



British Columbia's Regional Districts – An Overview

How BC Filled a Gap in the Fabric
of Local Governance in the 1960's



Topics Covered

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Slides</u>
Background & history of RD system	(3) - (5)
The RD system today	(6) - (9)
Case study of Columbia Shuswap RD	(10) - (11)
Key observations about the RD system	(12) - (14)

Why Regional Districts (1960's)

BC Topographic Map



BC Estimated
Pop., July '16

Total: 4.75M
Metro: 3.2M (68%)

- Mountainous terrain, 95% uninhabited
- Linear settlement pattern
- Only 1% municipalized
- 60's rural pop. ~15-20%
- No county system:
 - 99% of territory under direct Provincial administration
 - Issues in infrastructure and in interlocal & rural services
 - Pressure on Province to fill service gaps, resolve conflicts

Made in BC – Resolve, Ingenuity, Perseverance

- Pre-1950's:
 - 1920's – joint single-purpose utility boards for Greater Vancouver created
 - 30's-40's – more joint boards, e.g., libraries, regional parks, planning, etc.
 - 1947 – Goldenberg Commission urges more joint services (JE Brown, Secretary)
- 1950's:
 - 1953 – Metropolitan Toronto (*first 2-tier system in Canada*)
 - 1954 – JE Brown appointed Deputy Minister; talks on revising the architecture of the BC local government system start... but not following the Toronto model
 - 1957 – timid new legislation on rural & metro services (*treated as separate issues*)
- 1960's:
 - 1960 – Winnipeg Metro created; Ray Committee urges 2-tier for Gr. Van. (*flopped*)
 - 1963 – proposal to build “rural counties” on top of school boards (*didn't fly*)
 - 1964 – Brown develops self-organized, multi-purpose, regional federation concept
 - 1965 – original legislation for “regional districts” as self-organizing federations
 - 1965-68 – 28 RD's formed voluntarily as “empty vessels”, each with the responsibility for determining its own priorities for service partnerships
 - 1970 – Brown retires... after nearly a quarter century working on regionalism

Strategy of Gentle Imposition



Regional District System, 2017



RD System Today

Population

- 1+ million..... 1 RD
- 100 - 400K..... 5 RD's
- 25 - 99K..... 17 RD's
- 3 - 24K..... 5 RD's
- Median pop..... ~ 60K

Note – 68% of population resides in 3 largest RD's

Note – the rural (non-municipal) pop.% ranges from 1-100%, with a median value of about 30%

Area

- >100K km²... 2 RD's
(larger than NL Island)
- >10K km²... 15 RD's
(larger than Avalon Peninsula)
- Median area... 17K km²
(about 2x Avalon)

Note – only about 5% of total BC land mass is inhabitable, and only about 1% is municipalized



Five Roles of RD's

Territorial Flexibility

- Sub-regional scale:
 1. **Local**... *community services in rural areas*
 2. **Interlocal**... *partnerships connecting town(s) to countryside*
- Regional scale:
 3. **Regional**... *capturing scale economies*
 4. **Multi-regional**... *interconnecting regional districts*

Superior Capacity

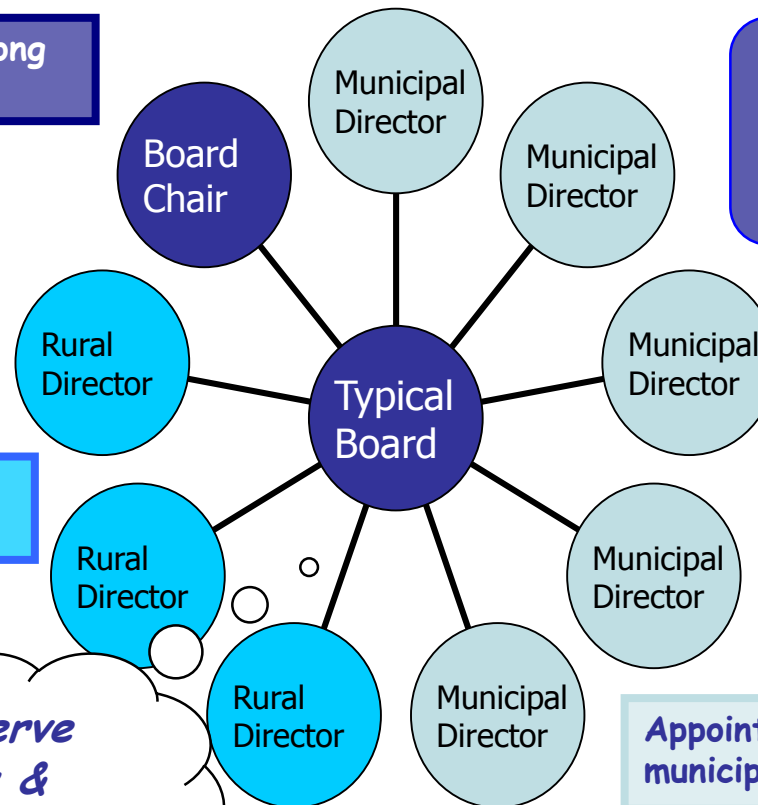
- Any scale:
 5. Contract service provision to members... *public-public partnerships (a different kind of P3)*

