canada.”

Thanks to its partnerships with some of the most reputable breeders across the globe, Klonetics now offers the largest breeder-certified cannabis strain catalogue in the world to licensed Canadian producers.

Klonetics also partners with VEXSL, a transport company specializing in climate sensitive, high-risk and high-value controlled goods, to ensure its products arrive intact.

Being recognized as a disruptor in the industry is how Klonetics defines success. The company’s existing accomplishments, coupled with the fact that they’re sourcing additional space to expand, leaves no question that they are already on their desired trajectory.

“There is a massive scientific component to cannabis that the Okanagan region is leading. Klonetics is leading the way on how cannabis is studied and developed for cultivation to produce the finest and cleanest medical and recreational products in the market.”

—
David Brough
Klonetics CEO

THE KARMA IS GOOD HERE



As successful tree-fruit farmers, Karma and Kuku Gill worked and raised their kids on their Okanagan apple orchard—30 years later, the kids are all grown up and working alongside their parents to operate Farming Karma Fruit Co., the agritourism business the Gills launched in 2019. The transition from well-respected orchardists to successful producers of value-added fruit products and tourism experiences was supported by the community.

“Whether it was learning about manufacturing practices and equipment or retail sales and distribution, our community was able to assist us in different ways,” says Karma and Kuku’s son, Avi Gill, who is also the company’s president. It was a desire “to give back to the community,” he adds, as well as “the hope of sparking the interest of the next generation of agricultural pioneers,” that inspired Karma and Kuku to launch their family-owned and operated business.

Avi’s wife, Binny, and younger brother, Sumeet, are also involved in the business, using their unique combination of skills to make the company a success.



At the Gills’ Kelowna property, you’ll find Farming Karma’s production facility, where their line of fruit sodas, which are free of added concentrates, preservatives, and sugars, are made.

Reflecting back on community partnerships, it was Peter Boyd of Independent Grocer who gave the Gills their first retail opportunity. After just three years in business, and thanks to some initial guidance from

Boyd, Farming Karma Sodas can now be found in more than 3,000 stores across BC and Ontario, as well as select stores in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Yukon.

Avi says being situated in the Okanagan and having the ability to build off the consumer desire for the region’s fruit has helped Farming Karma establish a solid reputation. The local community is also to thank.

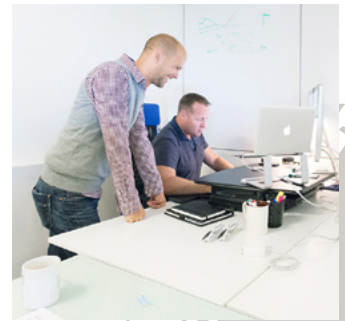
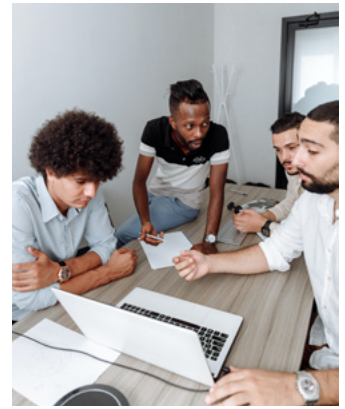
“When you’re looking to collaborate [in the Okanagan], there is always someone who is willing to help make a positive impact on your business.”

“The support from the community is immense and there is no other place you would want to start. It’s accessible and easy to create a buzz in this community—consumers here are progressive and always looking to support local businesses.”

—
Avi Gill
Farming Karma President

GAMING THE SYSTEM FOR SUCCESS





PICTURE THIS.

A club of penguins sets the stage for a group of creative hippos to take on capitalism and dungeon dwarves. Meanwhile, companies and gamers around the world delight when their superhero triumphs against the most treacherous villains in the land—bad internal communication and slow Internet.

This isn't fantasy, it's happening here in the Central Okanagan, one of Canada's most entrepreneurial regions, where the forward-thinking and risk-taking digital sector continues to grow, making the world more efficient and more entertaining.

Guided by visionary leaders, the sector's close to 12,000 employees make the region's digital tech companies successful with their ingenuity, tenacity, and out-of-the-box thinking.

These digital heroes are supported by trusted sidekicks like Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster, who invested \$950 million to support those with the will and desire to build upon Kelowna's top-notch digital ecosystem.

