



**Advantage Lillooet:  
The Land, The Community, The Opportunities**

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For the District of Lillooet  
March 2008**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Where else can you:

- wonder why anyone would name a bridge for 23 camels?
- play a few rounds of golf at a course where grazing sheep constitute the movable hazards?
- sample ts'wan – a salmon delicacy dried by the wind and the summer sun?
- enjoy the same rugged and unspoiled views that inspired painter Emily Carr?
- live in a community where the pace of life is so relaxed that Statistics Canada calculates the average commute from home to work is 2.8 kilometres?

The answer to those questions is Lillooet, whose residents believe: “There’s no place like home.”

The District of Lillooet (pronounced Lil-O-et) is a municipality with an estimated population of 2,324. It functions as the governmental, service and retail centre for the surrounding region.

The total population of the Lillooet Health Area (LHA), including Gold Bridge, Bralorne, Seton-Shalalth, Xaxli’p and Ts’kw’aylaxw, was 4,530 in 2006. The LHA trading area has 0.1 per cent of B.C.’s total population and occupies 0.8 per cent of the province’s total land area.

Lillooet is 235 kilometres north of Vancouver and 135 kilometres north of Whistler.

Lillooet is one of the oldest continuously inhabited locations on the North American continent, with archaeological evidence stretching back more than 8,000 years. The area attracted large seasonal and permanent populations of the St’at’imc (pronounced Stat-lee-um) people who relied on a lifestyle and trading economy based on salmon from the Fraser River.



The Bridge River, Cayoosh Creek and Seton River all flow into the Fraser at Lillooet. The climate is arid with approximately 400 mm. of precipitation annually and as little as 50mm. (two inches) on some the benchland micro-climates on the river banks adjacent to town. The growing season is long and summer temperatures are hot. With the nearby village of Lytton, Lillooet shares the distinction of being the hottest spot in British Columbia. On July 16, 1941 the temperature in both towns reached a record 44.4 degrees Celsius.

In the 1860s, the onset of the Cariboo Gold Rush made Lillooet Mile O of the Cariboo Wagon Road and the second largest community north of San Francisco and west of Chicago (after Barkerville).

Gold mining and prospecting continue in the area to this day and Lillooet remains one of the world’s greatest sources of nephrite jade.

The economy boomed again after World War II during the construction of the Bridge River Power Project, which included dam, powerhouse and canal sites.

The forest industry became a major employer in the 1950s and ginseng, one of B.C.'s most lucrative crops, was grown here in the 1980s and 1990s before market prices declined.

Today's economy is based on logging, wood processing at Ainsworth Lumber's veneer plant and Bridgeside Wood Products' value-added plant, agriculture, tourism and public services.

A large number of external and internal influences are having a significant impact on the changes currently taking place in the Lillooet area, which faces challenges from the decline of resource-based employment and withdrawal of government services.

Provincial government policies gutted Lillooet's civil service labour force after 2001. The local Community Response Committee calculated that the equivalent job losses in the Lower Mainland would be 43,750 of the best-paid and most highly skilled workers in the Greater Vancouver area, or a loss of 5,250 jobs in Victoria.

The community sustained additional job losses when the passenger rail service was discontinued in 2002 and BC Rail was sold to CN. The cumulative effect of these changes was initially devastating to the community's economic and social fabric and its sense of security.

Some positive lessons were learned. Lillooet residents proved to be resilient, reinventing their lives and finding new ways to be innovative and entrepreneurial. People also discovered new ways to work together.

"There's been a shift in the last couple of years. Crisis and change can represent opportunity. After the cuts and the devastating aftermath, I think people realized we needed to work together. There wasn't going to be somebody who was going to come in and take care of us, so people pulled together in a crisis," observes one community leader.

Lillooet is now actively seeking new opportunities to diversify its economic base in sustainable ways and restore the vitality of the local economy.

The community's tourism potential and its attractiveness to retirees and knowledge workers have all been identified as prime growth opportunities.

In his book, *Boom, Bust and Echo*, David Foote predicted this trend of retirees moving to rural centres would be a major growth opportunity for progressive small communities.

Given its proximity to the Lower Mainland, Lillooet is starting to enjoy some of this growth, but needs to consider how its friendly authenticity, splendid natural beauty and local services can combine to attract new residents.

The forest industry retains the potential to help drive Lillooet's economic engine, as do new clean, green initiatives such as run-of-the-river independent power projects and wind power.

To enhance the strength of the tourism sector, the District of Lillooet would like to increase Lillooet's role as a tourism destination in and of itself, going beyond its role as a service centre and one-hour stopover for bus tours. This will require significant investment in new attractions, infrastructure and new facilities (specifically roofed accommodation) to attract and cater to overnight destination visitors. To achieve this end, there are significant investment opportunities in accommodation, tourism attractions and tour operators.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Information for this Inventory Analysis was gathered from a research scan of secondary sources and from extensive interviews with 20 community leaders.

Included in this report are population profiles, income and labour characteristics and ethno-cultural demographics. The analysis also includes business, industrial and land use assets, new leadership initiatives, plus social, health care and recreation assets.

Statistical values are primarily from the 2001 and 2006 census. Wherever possible the 2006 information is used; however, some details from the 2006 census have not yet been released and will not be available until later this spring. The census information is used as a tool to provide a comprehensive overview of community-specific attributes.

This report also identifies investment opportunities in Lillooet in tourism and other sectors.

As the District of Lillooet continues its efforts to promote and market the community, further research and initiatives are in process, and new information is coming online all the time. Province-wide, information is being released on a daily basis. This report is therefore a snapshot of the evolving landscape and serves as a starting point.

## 3. THE LAND BASE

The District of Lillooet has a total land area of 27.18 square kilometres. It is geographically divided into four areas - Central Lillooet, North Lillooet, South Lillooet and East Lillooet, located across the Fraser.

There are 1,052 properties in Central and South Lillooet. Ten of those are zoned agricultural, 107 are zoned Commercial 1, 41 are zoned Commercial 2 and 3, 93 are zoned Industrial, 17 are zoned Public Use and 784 are zoned Residential, including 331 zoned Residential 1 and 322 zoned Residential 2.

Central Lillooet has 772 lots with the ability to be hooked up to water and 535 that can be hooked up to the sewer system. Those numbers do not include municipal or government properties such as the hospital or schools.

North Lillooet has 22 Commercial properties, one Industrial property, two properties zoned Public Use, six zoned Rural Resource 1 and 223 residential properties. 148 of the properties in North Lillooet are zoned Residential 1. North Lillooet has 227 lots that can be hooked up to the water system.

In East Lillooet, there are five properties with Commercial zoning, two with Industrial, and 196 properties with Residential or Rural Residential zoning. 108 of the properties in East Lillooet have Rural Residential zoning.



The District of Lillooet is bordered by several Northern St'at'imc communities, including Xwisten (Bridge River) to the north, Xaxli'p (Fountain) to the northeast, T'it'qet (Lillooet), and Sekw'el'was (Cayoose Creek) to the south.

Because of the municipality's relatively modest land base, the trees that are processed at the local veneer plant grow outside the district boundaries, and the back country where adventurers go exploring is located outside the municipality.

Lillooet's future growth and development are, therefore, inevitably tied to the surrounding landscapes, what happens there and the decisions that are made in neighbouring St'at'imc communities and in rural areas of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District.

As the original inhabitants of the area, the St'at'imc and their way of life are linked to the area's land, rivers, mountains and lakes for fishing, hunting, harvesting and gathering medicines. Aboriginals are key stakeholders and decision-makers on land management and increasingly, land development.

The province unveiled the draft of its Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Lillooet Timber Supply Area (TSA) in July 2004, with 193,098 ha., or 17.25 per cent of the total area, set aside for parks and protected areas. The St'at'imc Chiefs unveiled their own land use plan July 30 of that year. Both parties entered into negotiations on a government-to-government protocol to establish a framework for discussing land use issues. Those discussions have stalled, according to Grand Chief Saul Terry.

A resolution of aboriginal land use issues and a settlement of the lengthy - 12+ years - negotiations between St'at'imc leaders and BC Hydro for reparations for past damages are anticipated to have a significant impact on Lillooet's future economic development

Grand Chief Terry says resolution of these issues is essential.

"What's going to facilitate a lot of changes is an agreement between the St'at'imc and the provincial government in terms of land and resources – a political agreement that addresses resource issues and socio-economic issues. Then we will see revenues coming back to the area and our people get out of the doldrums," he states.

#### **4. INFRASTRUCTURE**

##### **Water**

The District of Lillooet has four separate water systems, serving Central Lillooet's Lower and Upper Benches, North Lillooet and the Industrial Park in East Lillooet. The rest of East Lillooet is not served by a municipal water system. South Lillooet is served by private wells or private surface water systems.

In December 2007, it was announced that the federal and provincial governments would provide \$380,000 in funding to enable the district to improve its delivery system and develop groundwater sources. The money will be used to integrate the Central and North Lillooet water systems, construct a booster pump station and install 450 metres of water main.

The municipality has been granted infrastructure funding to replace a 250,000 gallon wooden reservoir supplying some of Central Lillooet's water with a new larger reservoir.

To accommodate future development, TRUE Consulting Group estimates water servicing costs for North Lillooet's 70 ha. upper bench development area at \$1.6 million.

TRUE has estimated the cost of providing basic water services to the 720 ha. East Lillooet Airport and upper bench lands development area at \$5.7 million.