How RD Boards Are Composed

Chosen from among
all directors

HOW VOTING WORKS:

- rep-by-pop
- large cities, multiple directors
- weighted ballots for money votes



Elected to serve
4-year term

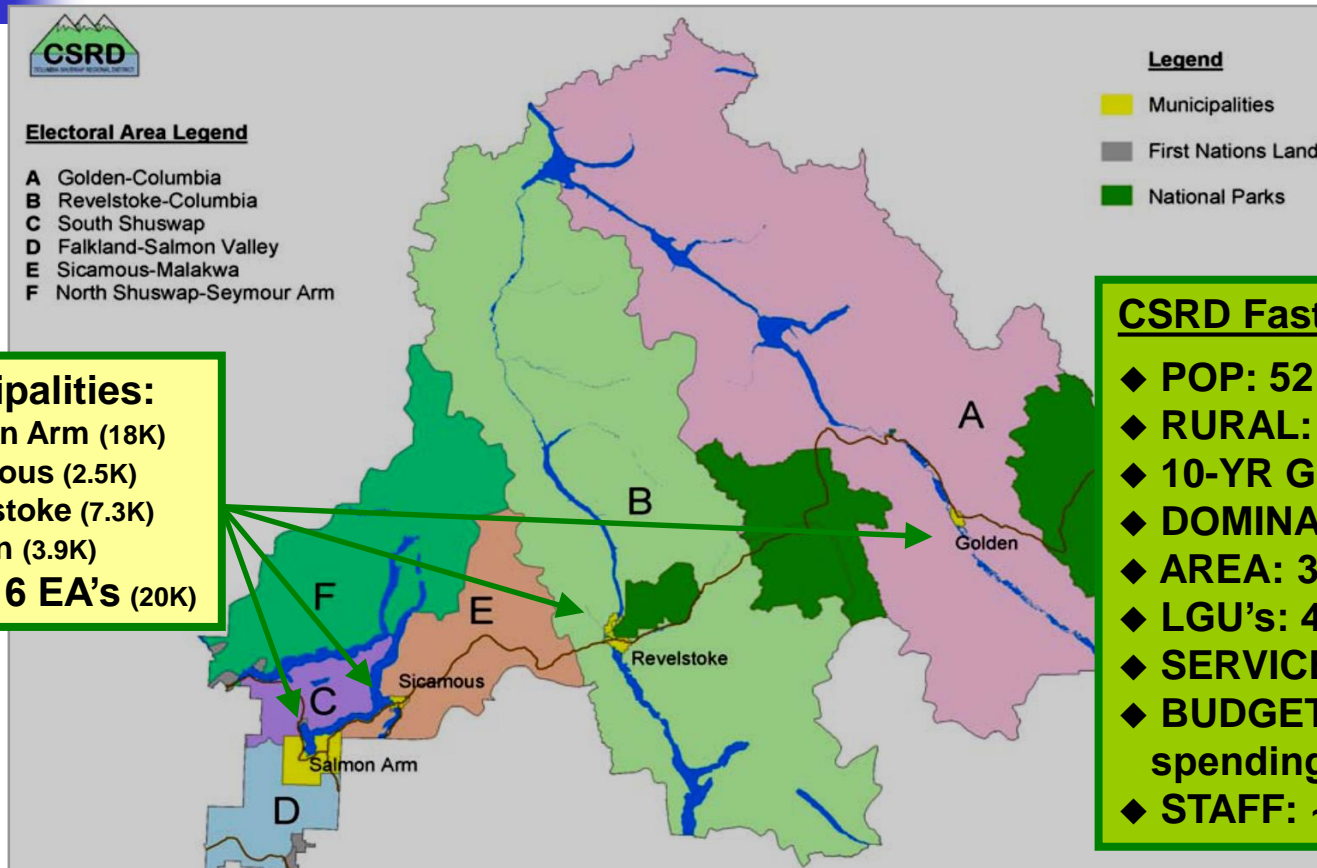
*RD Boards serve
municipalities &
non-municipal
territory alike*