The companies leading the way in Kelowna's digital sector are creating an impact worldwide, all while enjoying one of the world's best views and lifestyles.

\$1.67B

**IN ECONOMIC IMPACT
IN THE CENTRAL
OKANAGAN**

36km

**OF DARK FIBRE
NETWORK**

690+

**TECH COMPANIES
IN THE CENTRAL
OKANAGAN**

HUNGRY, HUNGRY FOR ENTERTAINMENT



Hyper Hippo's success perfectly illustrates the John C. Maxwell-coined term, failing forward. By learning from their mistakes and taking a new, creative approach, Hyper Hippo's team launched its flagship game and set off on an unstoppable growth trajectory.

It started in 2012, when Lance Priebe founded Hyper Hippo after leaving Disney, which had acquired his first Kelowna-based company, Club Penguin, in 2007. Priebe's first venture helped put Kelowna's tech community on the map, as it was still seen as a "remote" community in BC when he launched Club Penguin.



With \$5 million in startup capital for his new venture, Priebe and the Hyper Hippo team got to work on building Mech Mice, which was slated to include an online game, television show, and more. Six months in, with almost no capital left, it was clear that Mech Mice would not be a success. They learned from their mistakes and Priebe gave the team the freedom to take risks and build anything they wanted over the following six months.

Through this process, AdVenture Capitalist was created and successfully launched in 2015. Seven years later, the idle game (sometimes called clicker or incremental games) has been downloaded more than 50 million times and is one of the most successful mobile titles ever released.



Hyper Hippo's presence in Kelowna is one of the reasons that the Central Okanagan is known globally as a digital animation and gaming powerhouse.

"I can walk on Google's campus and say we're from Kelowna, and they say, 'Oh yeah, Hyper Hippo.' We've been very blessed, and it proves that this world from an industry perspective is getting smaller and smaller," says Hyper Hippo's CEO, Sam Fisher, who believes that the biggest key to the company's success is working strategically in a spirit of true partnership. The simple philosophy that guides the company is also key.

"We're not educators, we're not politicians, we're entertainers," says Fisher. "We bring that little bit of entertainment to your day to make things just a little bit better."

In its quest to attract top talent, Fisher notes that Hyper Hippo has to "take care of the people and give them a good place where they want to be and live. Kelowna is first-class when it comes to that." The company is too, as evidenced by the Best Places to Work award they received in 2021 from gamesindustry.biz.

Most recently, Hyper Hippo launched *Dungeon Dwarves*, its first idle game on Netflix, which is currently available in 15 languages in more than 190 countries across



"You're always working with new trends, new technology, new people, and new players [in gaming]. It doesn't matter how established you are, you gotta be scrappy. Our focus is on how we get things done."

—
Sam Fisher
Hyper Hippo CEO

the globe; 14 new languages will be available in an upcoming release.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for us to collaborate with a team who clearly loves games as much as we do and who support our vision

of entertaining and inspiring players around the world," said Priebe in a press release for the game's launch.

Based on their track record, it's likely gaming history will continue to be made by Hyper Hippo for years to come.





BUILDING A SOLID BASE FOR GROWTH

When a business is included on three fastest-growing company lists in one year, you know they are going places. This was certainly the case for Kelowna-based Bananatag, who in 2020 was listed on *Deloitte's* Technology Fast 500 North America List, *The Globe and Mail's* list of Canada's Top Growing Companies, and *Rocket Builders* annual Ready to Rocket list, which profiles BC tech companies who they predict will grow faster than their peers by delivering on technology sector trends.

The rise to the top started when Corey Wagner helped launch Bananatag in 2011. He and his co-founders, who all grew up in the Okanagan, set out to help companies, especially those with a distributed workforce, successfully deliver their internal communication.

"Our core belief is that internal communication moves

people, and people move companies," says Wagner. "Our solutions have been developed for enterprises who are looking to bring employee communication and employee experience to a new, modern level."

Over 10 years, the Kelowna-based company grew to 150 employees and opened an office in Vancouver. In March 2021, Bananatag was propelled even further ahead when it merged with Germany's Staffbase, a company with complementary software and strength in the European market, to form the world's largest and fastest-growing internal communications company. While the Bananatag name has been retired, the ethos of the company remains.