The district's Master Water Plan sets a 20-year target for securing funding for water service expansion in East Lillooet, with a focus on developer investments.

Phase 1 of the district's East Lillooet water infrastructure plan calls for the expenditure of \$1.8 million to construct a supply main and reservoir and connect the system to the existing Industrial Park well.

Under Phase 2, \$2.4 million would be spent to provide primary servicing (booster, supply main, upper reservoir) to 17 existing lots and up to 600 total lots.

Phase 3 of the project calls for spending \$1.5 million to distribute water to sparsely scattered homes in East Lillooet.

### **Sewer**

Central Lillooet has a municipal sewer system, while North, East and South Lillooet are served by private septic tank systems. In 2004, the municipality replaced the Central Lillooet spirogester with a wastewater treatment plant designed to handle significant future expanded volumes. The project was funded on a 1/3/ 1/3 1/3 basis by the municipality and the provincial and federal governments under the Canada/BC Infrastructure Program.

### **Electric Power**

Electric power is supplied by BC Hydro. Natural gas is not available, but propane gas is.

### **Communications and Technology**

Digital wireless service arrived in Lillooet in September 2003, with cell phone service provided by Telus. The community is served by Radio Lillooet CHLS, the Bridge River-Lillooet News and Shaw Cable. Telus provides high-speed internet in Lillooet proper, and satellite wireless internet is available in outlying areas.

## **5. TRANSPORTATION**

### **The Road Network**

Lillooet is on three highways – Highways 99 and 12 and Road 40. Highway 99 links North Vancouver, Whistler, Pemberton and Lillooet with Highway 97 north of Cache Creek; Highway 12 links Lillooet to the Trans-Canada Highway at Lytton; and Road 40 leads from Lillooet to Gold Bridge, Bralorne and the Bridge River Valley. The Hurley Forest Service Road completes the loop to Pemberton during the summer season. Traffic volumes are bolstered by Lillooet being on three of B.C.'s nine circle tours. Many European visitors in their RVs include Highway 99 on their tour itineraries and the upgrades to the highway are anticipated to bring more visitors to the area.

In March of 2005, Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon announced the province would invest \$40 million for a series of upgrades to Highway 99 South and North, including the construction of eight new bridges on the Duffey Lake Road, between Lillooet and Pemberton. When the improvements to the Sea to Sky Highway/Highway 99

are complete, travel time between Lillooet and downtown Vancouver is estimated at three hours.

### **Rail Service**

Lillooet is located on the CN Rail line between North Vancouver and Prince George. The community lost its passenger rail service in 2002 when the provincial government decided to discontinue the service. The famous Rocky Mountaineer tourist train passes through, but does not stop in Lillooet.

A rail shuttle operated by the Tsal'alh Indian Band links Lillooet with Tsal'alh and Seton Portage. The service will carry passengers to D'arcy for an additional price and if the trip is pre-booked.



### **The Airport**

Lillooet's airport, located in East Lillooet, has a 3990-foot long, 70 foot-wide paved airstrip that can be used by private planes, modern commercial jets and turbo-prop aircraft up to 40,000 pounds. Services at the airport include fuel sales via an automated card lock system, tie downs, a pilot lounge and two trailer pad rentals. There is no scheduled air service, with the closest scheduled service provided at the Kamloops Airport.

The District of Lillooet is reviewing plans to extend the runway to 5,000 feet and add lighting to the airstrip.

### **Public Transportation**

Lillooet does not have Greyhound bus service. Local taxi service is available, as well as a charter bus service.

As part of the initial steps in establishing a transit system, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) gave first reading in November 2007 to a bylaw to establish a regional transit system with a bus service linking Lillooet to Squamish, with potential for expansion. This allows the SLRD to apply for \$1.19 million of funding under the federal-provincial gas tax agreement and represents a "tangible commitment" on the SLRD's part.

## **6. DEMOGRAPHICS**

The total population of the District of Lillooet in 2006 was 2,324. (Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 census). The community's population in 2001 was 2,741, representing a decline of 15.2 per cent from 2001 to 2006.

The median age of the population in 2006 was 43.7 years, compared to a provincial figure of 40.8. The median age of the male population was 42.7, compared to a B.C. median of 40, while the median age of the female population was 44.6, compared to a provincial median of 41.5.

Lillooet has a younger population percentage under the age of 17 years when compared to provincial population statistics. The number of children under 6 years of age was 165 or 25.6 per cent, compared to a B.C. average of 20 per cent. The number of children 6 to 14 years was 250 or 38.8 per cent, compared to a B.C. average of 35.8 per cent. There were 115 children age 15 to 17 years representing 17.8 per cent of the population, compared to a B.C. average of 13.3 per cent.

The trend changes when people reach 18 years, reflecting the loss of young people who leave the community for educational or work opportunities elsewhere. In 2006, Lillooet had 80 persons ages 18 to 24 years, representing 12.4 per cent of the population. This compares to a provincial figure of 20.3 per cent.

The share of the senior population over age 65 is slightly above the B.C. average. For people ages 65 to 69, the figure for Lillooet was 110 people or 4.7 per cent, compared to a B.C. average of 4.1 per cent. There were 95 people ages 70 to 74, representing 4.1 per cent of the population, and compared to a provincial number of 3.5 per cent.

The population density was 83.5 per square kilometre.

(Please see the appendices for additional community demographic information.)

## 7. LABOUR FORCE

According to the 2001 census, the overall Lillooet Health Area was heavily dependent on the forest industry and public sector employment. Twenty-one per cent of income in 2000 was derived from the forest industry, 32 per cent from the public sector, five per cent from tourism and three per cent from agriculture. Provincially, eight per cent of income at that time was derived from the forest industry, two per cent from mining, two per cent from agriculture, six per cent from tourism and 27 per cent from the public sector.

With job losses occurring in the local resource sector over the past decade and with provincial government cutbacks, some workers have opted for re-training programs. The Lillooet Friendship Centre provides a variety of skills and work-based training programs.

In December, 2007, the centre received almost \$900,000 in a three-year funding package from Service Canada's Employment Assistance Program. The funding will be used to provide clients with information on the labour market, help prepare resumes, provide career planning services, employment counselling, diagnostic assessment, help with job-search skills, and job placement services.

The Lillooet area is currently experiencing a shortage of skilled trades people, including electricians, plumbers and carpenters. As of February, 2008, there was only one qualified electrician working full-time in the community. Lillooet is not alone. This acute shortage of skilled trades people is being experienced throughout the southern interior, so much so that the Southern Interior Construction Association (SICA) recently received approval to hire out of country. Even when employers invest in apprenticeship training, there is no guarantee the newly-trained workers will stay here as they can and are



being lured away by the prospect of better money elsewhere.

Locally, the Leech study in 2006 found that a lack of qualified people in all trades and the lack of journeymen willing or able to supervise apprentices is a major challenge to construction here.

The Leech study also identified a shortage of journey trades and apprentices for transportation and road maintenance because of the difficulty local contractors have in competing with wages offered in Alberta and northern B.C.

“I don’t think too much about getting ready for the Olympics. I’ve got 30 per cent of my workforce retiring before 2010 and I don’t see how I’m going to replace them. We’re looking to hire younger men but I have to compete with northern B.C. and Alberta for qualified workers,” commented Interior Roads Ltd. manager Charlie Hutchins. (page 17).

To recruit new skilled workers to town, some local employers have resorted to unorthodox and innovative recruiting techniques. When the Lillooet Hospital encountered difficulty recruiting health technicians, lab staff and nurses, prospective employees were offered free passes to the REC Centre and invited to dinner with the mayor and the chief of the hospital staff to learn more about the community and all it has to offer.

The Leech study determined that employment opportunities do exist related to the bridge upgrades on Highway 99 South and other highway construction projects, including openings for heavy-duty equipment operators and mechanics, traffic control flag persons, Occupational 1 and II first aid attendants as well as opportunities for procurement and delivery of supplies, lighting systems and concrete.

During interviews for this study, it was suggested that an inventory should be completed of qualified trades people and companies/contractors seeking to expand their labour force, as well as labourers.

One interviewee has gone farther than that, suggesting that a community resource directory listing skills of all types be established: “We would like to know who has a doctorate in biology, who can teach you to tan a hide, plant a garden and advise you on raising a baby.”

### **Olympic-related Job Opportunities**

The study, Planning for Gold – Maximizing 2010 Related Employment & Skills Opportunities in British Columbia, says the three sectors expected to experience the greatest employment growth from the Olympic Games and related projects from now to 2015 are tourism, retail and construction.

Overall projections for B.C. indicate the province will require 9,927 more cooks, 1,557 more professional chefs, 10,000 new managers for the food and beverage sector and 5,000 more managers for the accommodation sector by 2010. (Source: Community Tourism Foundation, page 26)

Roslyn Kunin and Associates estimate that while the greatest impact in tourism-related job openings is directly related to 2010, there will be a lasting impact in the tourism sector. Kunin says that in 2015, tourism will account for more than 70 per cent of job creation in the province. Forty-two per cent of these job openings will be in areas outside the Lower Mainland.

The Emery study (2006) focused specifically on tourism employment within the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District. According to Emery: “The primary issue in assessing future labour supply for the Whistler and Squamish-Lillooet area is, of course,

the already sizeable shortfall of workers, compared to those who reside in the area. It will not be possible to recruit sufficient workers from the local labour market over the next ten years to establish a balance in the numbers.” (p. 16).

