

RODEO IN BRITISH COLUMBIA - BCRA VISION 2020

Rodeo, the sport that we all love, have grown up around, and enjoy, is under siege. There can be no argument that the sport is in trouble. Although many of us believe that it is much stronger in other parts of the country, perhaps even across North America, the reality is it is under pressure everywhere. In BC we are particularly vulnerable because rodeo generally has a smaller footprint than in other areas of Canada, and we are on the forefront of the attack on our sport by the animal rights movement. Over and above that, rodeo is also under pressure from the following:

1. A reduction of both the quality as well as the quantity of competitors. As the family farm disappears, and as the cost/benefit ratio of competing dwindles, there are less families with connections to the rural lifestyle and with it the sport of rodeo. Pride in being a cowboy or cowgirl is waning, including representing the values and professionalism that are at the core of this sport. Wearing our “uniform” once carried with it a responsibility, as we represented a way of life.
2. The BCRA is in the entertainment business, and our production quality continues to deteriorate and we are losing market share, and the related sponsorship.
3. The financial viability of the sport is in jeopardy.
 - a. Sponsors are harder to get at both the local and broader level.
 - b. Competition costs are constantly increasing while payouts are decreasing.
 - c. Added money is stagnant, and minimum added purses aren't enough to attract competitors.
 - d. Many committees struggle from year to year to stay afloat and to produce another rodeo. In many cases our committees are aging and struggling to get a suitable number of volunteers.
4. The business model is broken, with almost all constituents to the sport struggling to sustain their participation financially. This includes competitors, committees, stock contractors, and even the association.
5. Over the past 20 years BCRA membership and the number of rodeos has decreased by over half, and sponsorship by over 80%.
6. There is no working relationship or coordination among the various rodeo related organizations.

This Vision for Rodeo

We will know that the Sport of Rodeo and this Vision for it, are working when:

1. There are increasing numbers of competitors and improving quality of competitors in all events, and increasing membership in the BCRA and other associated entities.
2. There is a functioning working relationship with all sectors and associations that promote and facilitate rodeos or individual rodeo events. There is an understanding that for our sport to be strong, we must support, encourage, and facilitate growth and participation in both the individual events as well as full rodeos.
3. Rodeo production quality and the related spectator experience is improving.
4. The financial stability of committees, stock contractors and the association is improving.
5. There is increased stable sponsorship, including value for those sponsors.
6. There is a coordinated response, and proactive campaign with managing the impact and interference in our Sport from animal rights groups and activists.

And finally, there is renewed pride and professionalism in having the opportunity to participate in rodeo, and to represent the lifestyle and values that are associated with it.

How Do We Get There from Here?

There is a group of us who believe that for the BCRA to flourish and expand, the following ideas need to be considered and the following changes implemented. We also believe that with improved contestant etiquette and pride, along with better production by the BCRA to help committees produce a higher quality Rodeo, we could attract new sponsorship opportunities and grow our sport.

We also acknowledge the effort led by Carmen Ross to solicit and assemble input to the future of rodeo, and thank her and those of you who provided your ideas and input.

These are the first, and necessary, steps of a three-year program to revitalize rodeo in British Columbia. They may not happen in this order, or even in the first year, but must be priorities.

1. Creation of the Vision 2020 Committee with the mandate to implement this Vision. The Committee will be responsible to develop necessary rule and operational amendments that may be required to implement the intent of this Vision. These recommendations will be brought forward to the Board of Directors for execution. The composition of the Committee is discussed below.
2. Work towards the creation of an umbrella organization for all rodeo event related organizations in BC. In the interim, begin communication and ideally coordination with the BC High School Rodeo Association, BC Little Britches, and other standalone associations in the Province.
3. Create a coordinator position(s) whose sole responsibility is the management and coordination of BC Rodeos and events. With a well-defined role and accountability to the Vision 2020 Committee and Board of Directors.
4. Establish a Finals Rodeo that is desirable to the membership as a whole, and strives to be inclusive to all. This includes greater sponsorship and added money, better stock selection and contractor's representation, and finally adding a Wild Card Qualifier and/or a "Best of the Rest" competition.
5. Expansion to the North – Making every effort to expand in places such as Halfway, Doig River, Blueberry, Chetwynd and Hudson Hope, while also maintaining Fort St John. We consider this expansion to be vital to the future of the BCRA.
6. Establish Zones (North, Central and South), and Zone Awards. Finals Eligibility sec.1, pg. 51 needs to be changed. Eligibility to the Finals could include:
 - a. Finalists would compete at five first approved rodeos including one from each zone
 - b. Finals qualifiers would be top two from each zone, next top four from all zones, the BC High-school Champion and the Wild Card Rodeo Champion or the highest finisher not already in Finals
7. BCRA Stock requirements need to be completely reviewed, updated and adjusted to reflect the current competitive, cultural and economic times that we are in.
 - a. Timed Event Cattle - improve quality of timed event stock, taking into consideration size, condition and temperament. Acknowledging that this will require an increase in cost and must be taken into consideration to ensure sustainability both for stock contractors and the BCRA/Committees.
 - b. Stock Contractors - Review and update current rules and regulations as they relate to the state of our current economic and transitional time.

Further Considerations for Change

1. Tie Down Rule changes:
 - a. Ensure all calves are within age, weight and size limits and conditioned prior. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**
 - b. Remove the 6 second rule and go to a 3 second rule.
 - c. Establish the legal tie rule as 2 wraps and half hitch.
2. Look at additional incentives/handicaps to create greater participation from and for Juniors, High-School competitors and Ladies. Potentially make it feasible for them to compete in Open Events.
3. Adding additional horse riding events:
 - a. Explore options that offer new ways for rookie, youth, or novice competitors to have appropriate stock and an opportunity to compete at select Rodeos, with financial assistance from BCRA.
 - b. These could include ideas such as Mini Broncs, Novice events, Ranch Bronc Riding and High School co-sanctioned events.
4. More priority needs to be given by The BCRA to be involved in supporting Schools and Clinics. The Vision 2020 Committee and Rodeo Coordinator must work with all associations, contractors, and committees to create a comprehensive rodeo competitor development program i.e. - Minor sports like hockey/baseball development.
5. The BCRA needs to have a system whereby stand-alone events (rough stock and timed events) can be sanctioned. This gains us access in areas and markets of the Province we are not currently in, as well as potentially having a more compelling opportunity to market to sponsors.

What do we do Today?

1. We pass a resolution to accept and implement this Vision 2020. In order for this to be successful there needs to be very broad, if not unanimous support for this initiative.
2. We elect a Board of Directors who support Vision 2020 for Rodeo in BC.
3. We pass a resolution authorizing the Board of Directors to amend the current rules as necessary to give effect to this Document, based on recommendations that will be brought forward from the Vision 2020 Committee.
4. We implement the Vision 2020 Committee to be comprised of a mix of directors and members including the six members presenting this document, and others as they may deem necessary to fulfill the objectives of this Vision. This Committee will have primary responsibility to articulate and implement this Vision.

Yours in Rodeo Past, Present, and most importantly Future,

Ray Jasper, Tim Terepocki, Courtney Smith, Steven Lloyd, Tom Danyk, Jay Savage