Appointed FROM and BY
municipal councils

How Services Are Organized

1. Choose service component (all or part of a function)		3. Choose service mode			
		Direct production	Public-public contracting	Public-private contracting	Autonomous entity
2. Choose service area	Local / rural	<i>Rural fire – CSRD</i>	<i>Suburban fire – CSRD</i>	<i>Recycling – KBRD</i>	<i>Financial aid – CapRD</i>
	Interlocal	<i>Water delivery – CapRD</i>	<i>Suburban transit – CORD</i>	<i>Waste collection – NRD</i>	<i>BV-EDA – BNRD</i>
	Regional	<i>Landfill – NRD</i>	<i>Landfill – CORD</i>	<i>Waste-to-energy – GVRD</i>	<i>CRHC– CapRD</i>
	Multi-regional	<i>Regional parks – Low. Mainland</i>	<i>9-1-1 services – North Island</i>	<i>Regional parks – Lower Mainland</i>	<i>9-1-1 oversight – North Island</i>

Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD)



CSRD – Collaboration in a Multi-nodal Rural Region

- **RECREATION** – established consensus:
 - Four cities and their hinterlands
 - Goal: lower costs, better service, fairer cost sharing
- **FIRE SAFETY** – extending the consensus:
 - 13 volunteer departments + 3 town/RD partnership agreements resulting in 95% overall coverage
 - Needs: regional support for prevention, training, etc.
 - Goal: greater integration, NOT consolidation
- **CLEAN WATER** – building a new consensus:
 - Fragmentation of delivery, multiple small purveyors
 - Engineering standards, water quality suspect
 - Goal: consolidation under RD, raise service quality



Ancillary Institutions Are Crucial

- Reliable assessment system is needed:
 - “Who gets” vs “Who pays” is rarely an issue for RD’s – services are financially self-contained
 - A province-wide real property assessment service makes this possible (bcassessment.ca)
- Borrowing & insurance can be problematic:
 - MFABC (*AAA-rated*) pools all debt financing for the local government system in BC (mfa.bc.ca)
 - MIABC provides pooled self-insurance for local governments (miabc.org)

How Integration Reduces Consolidation Pressure



- Solving service issues one-by-one is easier
- First things first – a focus on true service priorities
- Public-public contracting helps small municipal & non-municipal communities stay independent yet effective
- Cooperation tends to reduce interlocal friction
- Cooperation is self-reinforcing – success breeds success
- Cooperation keeps Province from meddling incessantly



Concluding Observations

- RD system is **self-organizing** and designed for **continuous evolution** – both critical success factors
- RD system has greatly **reduced transaction costs** in creating interlocal service partnerships
- RD system has enabled **professionalization** of service delivery – even in small & remote settings
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCRegionalDistricts>
- We like to say “***regions on tap, not on top***” – regions are part of the municipal system, not apart from it
- The **provincial role** has been critical – BC’s Local Government Department has been facilitative, not directive – but not absent
- The **local government association** role has been vital – for instance, UBCM was integral to the founding of MFA + MIABC and to delivery of educational programming (e.g., “RD Toolkit”)



Rural Development through Regionalism?

Findings on the Role of Regional Districts from the Kootenays, BC

Kelly Vodden, PhD, Grenfell Campus Memorial University; Sarah Breen, Selkirk College;
Sean Markey, Simon Fraser University and Research Team



Project goals (2011-2017):

- Assess the application and relevance of “new regionalism” in Canada,
- Seek lessons and innovations in regional development; and
- Understand how these are shared across regional development networks.