Other demographic changes will have a significant impact on the availability of workers for the tourism sector. The issue for tourism is somewhat different than for many other industries that are dealing with an aging workforce and the potential of substantial retirement numbers. For tourism, the workforce is typically young and retirement is not a problem.

Says Emery: “What is a problem is that the smaller proportion of young adults in the general population is now being recruited by many other industries as well as being encouraged to enter universities and colleges. The pool of young workers available, in the Squamish-Lillooet area as well as in British Columbia, for short term jobs is getting smaller, proportionally as well as absolutely.” (page 17)

“Many of the industries now looking to recruit young workers in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada, such as mining, oil and gas, and construction are offering higher pay rates as well as permanent and full time work. While they are often looking for skilled workers, many of these industries offer entry jobs at higher pay rates than those generally seen in tourism jobs. This pay difference has been the case for many years. What is different now is that these industries are actively recruiting, compared to being in lay-off mode.” (Emery page 17).

Both the Emery and Kunin studies suggest one source of new workers can be found in the aboriginal youth population. Emery found that, “Close to the 30 per cent of the aboriginal population in the total (Squamish-Lillooet) regional district was under the age of 15 with a further 15 per cent aged 15 to 24 years. This compares with the age distribution of the overall regional population (aboriginal and other) at about 20 per cent under 15 years of age and further almost 15 per cent in the 15 to 24 age group. It is the proportion of the aboriginal population that is under 21...that will be driving the numbers of new workers available to the labour market.” (page 18).

## **8. EDUCATION**

### **The Gold Trail School District**

Lillooet is part of Gold Trail School District #74 and is served by Cayoosh Elementary School, George M. Murray Elementary School, Lillooet Secondary School and the Lillooet Learning Centre for adult learners. Approximately half of the district population is composed of aboriginal students.

The school district has instituted a Distributed Learning program that enables small rural schools to offer a wide variety of courses and better access to teachers through technology. A teacher at Lillooet Secondary School, for example, is teaching Math to students across the district, while other students are learning Physics from a teacher in Lumby. “Kids in our schools have as many course options as kids in any school,” says Superintendent of Education Pat Pearce.



Recognizing the shortage of skilled trades people, the Gold Trail School District introduced a trades and training program three years ago.

Current courses include:

- Residential construction and carpentry - offered in Lillooet
- Cosmetology, including hairdressing - offered in Lillooet
- Welding Level C - offered in Lillooet
- Painting - offered in Lillooet
- Plumbing - offered in Clinton
- Building maintenance - offered in Lytton
- Culinary arts - offered in Ashcroft
- Business administration – offered online.

Training programs such as residential construction and culinary arts are identical to the courses offered in the Thompson Rivers University trades program. The painting course is offered in conjunction with the Painters Union.

With funding assistance from the Northern Trust, the eight-month Level C welding program is training up to 16 students per session in welding. Welding equipment will be removed from Lillooet during the off-season and rented to other communities who need to train students, providing a small revenue source for the District of Lillooet.

Local trades and training programs provide a huge saving to families and students. Tuition fees for many students are minimal or non-existent. Billeting and transportation costs are subsidized by the school district. For example, a student who takes the Cosmetology program in Lillooet instead of in the Lower Mainland, will save about \$11,000 to \$12,000 over the duration of the course, including transportation, moving expenses, accommodation and tuition costs.

### **Thompson Rivers University**

The community is also served by the local campus of Thompson Rivers University, which provides post-secondary education for local youth and adults and training opportunities for older learners.

The Lillooet centre offers first and second year university courses.

Additionally, in the spring of 2008 TRU offered business and office skills courses; three SuperHost customer service courses; a selection of computer courses; occupational first aid, foodsafe and transportation of dangerous goods courses; and professional development courses for natural resource workers.

In anticipation of Expo '86, Cariboo College (now TRU) began offering Super Host tourism courses in 1985. TRU training centre co-ordinator Jane Bryson reports that 20 students completed some or all components of TRU's Aboriginal Tourism program in the past year. Graduates completed a minimum of eight courses, including an event-planning segment that involved them in organizing Lillooet's Spirit of 2010 kick-off.

TRU also offered a travel counsellor's training certificate in 2007 for InfoCentre staff. Tourism LifeSkills have also been offered as part of a 10-12 week LifeSkills course.

### **Fountainview Academy**

A private school for international students, Fountainview Academy, is located south of town on Highway 12 and is run by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. It enrolls about 60 students per year in Grades 8 to 12.

### **More Suggestions**

Notwithstanding the new programs, a number of training courses and programs were suggested during interviews for this study “to fill the gaps.”

These included practical, hands-on training for front-line personnel handling inquiries from visitors. “Some people know the town, some people don’t, but there doesn’t seem to be that element of training that gives people practical, front-line skills,” was one comment. “I bet every single one of the business owners on Main Street would appreciate having front-line training for their staff with maps available and an answer to the question, ‘Do you have public restrooms?’” Another comment was, “A consistent message is needed. People working in our stores and businesses need maps and brochures, but they also have to know how to smile and have an agreed-on style of speaking to tourists.”

Other suggested tourism-related training included back-country first aid, a course on running a bed-and-breakfast business, and marketing and copyright courses for local artists.

Clients of the Lillooet Employment Centre have identified a need for trades math courses and physics courses.

It was suggested that a REAL (Refresh Education And Learning) program be offered at Ainsworth Lumber and/or Bridgeside Wood Products. REAL was implemented at Teck Cominco in Trail. It offers personal interest courses in a small classroom setting, allowing employees to work around their shifts. Its focus is on meeting learning goals, rather than training. Studies suggest it helps to retain employees by building a more stable workforce.

Other suggestions:

- a flagging course
- hands-on, task-oriented computer training and workshops that provide contractors and other businesspeople with specific skills that enhance productivity such as internet research and bookkeeping.
- the outcome of training programs should be clearly defined, with follow-up monitoring to see how or whether the course fulfilled the students’ expectation and determine how many secured employment.
- tourism training programs should be expanded to include internships, summer student employment, mentoring and job shadowing.

## **9. REAL ESTATE TRENDS**

Although housing prices are rising locally, Lillooet retains a significant advantage in its housing prices and can market itself as a community with affordable housing opportunities.

Prices for comparable homes are 10 per cent cheaper here than Logan Lake and 10 to 15 per cent cheaper than Ashcroft or Cache Creek. Local realtors say prices here are up to 40 per cent less than Kamloops prices for comparable homes, and up to 50 per cent less on more expensive properties.

The average assessed value of residential properties in Lillooet increased by 15 to 25 per cent in 2007. According to the B.C. Assessment Authority, the average single family dwelling in the District of Lillooet had an assessed value of \$159,000 in the summer of 2007, compared to a value of \$132,900 in the summer of 2006.

Those prices still place Lillooet at an advantage over comparable communities such as Ashcroft (\$180,900), Cache Creek (\$173,700), 100 Mile House (\$196,000) and Logan Lake (\$216,900).

Overall, Lillooet's assessment roll increased from \$242.65 million in 2006 to \$279.7 million in 2007, an increase of \$37.05 million, reflecting changes in the value of most properties.

Several people interviewed for this study said they sensed a new mood of optimism in the air and a general feeling that the community is on an economic upswing.

For example, Lillooet's first new residential subdivision in decades has completely sold out. All 12 lots have been purchased – half for investment purposes and half for future or immediate retirement homes.

And School District 74 officials were surprised in September 2007 when enrolment in Lillooet's schools jumped unexpectedly. The numbers included 20 more students at Cayoosh Elementary, an additional 20 at George M. Murray Elementary and 25 more at Lillooet Secondary School.

Where are the newcomers coming from?

Some of the people buying property in Lillooet are moving here from the Lower Mainland, particularly the Fraser Valley. "This is also the year people from Alberta discovered Lillooet. They love the scenery and the mountains," one real estate agent said. Some people are purchasing seasonal or future retirement homes and some are purchasing property as an investment, anticipating that prices will increase as growth moves towards here from the Greater Vancouver region.

The booming economies of other areas are boosting Lillooet's economy. Coastal housing prices are so high and prices have increased so much in Alberta that people are looking for less expensive homes.

To illustrate the real estate activity in the community, one real estate agent points to statistics for the past four years:

2004 – 28 total 'realtor related' sales

2005 – 72 sales

2006 – 78 sales, including seven for vacant land

2007 – 104+ sales, including approximately 40 vacant land sales.

A local realtor says sales of commercial property have not yet caught up to residential sales. Typically, the trend has been for commercial sales to follow residential sales.

To date, there has not been a significant increase in new businesses being started. "Existing ones are changing hands; there are always people willing to sell a business for the right price."

## **10. LIVING THE LILLOOET LIFESTYLE**

*"What do we have to offer? First and foremost, we are a community of indigenous people and newcomers who are rooted to this place. It appeals to our spirit and our senses. For the eye, there's the flora and fauna; for the ear, there's the peace and quiet; there's the smell of fresh crisp air with a hint of sage and chokecherry. There's good water to drink and fresh fruit and vegetables from the Farmers Market and Old Airport Gardens.*

*“It is a source of pride within our community that our pace is slow, our air is clean, our nights are quiet and our drivers are courteous. We like to volunteer some of our time to the community (Elks Club, Lions, Beautification Committee). Some of us build hiking trails and bird watch whereas most of us meander through town and visit with one another while we retrieve our mail from the post office. We observe bears and eagles by day and the moon and stars by night. We go fishing and hunting or we pan for gold. For relaxation, we go swimming or boating and we cheer on our home teams in season... In some ways, we are as far removed from the urban experience as one can get!”* - a Lillooet resident who commutes between homes here and in the Vancouver area.



