

Community Connections

The UNBC Community Development Institute Newsletter

Spring 2013: Volume 9, Number 2

Tumbler Ridge to Develop a Community Sustainability Plan

Since its creation in 1984, Tumbler Ridge has experienced the benefits and challenges of being a resource economy community. It began as an "instant" town with new infrastructure and modern community design, a young energetic population, plentiful jobs, and diverse community programs and services.

When the global market for coal collapsed in 2003, change came quickly and unexpectedly. As a result, the community faced a number of significant challenges around jobs, housing, retail services, health and social services, and municipal infrastructure. However, the spirit of the community remained within a core group of dedicated residents and leaders who kept many community programs active.

With the recent resurgence of coal prices, the community is again on the upswing. This prompted the District of Tumbler Ridge Council to undertake the development of a community sustainability plan. "The Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Plan is a proactive response, and a determined resolve not to let history repeat itself, regardless of the inevitable fluctuations in the resource economy," said Mayor Darwin Wren.

Tumbler Ridge is working with the CDI to develop the community sustainability plan through a local committee, chaired by Councillor Mike Caisley.

"Tumbler Ridge is preparing to take full advantage of the current economic upswing to create lasting benefit for the community," said Marleen Morris, Associate Director of the CDI. "We see this project as having the potential to create a model sustainability plan that other communities can use."

Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study and Housing Strategy Framework

Last year, the City of Prince George adopted a new Official Community Plan (OCP) which includes the goal of creating a range of housing types and tenures to accommodate all ages, income levels, and abilities. The OCP also highlights the need to strengthen neighbourhoods, facilitate infill and redevelopment, and minimize ongoing costs of infrastructure.

To further the housing agenda, the City of Prince George has partnered with the CDI to complete a housing need and demand study and a housing strategy framework.

"Our goal is to have a robust and diverse housing supply that aligns with economic growth and diversification opportunities," said Chris Bone, Manager of Communication and Citizen Engagement and the City's lead on this project. "We want to have housing that meets the needs and provides options for the full range of Prince George residents."

In addition to understanding current and future housing need and demand, the project will create a platform for dialogue that positions all segments of the housing sector in Prince George to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

"Good housing and vibrant neighbourhoods will attract new residents, support economic development and community revitalization, and help retain existing residents, especially seniors," said Greg Halseth, Director of the CDI. "With the anticipated economic growth and investment in the north, Prince George must be ready to take advantage of opportunities to strengthen its role as a hub for the region."

CDI Spring Speakers Series

Many of our northern BC communities are experiencing rapid population growth, resulting in housing shortages and putting pressure on community infrastructure and amenities. With this challenge comes opportunity: to take advantage of the upswing to undertake development and improvements that will attract and retain people and business investment in our communities.

The 2013 CDI Spring Speakers Series will examine the state of housing and community infrastructure and amenities in northern BC and explore opportunities and options for creative and innovative development and redevelopment.

Our guest speaker will be Gwyn Symmons, a planner and principal of CitySpaces Consulting. Gwyn and CitySpaces have worked in communities across BC on projects involving neighbourhood and residential design and the construction and renovation of health, sport, and educational facilities.

This year's Speakers Series will take place:

- May 7 in Mackenzie at the Recreation Centre
- May 8 in Prince George at the Prince George Public Library, Bob Harkins Branch

Talks are held from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

The Spring Speakers Series talks are open to everyone and are free of charge.

Volunteerism and Aging in Northern BC Communities

Working as part of a cross-Canada research partnership, the CDI is studying volunteerism in resource communities.

This research project examines the role that voluntary organizations, community groups, and volunteers play in both supporting older people and in influencing community development. It also examines the role of seniors in providing volunteer services and programs, and how this contribution is making a difference in volunteer organizations and community development initiatives.

Two communities, Quesnel and Tumbler Ridge, are participating in the study. The northern BC work is led by CDI faculty associate, Neil Hanlon and CDI Director, Greg Halseth, in collaboration with project lead Mark Skinner at Trent University and Alun Joseph at the University of Guelph.

CDI News Briefs

Youth on Boards, Prince George

CDI faculty associate, Dawn Hemingway, Chair of UNBC's School of Social Work, is developing a four-part workshop series to enable youth to learn about, and get involved with, local boards and volunteer opportunities. Participants who attend all of the sessions will receive a Certificate of Completion. The project is being funded through **Board Voice**, a new provincial organization advocating on behalf of social service volunteer boards across BC. Partner agencies include the UNBC Alumni Association and the United Way of Northern BC.

Partnerships 2020, Terrace

Marleen Morris gave a presentation to the Partnerships 2020 conference, sponsored by the Northwest Labour Market Partnership. The presentation, **Embedded Collaboration: Retooling for continuous workforce renewal in northern BC** looked at opportunities for strategic coordination and collaboration in workforce development. For more information about the conference, visit www.Partnerships2020.ca

Canadian Home Builders Association, Richmond

Greg Halseth put northern housing and community infrastructure issues on the map at the provincial CHBA conference. Speaking on a panel with Mayor Lori Ackerman of Fort St. John, Halseth spoke about the wisdom of focusing development within the existing community infrastructure envelope to increase the housing supply without having to extend services such as water and sewer.

The Community Development Institute at UNBC

The Community Development Institute at UNBC is dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, preparing students and practitioners for leadership roles in economic and community development, and creating a body of knowledge, information, and research that enhances our understanding and our ability to deal with the impacts of ongoing transformation.

In keeping with the vision of the University of Northern British Columbia, the Community Development Institute is committed to working with all communities – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to help them further their community and regional development aspirations.

For more information contact: Marleen Morris, Associate Director by phone at 250 960-9806 or email at mmorris@unbc.ca or visit our website at www.unbc.ca/cdi