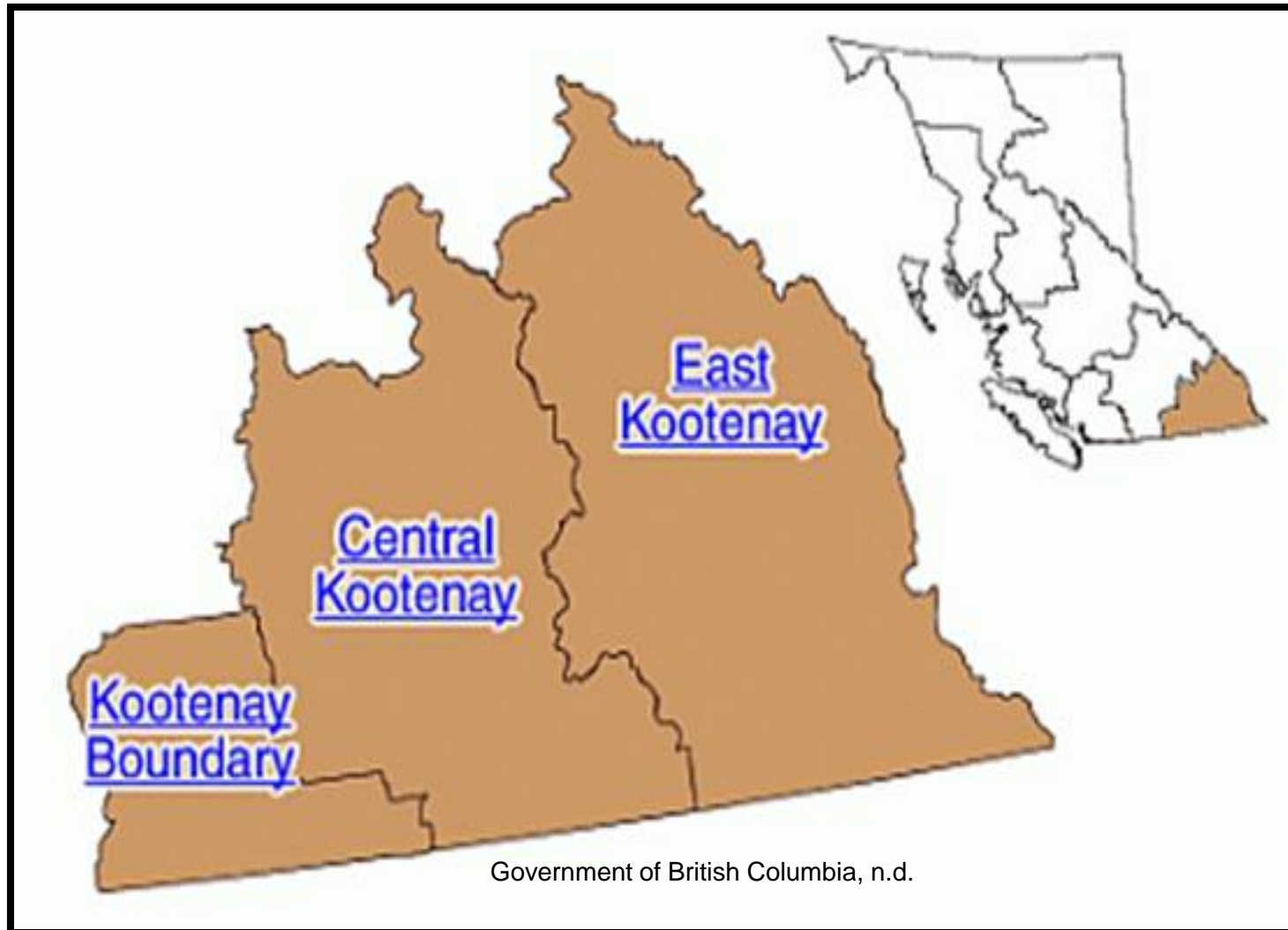
Methodology

Mixed methods, case study-based

- 5 case study regions
- 5 core themes and indicators
- Document/literature review; 190 semi-structured interviews, 33 in BC (2011-2014); observation
- Coding and pattern searching
- Multiple analytical “passes” with team dialogue and theme + case study region team cross-checking