Research undertaken by the Sonoran Institute in the United States and the Chinook Institute in Alberta suggests that the population of certain rural communities in western North America is starting to grow significantly again. There are two main factors driving this growth:

- early retirees associated with the first wave of retiring baby boomers, and
- knowledge workers who are “footloose” and not tied to any specific work location.

The early retirees are moving to rural areas where there is a true sense of community, healthy and safe surroundings (i.e. cleaner air and lower crime rates), a lower cost of living, and the opportunity to live in beautiful locales offering outstanding recreational experiences.

These early retirees frequently sell their urban homes for a high price, enabling them to purchase in a smaller centre where real estate costs are lower. Typically, they have significant disposable income, time for recreation and an interest in enjoying new experiences. They move to their new home with their pensions and a lifetime’s worth of investments. Not all of them want to completely retire, so they may create a new job for themselves.

These people also bring formidable skills sets and knowledge which can be invaluable to community organizations, service clubs and other volunteer groups.

Lillooet has also begun to attract a small cadre of knowledge workers; some are former residents who have returned home to work.

These knowledge workers are interested in a quality lifestyle, and a welcoming, friendly and safe place to raise their families, where they can communicate electronically with work.

A key factor in attracting newcomers to Lillooet is the community’s lower-priced real estate market. Low prices make it possible for younger families moving here to be ‘mortgage free’ or close to it in situations where the husband has a “camp” job in Alberta, for example.

People living in places with booming real estate markets can either retire early here or afford to hold a second piece of real estate as they contemplate retirement.

“Families are choosing to live here while one parent commutes to Vancouver on a weekly or bi-monthly basis. They can’t afford to live down there, so they share rent or stay with family in Vancouver, while owning a home in Lillooet,” says a local realtor.

“Everyone knows we have hot weather and great scenery, but there are other things that people think about when they decide to move here. The hospital is a huge selling feature and the fact we have six doctors and a medical clinic and other health services is very important to people. Lose the hospital and you lose a huge amount of value in your town. It’s the same with the REC Centre – that’s a draw for people moving here.”

Lillooet District Hospital provides laboratory and radiology (x-ray) services, emergency services, six acute care beds, obstetric services, outpatient ambulatory care procedures and consultations with visiting specialists.

The community is also served by a dental clinic and a wellness centre staffed by registered massage therapists, a registered clinical counsellor, a speech language pathologist and other practitioners. Interior Health runs a bus service to Kamloops and return twice a week for people who need to access medical care there.

The REC Centre is a first-class recreational facility containing an indoor swimming pool, ice arena, squash and racquetball courts, gymnasium, public library and meeting rooms.

Other in-town recreation facilities include the curling rink, Conway Park ball field, a skateboard park, the bowling alley, the Mile O Riding Club’s gymkhana site and a gun range.

Additional factors in Lillooet’s favour include:

- the beauty of its natural landscape. In our ever-more urbanized world, many people yearn to reconnect with nature
- its friendly, small-town atmosphere
- the healthy climate. People with arthritis and asthma have told local realtors they feel better here
- the safety of the town
- the volunteer component. People discover that those with energy and the community’s best interest at heart can make a difference in Lillooet, whether they join a local service club, raise funds for the Hospital Foundation, serve on a Parent Advisory Committee at their child’s school, coach kids’ hockey, help out with the Naturalist Society’s foreshore project or volunteer as a Radio Lillooet DJ.
- its proximity to Vancouver and Whistler

A diverse and intriguing group of residents has called Lillooet home over the years.

They include two Order of Canada recipients – feisty newspaper editor Margaret “Ma” Murray and Dr. Masajiro Miyazaki – and photographer-naturalist-merchant Artie Phair, known as “Mr. Lillooet.” Others who’ve earned recent fame and acclaim are George Leach, winner of the Best Male Artist and Best Rock Album awards at the National



Aboriginal Music Awards; Don Dickinson, nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award for fiction for his book *Blue Husbands*; high school student Armand Gaudry, a gold medal winner for Team Canada at the International Geography Olympiad; and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Kama Steliga.

## **11. OPPORTUNITIES NOW - BUILDINGS/BUSINESSES FOR SALE**

There are a number of business opportunities offering the chance at a new lifestyle for people eager to relocate to a rural community.

1. Dina's Place Restaurant, 690 Main Street. For Sale by owner
2. Race Trac Gas, 211 Main Street. Gas station with coin carwash, \$149,000 plus stock Royal LePage
3. Lillooet Mini Storage, 1.4 acre site in East Lillooet with 42 unit storage complex, home. Royal LePage
4. Feelin' Good neighbourhood pub and grill with kitchen. Old Bralorne Road. 2+ acre lot. Royal LePage.
5. 553 Main Street, former movie theatre. Commercial property has 50 feet of Main Street frontage. \$89,000. Lillooet Realty.
6. Cook's Cabins, 1176 Main Street – 11 two-bedroom units, 1 1-bedroom unit and 1 bachelor unit, plus office space. Contact Kendel Kaser.
7. 272 Main Street. 325 feet Main Street frontage and 2300 sq. ft metal clad building and 800 sq. ft. metal sided building Asking \$289,000 Lillooet Realty
8. Commercial property. 687 Main Street, prime commercial building in downtown core, tenants on main level, \$495,000. Royal LePage
9. 4-bay mobile home park and 4-bedroom house 401 Hollywood Crescent. Asking \$395,000. Lillooet Realty
10. Six-plex at 124 Phair Road. Asking \$379,900. Lillooet Realty
11. 530 Main Street. Commercial land and building with two vehicle bays with direct access to Main Street. 66 feet of Main Street frontage. \$349,500. Lillooet Realty
12. 117 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. Four-plex on 0.32 acres of land. \$289,000. Lillooet Realty.
13. 860 Moha Road. 1.18 acres with 73x40' shop and two-bedroom home. Currently operated as a truck repair shop. \$319,000. Lillooet Realty.
14. 86-7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Land, building and laundromat. \$189,900. Lillooet Realty.

## **12. OPPORTUNITIES NOW - VACANT LAND FOR SALE**

Property prices in Lillooet are still reasonably valued in comparison to many larger centres.

1. Gateway commercial property at junction of Highways 12 and 99. Ideal for hotel, motel, restaurant. 1 of 3 lots. Price: \$310,000 for ¾ to 1 acre. Second lot \$329,000 for 1 to 3 acres. Third lot \$385,000 for 1 to 3 acres. Royal LePage
2. 9.3 acres located above Victoria Street. Projected subdivision, surveyed. Property could be connected to district water and sewer. Royal LePage
3. District Lot 3027 Highway 12. 513 acres with subdivision potential. Offered at \$750,000. Royal LePage

4. Five-acre potential eco-lodge site near Old Fraser Bridge. Zoned for multi-family housing. Kendel Kaser

5. Five Riverview lots on McEwen Road, Potential for townhouse development. Kendel Kaser.

6. Vacant lot next to Museum and Visitor Info Centre. 716 Main St. \$149,900. Lillooet Realty

7. Three commercial lots at 1164 Main Street. 150 feet of Main Street frontage. \$250,000. Lillooet Realty.

Current average residential lot prices are \$30 to \$35,000 for 33-foot lots in the Victoria and Columbia Street residential areas, \$40,000 to \$55,000 for a 60x100 foot lot, and from \$65,000 to \$85,000 or \$90,000 for a ½ acre to one-acre lot on the Hop Farm.

### 13. TOURISM

*“When we’re so close to Whistler and the Okanagan, when we’re in such close proximity to those places, then I think we have a natural market sitting not far away. What an opportunity! Our culture and natural resources are our greatest assets.” – a Lillooet resident.*

#### **World-class potential**

Ric Careless, executive director of Wilderness Tourism Association of B.C., says Lillooet has the potential to be a world-class tourism region.

He says the community enjoys:

- a “better climate than the Okanagan.” The warm, dry climate, hot summers and mild winters and low precipitation give Lillooet the potential for a longer tourism season with extended spring and fall seasons to support a variety of tourism activities.

- the foremost canyon landscape in Canada. The Fraser River is one of the largest free-flowing rivers left in the world. The varied topography ranges from rainforests on Highway 99 to desert landscapes, and from ponderosa pine and bunch grass coniferous forests to alpine meadows and towering snow-capped peaks and glaciers.

- a rich aboriginal culture whose stories are “tremendously exciting for people who are not familiar with northwest culture” and a people whose ties to the salmon and landscape go back thousands of years.

- a rail corridor that’s “as good as any you’ll find anywhere in the world.”

- a diverse range of wildlife, including grizzly bear and California bighorn sheep, to attract nature-based visitors, and bird species to attract bird watchers who are snapping up birding guides at a “faster rate than people are publishing the Bible.”

