

Happily Hitched Halifax

From Bouquets to Budgets

Valentine's Day is on the horizon and love is in the air. If you're recently engaged and looking for a fun, inclusive and affordable alternative to a traditional wedding venue, look no further than the micro-wedding ceremonies offered at [Happily Hitched Halifax](#).



When Ashley Groves first pivoted from her career in social work to production management, she began working with an event producer in Toronto's wedding industry. Seeing people "celebrate love and joy" was the best part of her new job.

Ashley considered starting her own wedding planning business, but quickly realized that she wasn't as interested in continuing with the 'big luxury weddings' that were very

standard in Toronto at the time. She also noticed that with the rising cost of living, the average people were looking to scale back on the size and cost of their weddings.

"Folks either don't want to or can't afford to spend that much money," she explains.

When COVID-19 hit, Ashley and her partner decided it was time for a change, moving to Nova Scotia in October 2020.

Upon opening her first business, The Wedding Grove, Ashley continued to provide traditionally larger wedding events. But she couldn't shake the feeling that there was a need among customers for smaller-scale packages.

Ashley went to work on developing a new business plan through the [Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development \(CEED\)](#) at the end of October 2022. Her loan from CUA came through only a few months into the new year.

"There was a recommendation through CEED to look at a couple of different financing options and CUA was one of them. I came into [applying for a loan] a little bit more confidently than I may have otherwise because I had worked on that business plan, and I'd had people [at CEED] review it."

Ashley says her Small Business Advisor at CUA helped to smooth the process for her, noting how scary it can be going out on your own for the first time.



“CUA was so helpful. It was a very fast timeline to get things rolling. [The loan] really had to be pushed through pretty quickly, but everything was very efficient and CUA was a big help.”

After successfully receiving financing from CUA, Ashley began renovations on a venue space. Last May she opened the doors to her most recent business venture, Happily Hitched Halifax, which is a micro-wedding venue in the heart of downtown.

Happily Hitched Halifax offers three wedding packages: elopements, mini-monies, and micro-weddings. The number of guests included ranges from two witnesses in the elopement package to up to 20 guests in the micro-wedding package. Couples can book from 45 to 90 minutes in the event space.

“It takes stress away from wedding planning,” Ashley explains. “Folks don't have to go out and search and vet different vendors. I've done all that work for them. They pay one fee to me, and I bring everything to them.”

Happily Hitched Halifax provides couples with a professional photographer, an officiant, a selection of flowers, a cutting cake or cupcakes, celebratory bubbly, and a beautifully designed urban ceremony space.

And, with the venue located on Blowers Street in Halifax, the newly married couple is only steps away from the iconic Pizza Corner for a post-ceremony slice.

Ashley says that the popular ‘engagement season’ usually takes place between November to February, as folks often get engaged around Christmas, New Year’s and Valentine’s Day. While most engaged couples think ‘long-term’ and plan their weddings out years in advance, Ashley explains that with smaller scale weddings, it doesn’t take long to put ceremony packages together.

“People can decide to get married next week or next month. We’ve had a Wednesday afternoon renewal just pop in to have a nice celebration.”

Happily Hitched Halifax can accommodate three to four ceremonies a day, depending on the size of the packages chosen. Ashley hopes to see the 2024 wedding season fully booked, as well as some fun and less-conventional wedding dates such as Friday the 13th or New Year’s Eve.

Ashley says she’s received very positive feedback since starting her most recent venture, with one bride saying she was glad to have had a wedding so close to the couple’s original vision without the accompanying huge price tag.

She also emphasizes the inclusivity of their wedding space, noting that couples from all walks of life are welcome and encouraged to celebrate in their venue. “We strive really hard to be a safer space. We take very thoughtful and deliberate steps to make sure that folks will feel safe.



We're [Rainbow Registered](#), and we are a member of [Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce](#) as well."

Since opening, Ashley says the wedding community, which includes vendors and other small businesses, has been so welcoming. Her advice to other entrepreneurs getting started is straightforward.



"Get your face out there. Especially here in Nova Scotia, I find people are doing business with people, not companies. Let people get to know you because they're doing business with you, personally."

Ashley notes that this is only the beginning. She plans on using this winter 'offseason' to continue working with her Small Business Advisor to learn more about CUA's products and services and how she can leverage them to further expand her business. Eventually, she hopes to bring the micro-wedding experience to other places in Nova Scotia as well, so she can continue to "see people light up and celebrate something joyful."

You can learn more about Happily Hitched Halifax and explore available wedding packages [on their website](#).