BC Case Study- Kootenays

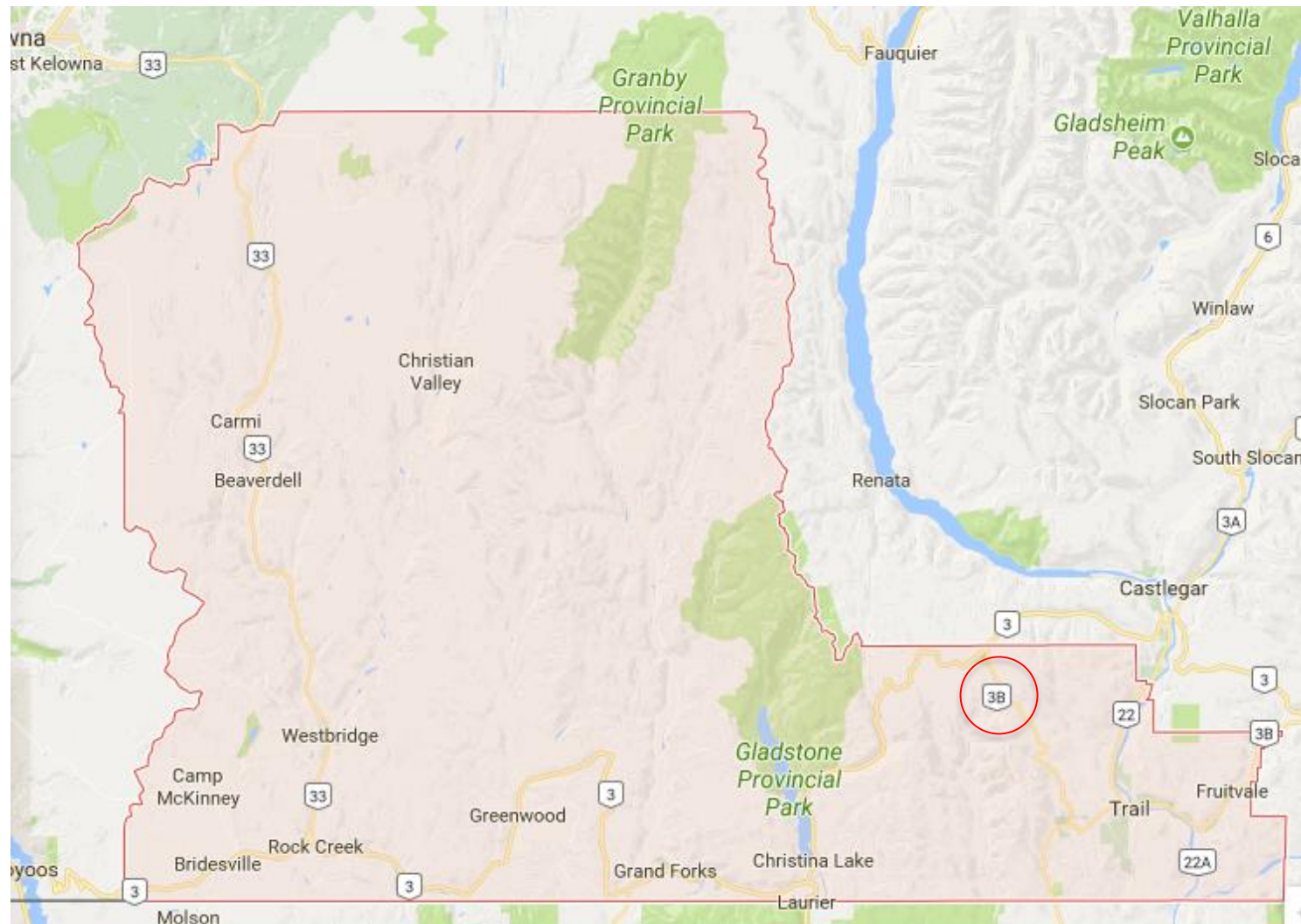


Some Key Findings on RDs



- Importance/encouragement of regional approach
- Ability to provide services for those who want and are willing to pay (varied arrangements, new and growing demands)
- Flexibility (and complexity)
- Representation: on other regional bodies, rural vs. municipal, community vs. region
- Challenge of appropriate boundaries