A similar study that same year - 2005 - called the Lillooet Resort Opportunity Study, concluded that the Lillooet region’s diverse terrain and close proximity to the Lower Mainland (a four-hour drive) and the internationally famous Whistler resort (a two-hour



drive) gave it a strategic development advantage for commercial recreational products. It suggested these be developed with three prevailing marketing themes: Sea-to-Sky Country, the Chilcotin’s cowboy/ranchland and the Fraser’s Gold Country.

**B.C. Tourism – The Big Picture**

According to Tourism BC’s 2006-2007 Annual Report, B.C.’s tourism industry is expected to grow steadily over the next three years, with visitor expenditures expected to increase by 10.9 per cent between 2007 and 2010. Worldwide markets are growing, with revenues from the Asia/Pacific region expected to increase by a total of 19.2 per cent during that time.

Outside factors, such as the performance of the overall economy, new US passport regulations, gasoline prices, limited air capacity to B.C. from various markets, or a possible terrorism incident, can all affect the tourism industry.

However, the prospects for growth in this sector are excellent, especially given the onset of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games and the publicity they will generate in advance, during and after the games are held.

Recent stats from BC Stats and Stats Can report there were 119,000 direct full-time and part-time tourism jobs in B.C. These were primarily in two sectors – accommodation and food and transportation and related services. Additionally, another 170,000 jobs were indirectly related to tourism.

**The Current Situation**

**Visits to Visitor Centre**

The number of visitors to the Lillooet Visitor Centre had been steadily increasing until 2007 (see attached chart).

<u>Year</u>	<u># Visitors</u>	<u># Buses</u>	<u>#Parties</u>	<u>from B.C.</u>	<u>from Europe</u>	<u>same day</u>	<u>overnight I</u>
<u>nt.</u>							
2004	22950	452	5034	1350	1850	3242	1183
2005	29106	637	6367	1980	2581	3832	1667
2006	33453	635	7164	2385	2875	4455	1803
2007	29107	572	7151	2053	3227	4753	1510

The decline in visitors in 2007 was predicted by tour bus operators and was reflected in other markets across BC, not only Lillooet, according to Visitor Centre manager Susan Bell. This decline is partly being attributed to the upcoming Olympics in Beijing and visitors’ inclination to “go east, not west.” In 2007, the Visitor Centre saw a 30 per cent decrease in the passengers on bus tours, with some coaches, which carry 45 passengers, carrying 12 or 15 people last summer. Based on early bookings for 2008, tour operators expect their volume to return to pre-2007 levels this year.

Current accommodation in the Lillooet area includes 29 hotels, motels, B&Bs, campgrounds, etc. offering an estimated 167 rooms and 272 camp and RV sites.

The growing number of bed and breakfasts offers visitors more choice. The Visitor Centre reports visitors are happy with the value they receive at local motels and hotels;

they are also willing to pay more for more upscale B&Bs with a view, a hot tub and other amenities.

The Nichol study (Tourism British Columbia 2007) identified 13 commercial use permit holders in existing protected areas in the Lillooet area. The majority of those licences were for the South Chilcotin area. The same study listed 10 companies offering wilderness experiences in the Lillooet, Gold Bridge and Marble Canyon areas.( page 12). These offerings included horseback riding/packing, ski touring, snowmobiling, heli-biking, horse-assisted hut-to-hut hiking, guided angling, heli-skiing, fly-out fishing, flight-seeing, sturgeon fishing, etc.

The draft LRMP established new protected areas and special tourism zones which focus on the management of commercial recreation and tourism values. These areas will be closed to industrial logging. An order-in-council from the provincial cabinet is in place to establish the South Chilcotin Park in the Spruce Lake area. The LRMP attempts to better manage the tourism experience, minimize conflicts on the land base, ensure sound land and resource management practices, secure commercial tenures and support the overall development of the tourism sector.

### **Investment Opportunities in Tourism**

Nature-based tourism is the fastest growing sector of the overall tourism economy. The following potential outdoor activities can support tourism in Lillooet:

Winter:

- Cross country skiing
- Snowmobile touring
- Winter camping
- Sleigh rides
- Skating
- Ice climbing in the Marble Canyon, Seton Lake and Bridge River areas
- Ice fishing
- Snowshoeing
- Birdwatching, including the Annual Christmas Bird Count

Summer:

- Fishing
- Sturgeon fishing
- Golf
- St'at'imc cultural/heritage tours
- Sustainability tours that demonstrate how to live off the land
- Mountain climbing
- Horseback riding
- Jet boat tours
- 4X4 tours linked with Whistler
- ATV tours
- Heli-hiking and helicopter tours. Scenic hiking areas on the ridges above Lillooet are a two-minute flight away.



Walking and hiking tours  
 Photography tours  
 Geo-caching expeditions  
 Expanded garden tours  
 Rappelling  
 Multi-day rafting trips on the Fraser  
 One-day, brigade-style canoe trips combining Simon Fraser's explorations in 1808, aboriginal cultural sites and Gold Rush history.  
 Mountain biking in the Duffey Lake area  
 Wine industry  
 Night Skies tours bringing people to Lillooet to enjoy the spectacle of the area's starry nights. Two entrepreneurs are already doing this - one in the Yalakom and one in the Texas Creek Road area.  
 Birdwatching  
 Canoe/kayak tours on the placid stretch of the Fraser between Lillooet and Lytton  
 ElderHostel programs for older visitors.

Lillooet should also be mindful of the long-term implications of the agreement Canada has negotiated with China for approved destination status. Up to 200 million Chinese citizens will be traveling abroad by 2020, and Canada is poised on the Pacific Rim to welcome millions of Chinese tourists.

With its Jade Monuments project and history of Chinese gold miners, Lillooet should consider how it can appeal to this huge new market. The jade project and the historical links to China can be promoted to give Lillooet a competitive advantage over similar B.C. communities trying to attract visitors from this new market.



There is one caveat: While the international market is attractive, negative experiences can have far-reaching consequences. Tourism studies advise that international visitors should be targeted only when their destination has top-notch facilities, and high-quality amenities and levels of customer service.

**Needed: a destination resort**

There was consensus among people interviewed for this study that Lillooet needs a hotel with a restaurant and a pool to attract overnight visitors and keep them in the community for longer stays. In the longer term, many people would also like to see a destination resort in the immediate area.

"I like the beautiful scenery and the lovely climate, but I also want something with a little more 'pop,' and with more amenities; something more like Tyax (Resort)," was a typical comment.

Ric Careless identified the community's greatest need as the "development of a destination resort that would be an economic anchor" and function as a "magnet" to allow new businesses to grow and attract investors. Ideally, Careless says the resort should be a year-round operation that would combine a ski resort and golf course.

In his study, Careless stated that Lillooet's climate, dramatic setting, and proximity to Vancouver and the Okanagan, make it a feasible location for developing a destination 18-hole golf resort. A couple of possible locations have been identified - the Kamenka property, located within the District of Lillooet's boundaries in East Lillooet, and the current golf course nine kilometres south of town on Texas Creek Road

Careless concluded that the Kamenka property is an attractive prospect, given its size (more than 1000 acres), its mountain setting, its location adjacent to the airport for easy fly-in use, its zoning, the fact it is not within the ALR and the possibility of incorporating a large real estate development (up to 74 large lots could be subdivided as part of the project.) Similar real estate developments are key components of many of today's destination resorts and are used to help finance the developments.

The lack of water has been identified as the limiting factor for this site.

The current Lillooet Golf Course would have to be expanded to 18 holes, would be situated within the ALR and would not be able to directly benefit from a real estate component.

### **Ec lodges**

Careless (p. 39) also notes the potential exists in the Lillooet area to develop a number of ec lodges. These would be smaller-scale facilities, accommodating up to 40 guests, and would offer a high calibre experience for seasoned ecotourism and adventure travelers. To succeed, such lodges would have to be linked with a range of products, including trail riding, heli-hiking, mountain bike touring, nature viewing, cultural tourism, etc. This in turn could lead to the development of other tourism-related businesses, including new restaurants and retail stores.

Potential sites for a lodge include the Kendel Kaser property near the Old Fraser Bridge and a site on Xwisten land at the mouth of the Bridge River.

### **Dealing with Skepticism**

Despite its splendid natural advantages and rich history, Lillooet still confronts challenges posed by its reliance on drive-by travelers, its location off the beaten track, the need to draw visitors "up the hill and into town," and its lack of destination facilities and a market-ready product.

The small population, labour force and shortage of entrepreneurial dollars also mean the community has difficulty finding people willing to make major tourism investments.

Skepticism about the value of tourism still exists within the community. Some residents hold the view that Lillooet faces a forestry-versus tourism-choice, rather than seeking ways for the two industries to complement each other.

One person observed, "I think there's still a lot of resistance in the community from resource-based industry and resource-based families. Some people are fifth-generation loggers and they sometimes remind me of the fishermen in Atlantic Canada. When an environment changes, people have a choice.

"I think that's where we are. I think tourism is a really big opportunity. It's scary, huge and there's a steep learning curve. If we can create a solid vision and some tangible opportunities, then there's the potential for the community to buy into it. I think we are moving to tourism. It's the most viable option we have. I think it provides the widest,

most viable opportunity to engage the largest and widest sector of people in the area. Our other options are limited, because issues arise with them.”

