

This interview is with Helga Leaney, a working-owner Paddlewheeler Riverboat Tours in New Westminster. The major themes in the interview are the Fraser River, business operations, and history of the Fraser River. The interview was conducted while the boat was underway.

Interviewers: Leigha Smith and Oana Capota

Interview Date: 21 September 2013

Date Range: 1980s – 2013

Sound Recording Length: 00:13:39

Helga Leaney, with her husband Doug Leaney, are the owners of the Paddlewheeler River Boat Tours based in New Westminster. In this interview she describes how the couple started the company after realizing how beautiful the River was, and thought “nobody knows how beautiful this is, wouldn’t it be nice if we could show other people that we have a beautiful river”. She believes that no one else recognizes the Fraser River as being a part of British Columbia’s history. It has been a mission for Leaney to tell that history. She states that it has been a struggle, even after 24 years, to show the river’s importance to British Columbia. In this interview Leaney discusses the changes and issues that her company has experienced.

Section 0:00 – 4:47

- In this section of the interview Leaney talks about the company got started in 1989. For the first 2 years, they operated the Paddlewheeler Riverboat Tours on a smaller boat, the *Beta Star*, which could hold 40 passengers. However, with the positive response the company was receiving they purchased a paddlewheeler because they wanted something “more specific” to the Fraser River. Prior to starting the company, Leaney and her husband did pleasure boating, but never on the Fraser River.

Section 4:48 – 8:47

- In this section Leaney discusses the company’s experience with the surrounding communities along the Fraser River. She states that although different communities have reached out to the company to establish partnerships it has been difficult to initiate due to the cost and logistics of creating access to the river. She states that ever since the company was forced to change docking locations in New Westminster, due to the arrival *Royal City Star* casino boat, the amount of foot traffic significantly decreased as their current location reduces the *Native*’s visibility. Leaney also briefly discusses the changes that she has witnessed on the Fraser River.

Section 8:48 – 10:19

- In this section Leaney discusses how her duties have increased since the company first started. She had prior experience of running a food business, working in a deli and working for someone else. She states that the winter season is the most difficult season

for the business. Her aim is to be booked up for the major days in the summer ahead of time. In regards to her relationships with employees, she states that they all are family and work together, and prefers calling them “partners” instead of employees.

Section 10:20 – 13:39

- In this section Leaney describes in more depth the changes that she has seen on the Fraser River. In terms of the river, she states that there are no challenges to the company other than monitoring the tide, especially when it is in freshet. With the reductions in logging, mills have shut down, and she has seen fewer deadheads but asserts there is still industrial activity on the Fraser River. Leaney also discusses the issues of the company forming partnerships and working with schools. Due to a lack of sponsorships to subsidize costs, in order to maintain their expenses, she states it makes forming partnerships with other organizations and working with schools difficult.