Staffbase now employs more than 675 people across North America and Europe, providing service to 1,350+ businesses worldwide,



"Starting a business in the Central Okanagan is great because you and your employees get to enjoy a lot of the benefits of being near a major centre, without a lot of the downsides."

— **Corey Wagner**

Managing Director, North America, Staffbase

including companies like Adidas, Audi, and Ikea.

While Wagner notes that the institutions and infrastructure in the Okanagan provided great support for the business, he believes it's the world-

class people in Kelowna that are the biggest draw.

"When new team members join, they always comment that everyone is so nice, people recognize that, and they want to be part of it."



NO MORE LAG? WTF!

Steady, sustained growth is a feature of many Central Okanagan companies and is certainly the case for WTFast, which launched in 2009 to create plug and play network optimization for gamers. Today, the company employs 40 people, has 11 patents to its name, and makes millions of gamers very happy.

The happiness of the end user is achieved through the company's Gamers' Private Network (GPN), which is similar in nature to a Virtual Private Network (VPN). WTFast's patented technology finds the fastest connection from a gamer's computer to the game server, minimizing the network latency, or ping as it is known in the world of online gaming, that gamers despise.

It is the "interesting and challenging/novel work" the company is doing, which includes developing technology to level the playing

field through connection equalization, that CEO and Co-founder, Rob Bartlett, says allows the company to attract and retain top talent. That and the fact that "the Okanagan is one of the nicest places to live in Canada."

"Like many Albertans, we spent some time vacationing in the Okanagan. We got tired of the cold Alberta winters and generally fell in the love with the great work/life balance in the Okanagan, so we decided to move here," says Bartlett.

As a self-described "Internet Hermit," Bartlett says it was encouragement from the team at Accelerate Okanagan that pushed him to get out of his shell and take advantage of face-to-face opportunities in the region. This face time was vital for the company's growth, Bartlett adds, as it allowed him to secure millions in investment and close distribution deals with multi-billion-dollar corporations.

"The region is a great place to build tech and while we are doing a lot of remote working these days, it isn't hard to convince people to move to the Okanagan for those face-to-face meetings."

Rob Bartlett
WTFast Founder



MEET THE PARTNERS



DRIVING COMMUNITIES FORWARD

Looking for general information? Statistics? Quarterly Economic Indicators? Industry-specific profiles? Export advice? Business development assistance? Local government connections? Workforce sourcing? Housing prices? Today's temperature? We're your first stop for all this and more.

Our priority is to facilitate the development of a dynamic and sustainable economy in our region by encouraging business investment and supporting existing businesses. With minimum fuss and maximum speed.

We can provide 1-to-1 support on anything you'll need and connect you with anyone you need—from government, industry, business support organizations, and talent. Speaking of talent, we can also help you source, recruit and retain talent with the Okanagan Young Professionals Collective and by connecting you to fresh talent—students, recent grads, young professionals and newcomers—through our Connector program.

investkelowna.com

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WHERE BUSINESS MEETS PLEASURE

Encouraging meetings and conferences is part of our four-season strategy to attract visitors (and businesses) that economically benefit Kelowna and the Central Okanagan. So, we support Destination Canada's Business Events strategy by hosting national and international gatherings with specific emphasis on everything you've seen in this magazine. It's an effective and inspiring way to introduce potential businesses to what our region has to offer.

Event planners can lean on us for everything—we can distribute RFP to venues, assist with site selection, and facilitate guest speakers. No matter what you're looking for—off-site activity and tour suggestions, concierge services, or assistance in building promotional materials to attract delegates—our team has the expertise to make the planning process as seamless as possible.

Want to visit us in person? We'll check you in to one of our many hotels, give you the royal tour, and connect you with local industry ambassadors who can showcase all that's happening here and give you a better picture of what you'll experience when you #meetinKelowna.

tourismkelowna.com

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INNOVATION GROWS HERE

Our mission is to give entrepreneurs the mentorship, connection, and community they need to build technology-driven ventures. We provide guidance and coaching for startups, scaling companies and everything in between. Our goal is to help businesses grow and create high paying knowledge-based jobs that bring positive economic and social benefit to the region.