The Careless study also acknowledged the reluctance of some in the community to embrace tourism. Noting that tourism in B.C. generates 74 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) of the forest sector, Ric Careless suggests, “Therefore, tourism clearly can play a role in enhancing the economies of places like Lytton and Lillooet, building on the foundations provided by forestry. This means that the best approach for B.C. communities such as Lillooet and Lytton to maximize the benefits of these sectors is a diversification strategy that is based on tourism *and* forestry (rather than tourism *versus* forestry.)” (p. 9)

### **The Case for Tourism**

Solid arguments can be made in favour of tourism. They include:

- the community’s shifting economic base means Lillooet needs to diversify
- the relative cost of developing a tourism economy versus the more onerous costs associated with extensive infrastructure development
- tourism’s ‘lighter imprint’ on the natural landscape
- tourism has the highest rate of owner-operators of any industry
- the entry level jobs it can provide for local youth
- the first contact for newcomers such as retirees and knowledge workers is often through a visit as tourists
- tourism is the one industry that attracts dollars from urban areas to rural areas. The dollars come this way instead of leaving the community.
- much of the money spent by local tourism operators is spent locally and circulates locally. CAO Kim Burgoyne estimates that 90 per cent of tourism operators throughout the Coast Cariboo Chilcotin Tourism Region purchase goods locally.

Burgoyne believes people throughout the tourism region need to see dollars and cents numbers to prove the value of tourism to their area.

She notes that a Tourism BC study of the value of tourism to Fort Nelson revealed that it’s a \$50 million industry for that remote northern community. She would like to see a similar study done in this region and has offered the Coast Cariboo Chilcotin Tourism Region as a model for such a regional study.

### **Developing a Tourism Economy**

To create a positive investment climate, Lillooet needs to embrace tourism as a future economic base.

The first step is to make the decision to develop an integrated, quality tourism economy. That requires the entire community – and not just those directly involved in tourism and hospitality – to support the concept. It requires the willingness to build community partnerships; support for joint marketing initiatives; working together to communicate a unified message; consistent and reliable service; and perhaps even pooling resources for a central reservation system and a Visit Lillooet website featuring local tourism businesses.

The question of ‘Who do we want to be when we grow up?’ can partially be answered by



developing a brand, which projects a distinctive image of a community or region and its unique attributes.

Effective branding is absolutely essential if a tourism location hopes to be successful. “Branding is more than just achieving consumer recognition of a product. It also seeks to build a story or elicit an emotional response in the consumer that will encourage him/her to choose to visit a particular locale. Successful branding (achieved by careful logos, messaging and pictures that are repetitively and compellingly imprinted) results in a consumer choosing to integrate the experience that a brand represents into his or her life.” (Careless, p. 14).

Community tourism action strategies and work plans can be created through a community tourism body or Destination Marketing Organization. These can include informal marketing cooperatives, a department/committee of the Chamber of Commerce, a subsidiary of the Economic Development Commission, a fee for service contract with a regional DMO, or a non-profit society .

Possible sources of funding for tourism development include the hotel room tax (Lillooet is too small to generate much revenue in this area); municipal funding; business levies; memberships; earned revenue from a central reservation service or racking fees; Tourism BC funding; or a combination of the above.

Kim Burgoyne notes that the province is pouring millions of dollars into destination resorts in B.C., while her tourism region – and others – only receive funding for marketing, and none for product development. This is an area where community leaders might weigh the pros and cons of lobbying Victoria to change this funding method.

Lillooet is one of a handful of B.C. communities selected for the Tourism BC Community Foundations program. This program provides Lillooet with a paid facilitator to lead the community’s tourism development process, including creation of a sustainable tourism development plan.

Leadership in developing a long-term tourism vision for Lillooet needs to come from three sectors:

1. Local government, which provides the infrastructure and takes the lead in relations with senior government
2. The aboriginal community, which represent half the population and has enormous potential for developing tourism products, and will have a powerful voice on how the land base is used.
3. The business community, which sets the climate and helps bring in new capital investment

Once all the groundwork is laid, Lillooet would then be in a stronger position to link and partner new products with established large-scale tourism marketers/packagers. Two that have been identified in past studies are Rocky Mountaineer Vacations, and Intrawest, North America’s largest resort company. Executives from both companies have toured the Lillooet area to gauge its tourism potential.

### **Aboriginal Tourism**

Market research indicates that the aboriginal tourism industry has significant potential for growth in B.C. The Aboriginal Tourism BC (ABC) report Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy, released in December 2005, notes that the aboriginal tourism industry is expected to expand to \$50 million by 2010 – an increase from the \$30 million

in annual revenues in 2006. The study also stated that 89 per cent of tour companies surveyed would consider offering or expanding aboriginal experiences in their packages.

Locally, 15 Lower Mainland tour operators participated in the St'at'imc cultural familiarization tours that were initiated in 2005.

According to the Leech report, "Within a week of the Fam Tour, the St'at'imc Cultural Centre Project was asked by a tour operator to provide cultural performances and traditional lunches for the 2006 summer season. However, negotiations between the project and the tour company broke down, partially because the demand increased from a maximum of four buses/day to eight or nine, which was beyond the current project capacity."

However, the demand is indicative of the interest in cultural tourism product in the Lillooet area. Leech concluded, "Clearly, tourism can play a significant role in providing aboriginal entrepreneurship and employment opportunities." (page 16)

Leech also found, "Tourism was the area most identified by interviewees as being the greatest opportunity for the Lillooet area, not just during but pre-and post- (Olympic) Games as well." (page 16)

Current aboriginal tourism activities include Xwisten's tour to its traditional fishing rocks; spawning channel tours at Sekw'el'was; dramatic performances and traditional feasts at T'it'q'et; and boat tours offered by Tsal'alh.

As an indicator of the growth of St'at'imc cultural tours, one tour operator will be offering two-night, three-day tours of the area this summer.

Grand Chief Terry, who is chief at Xwisten, described the tours of the fishing rocks as "a small operation now, but it's the beginning of something...I don't know that we're ready for tourism, but tourism is slowly sneaking up on us."

The proposed St'at'imc Heritage and Learning Centre (formerly known as the Cultural Centre) presents the opportunity to preserve, celebrate and share the St'at'imc culture.

The Upper St'at'imc Language, Cultural and Education Society (USLCES) has received approximately \$100,000 in funding from the Pine Beetle diversification program to update the design of the centre and conduct a feasibility study, based on the newest cost estimates. The new study will include green technology and will also examine if the heritage centre can be more closely integrated with the Lillooet REC Centre i.e. combining infrastructure such as heating systems.

The District of Lillooet has shown its active support for the heritage and learning centre by providing the property for the centre. Fund-raising events for the centre have also received widespread community support. Other examples of community co-operation and support for aboriginal tourism initiatives include labour, equipment and material donations for the construction of the s7istken (pit house) at T'it'q'et in 2006-07, and the decision to expand the July 24-27, 2008 Apricot Festival to include a celebration of Tsaqwem (saskatoon) berries.

Tourism collaborations between aboriginal communities and their neighbours are ongoing in other areas of B.C., with the Gitskan at Hazelton, the Haida on the Queen Charlottes, the Ktunaxa in the Kootenays and the Haisla in the Kitimat area.



To achieve similar success here, Careless recommends the overall community should try to “identify possible projects that can involve both native and non-native players, and that could serve as positive triggers to support sustainable economic diversification.” (page 35)

Careless also urged Lillooet to work with its aboriginal neighbours “to create revenue, social benefits and jobs for both communities in ways that are meaningful, respectful and fair for both communities.”

He noted that aboriginal support for tourism will likely only be achieved if aboriginal communities are involved in all aspects of developing the tourism economy, including participation in the revenues, which would include employment and ownership benefits.

#### **14. 2010 OPPORTUNITIES**

A Spirit of B.C. Committee was formed in 2004 with a mandate to maximize the opportunities created by the 2010 Winter Olympics, which are expected to generate \$4 billion worth of economic opportunities for B.C. Lillooet has already benefited from Olympic Legacy funding for the REC Centre and for local literacy initiatives.

The Spirit of B.C. Committee has hosted a number of events, including a community open house to discuss local opportunities, a flag-raising ceremony for the five-year countdown to the Olympics, a three-day opportunities forum, a sports tourism workshop, a business opportunities forum, a volunteer appreciation night and community athletic events at the REC Centre.

Through the Spirit Committee, Lillooet received funding for the Apricot Tsaqwem Festival in July, Rivermania in September and for the Spirit Pole’s visit in June.

A number of Olympics-related opportunities have been identified:

- providing accommodation for Games visitors. With 250,000 visitors expected to attend the Games and with accommodation at a premium, the suggestion has been made that visitors could stay in Lillooet and commute to the Games if a transportation system was in place i.e. the proposed SLRD transit system or an extension of the current shuttle train serving Seton-Shalalth.



The Tsal’alh (Seton Lake) Indian Band is investigating the feasibility of extending the shuttle service south; however Chief Larry Casper says there are concerns that the current rolling stock cannot navigate the steep railways grades in the D’arcy area. He notes the service’s primary mandate is to meet transportation needs of his community.

- hosting an international indigenous artists and artisans market in Lillooet during the Olympics. Resources have not been available and time is running out to organize such an event.

- using the REC Centre and the surrounding environs as training sites for athletes from a national team. Overtures were made to contacts in South Korea, but the effort was not successful. The REC Centre has been posted on the Olympic Committee site.

- if the Sea to Sky Highway was closed by adverse road conditions during the Games, Lillooet would be the vital northern gateway to the Olympics. Planning for the possibility is difficult; however improvements to Highway 99 south and its bridges are supposed to be completed by 2010.