Regional Boundaries and Identities



www.google.ca/maps/place/Kootenay+Boundary,+BC/

Economic Development

Imagine Kootenay

- 3 Regl Districts+
- Economic opportunity + lifestyle

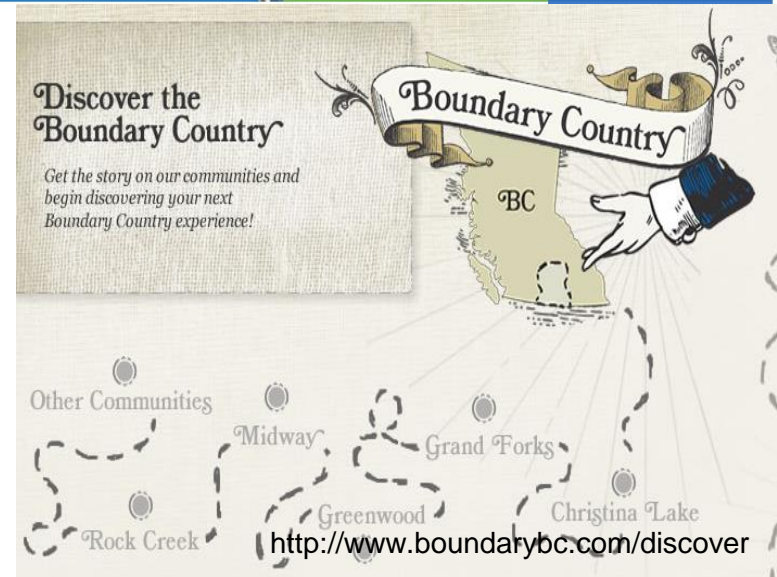
www.imaginekootenay.com

“Your Better Life”



Branding the Boundary

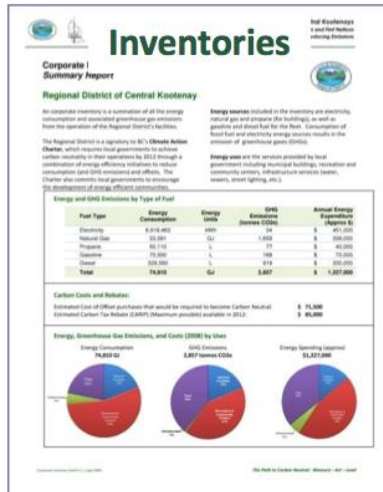
- Initiative of Boundary Economic Development Committee, formed by Regional District of Kootenay Boundary



Innovation and Environmental Action: Carbon Neutral Kootenays



CC101 Workshops



Regional District Action Plans



East Kootenay
Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Action Plan

Final Report

Prepared for:
Regional District of East Kootenay
Andrew McLeod
Manager of Planning & Development Services

Prepared by:
The Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project
Contact: Ron Macdonald

February 5, 2010

Municipal Action Guide

NK Project
Emissions



Carbon Neutral ACTION Guide

A Starting Point for Communities to
Reduce their Carbon Footprint

Prepared for:
Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project Steering Committee
Project contact:
Raharna Malik, RDC

Prepared by:
The Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project
Contacts: Ron Macdonald & Dale Lefebvre

April 2010

Implementation Agent Report



Implementing Agent Report

APPROVED

DRAFT for Steering Committee Review

Prepared for:
Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project Steering Committee
Project contact:
Raharna Malik, RDC

Prepared by:
The Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project
Contacts: Ron Macdonald & Dale Lefebvre
January 28, 2010

Offset Discussion Document



Kootenays Offsets Strategy

DRAFT for Steering Committee Review

Prepared for:
Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project Steering Committee
Project contact:
Raharna Malik, RDC

Prepared by:
The Carbon Neutral Kootenays Project
Contacts: Ron Macdonald & Dale Lefebvre

February 12, 2010

Planning

- “pre-emptive planning and maintaining the values which the region considers important”

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RD Planner

Boundary Area Agriculture and Food Security Plan



Concluding Remarks



- Power of regions acting in a more coordinated way, particularly when formalized and around key issues and services
- Challenges of identity and identifying and maintaining common self-interests across different communities – strength of the formalized yet flexible Regional District model



This multi-year research initiative is investigating how Canadian regional development has evolved in recent decades and the degree to which New Regionalism has been incorporated into policy and practice. Five key themes are examined: (i) place-based development, (ii) governance, (iii) knowledge and innovation, (iv) rural-urban relationships, and (v) integrated development. The project is funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development.

Website: <http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/>

Research Team

Kelly Vodden (Memorial University)

David Douglas (University of Guelph)

Sean Markey (Simon Fraser University)

Bill Reimer (Concordia University)

Luc Bisson (Université du Québec à Rimouski)

Sarah-Patricia Breen (Selkirk College)

Matthew Brett (Concordia University)

Ken Carter (Memorial University)

Jen Daniels (Memorial University)

Ryan Gibson (Memorial University)

Craig MacKie (Concordia University)

Heather Hall (Memorial University)

Sarah Minnes (University of Guelph)

Kyle White (Memorial University)