Looking for help or advice? We can support all facets of your business, including finding investors, recruitment, and providing interim office space.

Prefer something more structured? No worries. We offer multiple mentorship and accelerator programs as well.

Many of the entrepreneurs in this magazine mention us and the help we provided. It was a pleasure working with them. We'd love to help you, too.

accelerateokanagan.com

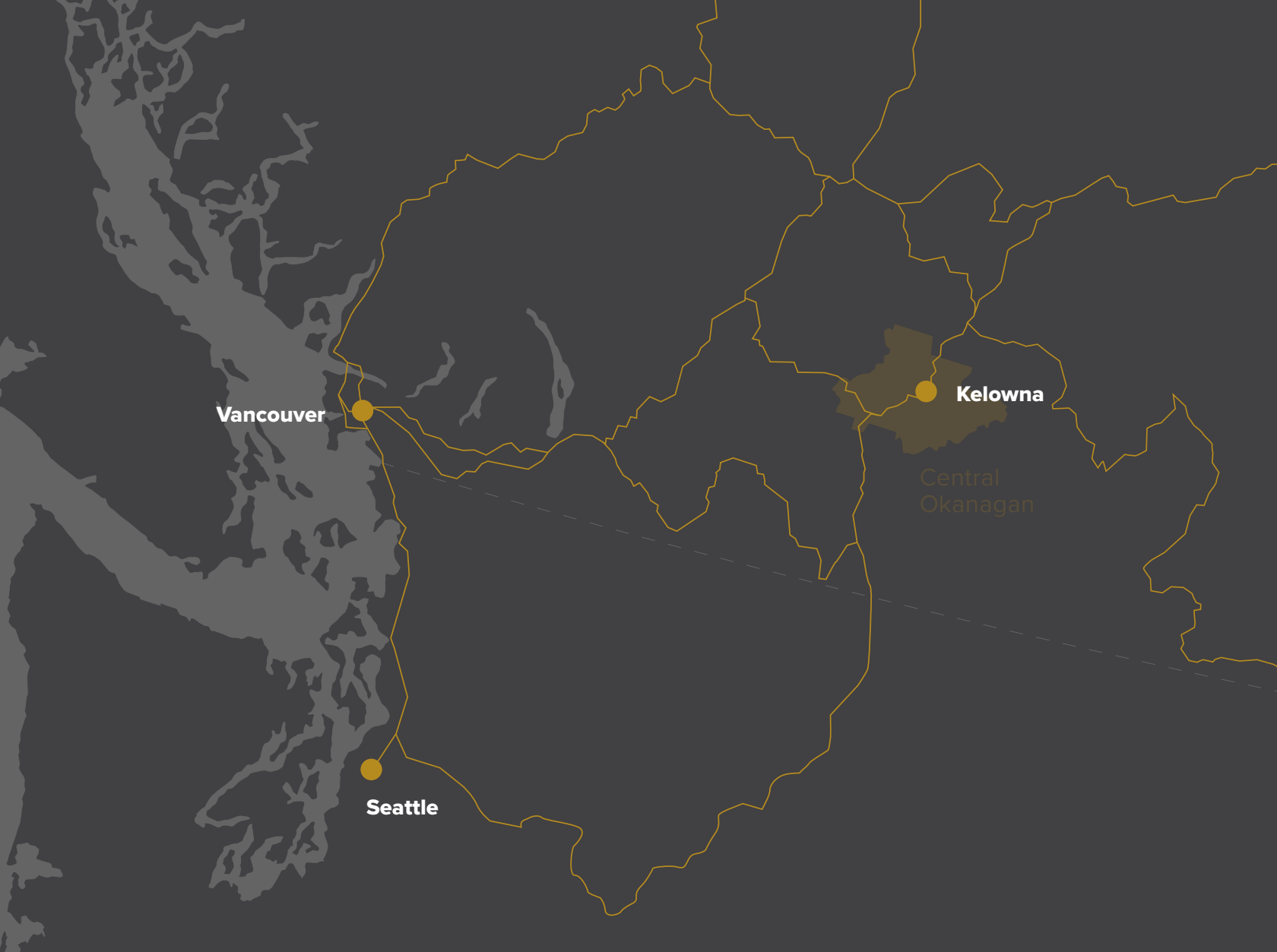
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