Despite a community forum and various Spirit of B.C. events, many locals are still unaware of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games Secretariat's Commerce Centre website and procurement policies.

As Leech wrote, "The Commerce Centre website is an incredible resource where entrepreneurs can review past opportunities and bid results to identify potential subcontracting prospects; become aware of new bidding opportunities and sign up (\$100 fee) for email notification of the latest bid postings, prepare for a bid by downloading and reviewing documents for opportunities and connect with winning bidders to offer goods and services." (page 7).

It is recommended that a local agency pay the \$100 registration fee to receive email notification of postings on the BC Bids website (procurement of goods or services) in areas such as tourism, construction, goods and services and arts and crafts, providing access to these postings for interested local entrepreneurs, artisans and contractors. This information could then be posted on Lillooet Listserv and other boards.

## **15. THE FOREST INDUSTRY**

Growth opportunities in the forestry sector have become more limited due to a variety of factors, including:

- cyclical lumber prices leading to boom and bust cycles in resource communities
- increased mechanization resulting in fewer jobs
- aboriginal and environmental concerns
- difficulties accessing timber in the Lillooet Timber Supply Area (TSA)
- increasing competition for the land base from other economic sectors

There is also the looming invasion of the mountain pine beetle. Out of nine TSAs in BC's southern interior, the Lillooet TSA is going to be the second hardest-hit. Forty per cent of the forests in the TSA are pine and it's estimated that 80 per cent of those trees will die within the next couple of years.

Responding to the crisis, one local company, Bridgeside Wood Products, is utilizing pine beetle wood in some of its specialty products.

To address other forest industry concerns, the District of Lillooet successfully lobbied the province for a study to be conducted on timber pricing issues and access in the TSA.

The Ministry of Forests hired Bruce McRae, a former assistant deputy minister, to undertake an independent review of

issues such as stumpage costs, point of appraisal, road groupings and manufacturing and recovery costs in the Lillooet TSA. He concluded the current stumpage system is "not adequate" for the TSA and recommended that the ministry develop and implement stumpage adjustments for licencees in



the TSA, clarify licencees' consultation and information-sharing obligations and expand its holdings and sales of timber to ensure access to timber by licencees in the TSA.

"It has become almost a cliché that this TSA is composed of interior timber in a coastal setting, that is lower-valued timber located in a higher-cost area," wrote McRae. "The situation is worsened by lack of an agreed-upon land use plan and a co-operative framework for addressing First Nations claims."

He said the dominant concern is that harvest rates have been running at about 55 per cent of the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), with "obvious direct impacts on employment and economic activity in the region." The harvesting shortfall is attributed to difficulties in obtaining secure access to the Timber Harvesting Land Base (THLB), and extremely high stumpage expenses.

The community is waiting for the provincial government to act on the recommendations contained in McRae's report. Government action would reduce the competitive disadvantage currently encountered by the local forest industry.

To address aboriginal issues, Ainsworth Lumber Co. Ltd. and the Northern St'at'imc signed the Halaw Protocol, described as a "milestone accord," in October 2007.

The accord between Ainsworth and the Northern St'at'imc (Xwisten, Tsal'alh, T'it'q'et, Sekw'el'was, Xaxli'p and Ts'kw'aylaxw) formalizes their working relationships in an agreement that acknowledges the social and economic interests of all parties. It sets out the principles for relationships, sustainability, communication, process and economics that will "define a positive and productive working relationship into the future."

In October 2005, the District of Lillooet commissioned a feasibility study on a micro mill for the community. The study examined the feasibility of building and supplying a small, modern, relatively maintenance-free micro-mill.

Another project under consideration is an application for a community forest licence that would be operated as a partnership among the towns of Lillooet and Lytton, aboriginal communities and current licencees.

## 16. AGRICULTURE

*"Our end vision is that someone will realize the huge potential in this area and will build a winery here. We are less than four hours from Vancouver, less than two hours from Whistler and on the route of B.C.'s most spectacular circle tours. In comparison to the Okanagan, our real estate is cheap and the sunshine is plentiful. Add an excellent glass of wine and what more could a tourist want?"* – a volunteer grape grower

Lillooet has a long history of supporting agriculture and ranching. Kentucky tobacco farmer Jonathan Scott provided plugs of "chaw" for Gold Rush-era miners and a co-op tomato cannery operated on Main Street until the 1950s.

Fountainview Farms, located on Highway 12 between Lillooet and Lytton, is the largest producer of organic carrots in the province. Old Airport Gardens, the seasonal Farmers' Market and Cariboo Apiaries are all testament to the success of agricultural endeavours in the area.

The Official Community Plan calls for the community to work with the Ministry of Agriculture to research and promote new agricultural opportunities (e.g. grapes, food processing and market gardens) and to amend zoning regulations to permit agri-tourism opportunities that are consistent with Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) regulations

When 1800 grape vines were planted in June 2005 (consisting of nine red and nine white varieties at two sites), it was the first step towards developing a small scale wine industry along the sunny slopes of the Fraser River between Lillooet and Lytton. The hope is that in the wake of 2010, the Lillooet region will become the newest home to B.C.'s thriving wine industry.

Chances of successfully developing a wine grape-growing area are rated "very high," based on the high temperatures in the area, its long growing season, the creation of hardier grape varieties and the fact that Lillooet and Lytton are now in a warmer weather cycle. Private sector operators in the Okanagan are keenly interested in the local project and its progress. The high cost of land in the Okanagan makes it prohibitive to expand the wineries there, and companies are looking for new locations.

The Lillooet area has skilled workers who can work in the vineyards. When the ginseng companies moved out, they left behind a workforce that is educated in WHMIS, has all the pesticide and herbicide application certificates and knows about irrigation, posting and fencing. Many of these workers are members of local aboriginal communities and have not moved with the ginseng industry.

## 17. MINING

Since 2001, provincial government policies and increased commodity prices have fuelled investor confidence in the mining industry, and mining revenues and jobs in B.C. are increasing.

The Lillooet area has historically been a hub of mining activity in the province.

Bralorne Gold Mines is re-developing the historic Bralorne, King and Pioneer Gold Mines in the Bridge River Valley, west of Lillooet. Together, these three operations represent the largest historic gold producer in the Canadian Cordillera. From 1928 to 1971, these three operations produced 4.15 million ounces of gold from 7.9 million tons of ore (equalling a grade of 0.53 ounces per ton.)

The company says recent discoveries between the Bralorne and King mines have opened up significant new mineralization. Phase III exploration, now underway, is focused on expanding new zones and outlining reserves for a 280 tpd operation. The current Bralorne mill operates at 120 tpd with ample room for expansion.

The company received permit approval in January 2008 from the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources for new cross-cutting and drifting in the BK zone, located between the Bralorne and King mines.

During the fourth quarter of 2007, the company prepared and installed new underground rail and rail ties, along with new ventilation and electrical systems to the



Alhambra Drift at a total cost of approximately \$1 million.

Exploration is also underway in the Lillooet area for gold, copper and silver.

In March 2005, Ts'kw'aylaxw and Graymont Western Canada Ltd. signed an agreement for a new long-term lease that will permit Graymont to continue its limestone mining and processing operations on Ts'kw'aylaxw lands until 2045.

## **18. ENERGY**

The Lillooet area is seeing an upswing in applications for run-of-the-river independent power projects (IPPs) that could provide employment, construction investment dollars and open up access to remote areas.

IPPs and other green energy initiatives such as wind power are consistent with B.C. Hydro's objective of acquiring 50 per cent of new energy from renewable, clean energy sources and delivering that energy to the Lower Mainland.

The industry is still in its infancy, but half a dozen companies are looking to develop projects in the region under the umbrella of the Western Geopower Corporation. The companies include ATCP Power, Cloudworks Energy, Ledcor Power, Gaea Energy Enterprises, Hydralto Renewable Energy, Plutonic Power, Summit Power Group, and St. James Enterprises. Ledcor is examining opportunities on Gun Creek, Tyaughton Creek, Cadwallader and Noel Creeks and the Hurley River in the Gold Bridge-Bralorne area.

Closer to Lillooet, Langley-based Princeton Energy has applications pending for an IPP on Texas Creek, south of Lillooet. The company has also made application for water licences to divert water from Downton Creek and an adjacent unnamed creek, which both flow into Cayoosh Creek.

Earth First Energy of Victoria is examining the feasibility of building a wind power project on four mountaintops in the Yalakom region, northwest of Lillooet. The company has received an investigative permit from the province to study the project's effects over a maximum of 5,000 ha. of land.

## **19. SENIORS HOUSING**

A local seniors housing project is also seeking investment dollars.

A committee headed by local businesspersons Hal Stathers and Clyde Pettit is examining the feasibility of developing the housing complex.

The committee says a specific site is required and a community services co-ordinator is needed to advance the project.

The committee says "extreme" construction costs of up to \$225 per square foot may hinder Lillooet's short-term ability to bring the project to fruition. Costs, including labour, are expected to remain high until at least 2010 and the shortage of skilled workers "has never been more severe," according to Stathers.

## **20. LOCAL LEADERSHIP**

In 2006, the District of Lillooet re-established its economic development office and recruited an EDO to attract investment to the community and assist with economic planning and promotion.

The municipality's draft Official Community Plan, the Economic Opportunities Plan presented to Premier Gordon Campbell and the 2007-2017 Corporate Strategic Plan identify a series of policies and strategies designed to support and enhance economic development for Lillooet.

The benefits of this type of long-term planning include:

- integrity of the working land base
- direct investment to commercial centres
- building on existing assets and infrastructure
- taxes shared more equally
- vibrant, mixed use neighbourhoods
- certainty for developers

### **Commercial Strategies**

Commercial strategies to support development include:

1. Land Use Designation changes including:

- enhancing Downton Square as a community focal point providing a mix of social, heritage, cultural, commercial and passive recreation activities; seeking partners to assist with project development.

- changing Main Street zoning north of 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. from Light Industrial to Commercial-Mixed Use.

- encouraging multi-family use as a priority use for the Main Street area south of the Mile O Cairn, with commercial uses supported on the ground-floor only.

2. Tax incentives to create a specified area on Main Street from Station Hill to Phair Road and in the East Lillooet Industrial Park. In this specified area, the municipality would provide tax relief for up to five years on increases to assessed values arising from improvements such as:

- upgrades to building exteriors
- additional commercial floor space
- new residential units

3. Development Permit guidelines: The OCP says the District will support existing Development Permit guidelines that work to establish a general pre-1910 theme for renovations and construction of new buildings.

Acceptable design themes are:

- authentic renovation or restoration of original design themes, including Old Gold Rush, traditional First Nations, "Turn of the Century" Victorian or western.
- New or modern pre-1910 design themes including the above architectural values.

### **Industrial Strategies**

OCP industrial strategies include several new opportunities:

- potential development of the North Lillooet upper bench area to include a 20 ha. industrial area and a 50 ha. residential area.

- development of the East Lillooet Airport lands, including a 120 ha. industrial area and a 380 ha. residential area.

- encouraging agriculture processing facilities on ALR lands in East Lillooet.

- possible relocation of all District of Lillooet maintenance activities to East Lillooet.

- amending zoning from Commercial to Light Industrial in East Lillooet in the vicinity of Highway 99 North and Nugget Road to focus commercial development in downtown Lillooet.
- new partnerships on undeveloped CN Rail lands.
- amending light industrial designations to Main Street Commercial designations to support long-term strategy of for new commercial infill downtown.
- amending industrial designation to residential to encourage site redevelopment for multi-family or resort development near the Old Bridge area. This initiative, along with the Main Street expansion, does present one challenge - it will decrease the industrial land inventory.

### **Housing Strategies**

The OCP recognizes that a community housing rehabilitation strategy is required to address the 30 per cent of housing that is worth less than \$50,000.

It has also been recommended that the OCP should designate more multi-family sites to encourage new developments.

The district's Corporate Strategic Plan 2007-2017 notes there is under-utilized land in Lillooet belonging to School District 74, controlled by provincial ministries, currently leased by B.C. Rail or Crown land in and around the district. "Our control of these lands will create the ability to deal with seniors housing issues and affordable housing." (page 23).

### **Tourism Strategies**

To support tourism, the District of Lillooet has set key objectives, including:

- the Gateway Project at the Highway 99 junction
- highway signage program
- Communities in Bloom participation. (Lillooet came first in its category in B.C. and earned five blooms in the Communities in Bloom beautification program in 2007)

These initiatives are indicative of the importance now given to tourism infrastructure in long-range community planning.

The municipality also supports tourism development through policies and management direction that are much more specific and pro-active than in the past. The municipality belongs to the Gold Country Community Society, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourist Association and the Vancouver Coast Mountain Tourism Association.

### **Preserving Lillooet's heritage**

In the area of heritage, the District of Lillooet's OCP calls on the community to encourage heritage preservation and education to enhance cultural experiences e.g. the Miyazaki Heritage House, and to protect existing heritage sites, including: the Old Fraser River bridge, St. Andrew's Church, the mining tailings at the Chinese Rocks and Hangman's Tree.

### **Recreation strategies**

In the area of recreation, the OCP calls for the municipality to:

- support partnerships to expand and upgrade the development of the REC Centre.
- improve access conditions for visitors

- add new facilities i.e. a water park
- protect and enhance existing facilities e.g. ball fields
- develop road network facilities and seek funding to support a bicycle network in priority areas such as Station Hill, Main Street, gateways, North Lillooet and East Lillooet.

## **21. CONCLUSION**

Lillooet is open for business.

For more information, please call the District of Lillooet at 240-256-4289, write to PO Box 610, Lillooet, BC, V0K 1V0, or contact:

Mayor Christ'l Roshard at [croshard@lillooetbc.com](mailto:croshard@lillooetbc.com)

Chief Administrative Officer Grant Loyer at [gloyer@lillooetbc.com](mailto:gloyer@lillooetbc.com)

or Economic Development Officer Jerry Sucharyna at: [jsucharyna@lillooetbc.ca](mailto:jsucharyna@lillooetbc.ca)

The Lillooet Chamber of Commerce may be contacted at Box 650, Lillooet, B.C., V0K 1V0 or by phone at 250-256-3578. Its website address is [<http://www.lillooetchamberofcommerce.com/index.html>](http://www.lillooetchamberofcommerce.com/index.html)

## 22. APPENDICES

### District of Lillooet Population by Age Group (2006 census)

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>% Distribution</u>
Under 18 years	520	22.4%
18-34 years	370	15.9%
35-54 years	750	32.3%
55-74 years	530	22.8%
75 years and over	154	6.6%
Total-Age Groups	2324	100%
Median Age 43.7 years		

### Household Income in the District of Lillooet (2001 census)

**Median Household income: \$40,289.**

Note: the 2006 census statistics for this information will be released in the spring of 2008.

Total households (occupied, private) 1,145.

<u>Household Income Group</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% Distribution</u>
Less than \$35,000	430	37.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	275	24.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,000	245	21.4%
\$75,000 and over	190	16.6%

### Work Force Education Attainment in the District of Lillooet (25 to 64 years of age) (2001 census)

Less than High School Diploma	315	25.6%
High School Diploma Only	195	15.9%
Some Post Secondary	90	7.3%
Post Secondary Certificate/Diploma	435	35.4%
University Bachelor Degree	130	10.6%
University Graduate Degree/Certificate	65	5.3%

**Language Knowledge (2001 census):**

Language Knowledge for persons aged 15 to 64 (defined as the ability to hold a conversation) is:

1920 English speakers or	90.4 per cent
70 Punjabi speakers or	3.8 per cent
45 German or	2.5 per cent
15 Russian or	0.8 per cent
10 Japanese or	0.5 per cent
10 Polish or	0.5 per cent
10 French or	0.5 per cent
10 Chinese or	0.5 per cent
10 Ukrainian or	0.5 per cent

**Non-Agricultural Labour Force By Sector (2001 census):**

Forestry and Logging	35 jobs	2.6 %
Mining and Oil and Gas	0	0%
Construction	40 jobs	3.0%
Manufacturing	160 jobs	12.0%
Transportation, Warehousing, Public Utility	155	11.7%
Wholesale Trade	20	1.5%
Retail Trade	150	11.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Leasing	20	1.5%
Services	505	38%
Government	160	12.0%
Total	1,330	100%

**Labour Force by Occupation (2001 census):**

Administrative/Clerical	170	12.8%
Executive	0	0%
Farming/Forestry	50	3.8%
Labourers/Handlers	175	13.2%
Machine Operators	135	10.2%
Management	30	2.3%
Precision Production	10	0.8%
Professional	90	6.8%
Protective Services	25	1.9%
Sales	60	4.5%
Services	420	31.6%
Technician	120	9.0%
Transportation and Public Utilities	50	3.8%
Total	1330	100%

**District of Lillooet Residential Building Permits**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Value, \$000</u>
2001	2	338
2002	3	315
2003	5	550
2004	2	461
2005	5	1,199
2006	4	776
2007	12	2,041

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## **24. INTERVIEWS:**

1. Debbie Arnott, general manager, Community Futures Development Corporation of Sun Country
2. Susan Bell, manager, Lillooet Visitor Centre
3. Arden Bolton, director of public works, District of Lillooet
4. Jane Bryson, community co-ordinator, Lillooet centre, Thompson Rivers University
5. Kim Burgoyne, CAO, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
6. Joanne Drake, author
7. Larry Casper, chief, Seton Lake Indian Band
8. Chris Graham, owner-manager, Lillooet Realty
9. Doug Grossler, owner, Lillooet Contracting
10. Brenda Ireland, consultant, First Light Initiatives
11. Bruce Jaffary, president, Lillooet Chamber of Commerce and owner, Miner's Rest B&B
12. Kendel Kaser, landowner
13. Colleen Ledoux, manager, Lillooet Employment Centre
14. Norm Leech, chair, steering committee, Lillooet Heritage and Learning Centre
15. Gerry Little, director of recreation, District of Lillooet
16. Pat Pearce, superintendent of education, School District 74
17. Sheila Pfeifer, chief librarian, Lillooet Area Library Association
18. Kama Steliga, executive director, Lillooet Friendship Centre
19. Bailey Stone, managing broker, Royal LePage Westwin Realty
20. Jerry Sucharyna, economic development officer, District of Lillooet
21. Saul Terry, chair, St'at'imc Chiefs Council, chief, Xwisten Indian Band
22. Betty Weaver, literacy co-ordinator, Lillooet Area Library Association, and executive director, New Beginning Community Society