

COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Summary Report

PARTNERSHIPS - Tourism: District of Lillooet and City of Quesnel

Summary report

1. *Tell us why you consider this project to be an innovative and/or creative initiative.*

The District of Lillooet and the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation (QCEDC, a wholly owned subsidiary of the City of Quesnel) have established a working relationship to promote both of their communities. The municipalities for both economic development organizations see the value and importance of working with like minded communities. Together they were able to partner on trade shows, marketing, and investment attraction. The Gold Rush Living marketing brochure is just one of the results of this combined effort. The brochure focuses on similarities of the communities while emphasizing their uniqueness.

This is an innovative and creative undertaking that challenges the norm of competing against each other and focuses on ways that both can cluster market and maximize annual budgets. And, in light of the economic downturn, both communities recognize the need to aggressively promote their communities.

Working with other communities often results in a competitive approach to attracting visitors. What makes this partnership so attractive is its cooperative approach to recognizing each other's uniqueness. This union works because of the positive approach each Economic Development Officer (EDO) has taken to promote their community while recognizing that just down the road is another community that is of equal value with different characteristics. With shared expenses and management of the magazine, they are able to maximize their staff time and budget.

2. *To what degree did the partnership initiative impact tourism in the region?*

This partnership has created an economic impact through increased marketing via new media outlets (Gold Rush Living magazine) and through social media outlets (new website, blog, facebook and twitter). These new media options have increased our website traffic numbers and have further spread the word on activities and opportunities available in our communities.

The partnership has also reduced the budget and staff time needed for continued participation in tradeshow opportunities. Rather than sending multiple people from each community, the District of Lillooet and the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation can each send one representative sharing the costs and maximizing exposure.

In addition, our communities have been positively impacted by cross promotion of events and festivals, which hasn't occurred in the past. This has lead to new visitors coming to both of our communities, increasing the tourism spending in both communities and enabling our communities to maximize marketing dollars.

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3. *Did the program/project increase interest and visitation to the community/region?*

The Gold Rush Living partnership has attracted those looking for a small town experience of natural beauty; whether young or old, the beauty and adventure is there for you. From Quesnel, 'BC's Most Beautiful Small City' to Lillooet's 'Guaranteed Rugged', there is something for everyone.

We have anecdotal experiences captured on blogs, and stories from guests at our visitor centers; families and visitors are taking tours that include both Lillooet and Quesnel. Examples have included a couple travelling from Alberta who stopped in Quesnel. Based on commentary in their blog it is clear that they had a copy of our joint magazine in hand. Their next stop was Lillooet where they stayed overnight, heading to the Lower Mainland the next day through the Duffy Lake Road.

4. *How did each partner benefit from the partnership? Have any long-term partnership plans been established?*

Each partner has benefited through increased media exposure. This partnership has included joint tradeshow attendance, Olympic investment hosting, magazine development, sharing of information and opportunities and developing partnerships between regional businesses.

Future plans include more tradeshow attendance, new business partnerships and a reprint of the magazine. The partnership continues to expand and both partners know that it has been worth their time and effort.

5. *How has the community benefited from the program/project? Are there other benefits to the community, in addition to tourism (e.g. economic, social, environmental, and other)?*

Both communities have benefited from the work planned and implemented. Each community received increased interest during and post Olympics from both foreign and domestic markets. Through the Olympic partnership both communities received interest from real estate investors and entrepreneurs.

The brochure has generated relocation and tourism interest in both communities. Quesnel has experienced an increase in the total number of requests for relocations packages from this year to last.

With increased relocation to both communities and increased tourist visitation we know that each community has positively benefited both socially and economically.

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6. *Did you reach your objectives? (e.g. with respect to participation, commitments, community benefits)*

Together we have exceeded our objective. Co-hosting an investment evening during the 2010 Olympics, we were able to display our unique working relationship and promote both communities to local investors and to the world. The municipalities combined their human and financial resources to target investors and mutually moved their respective communities ahead to attract investment.

The Gold Rush Living Investment Evening targeted investors seeking modest land prices, economic opportunity, low investment costs, a specific level of technology, and close proximity to larger centers and markets. The Gold Rush Living Investment Evening was a huge success, attended by over 250 people, including three provincial ministers and municipal representation from both communities. Many leads were developed and are currently being followed up. Attesting to this is the increased number of web hits, phone calls, enquiries and publicity from government agencies and the public sector.

In addition, existing businesses that shared in the displays have increased exposure and sales and still speak of the event. They continue to work with both respective economic development officers, seeing the benefit of the unique partnership. The initiative continues to maximize exposure and continues to build each community's profile and support, moving forward in spite of the economic downturn. This event strengthened the partnership and continues to make recruitment and attraction easier by significantly reducing costs and optimizing both staff time and budgets.

7. *How sustainable is the continued operation of this initiative?*

This initiative was taken on by both communities who identified the opportunity but lacked individual resources. The benefits of joint-marketing have been clearly shown and as we continue to work together on projects, the economic benefit continues to grow and further opportunities for joint projects become apparent.

Each economic developer sacrificed personal time and resources to make Gold Rush Living Investment Evening a success. With limited resources they sought out support from councils, community members, and businesses alike. Due to the distance between the communities, approximately 4 hours, and from the event, 2 hours for Lillooet and 6 hours for Quesnel, many alterations had to be made on the fly with little or no notice. And yet, the Gold Rush Living Investment Evening took the value of collaboration to a new level, as the results show. Plans for 2010 are moving along as expected with 2011 planning taking place to capitalize on interest generated

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8. *Have you done a cost-benefit analysis? Rate the “value added” by establishing the partnership.*

A cost benefit analysis was completed to assess the value of future years of partnership. The cost benefit analysis indicates that our communities have significantly gained from this unique partnership, over the course of two years and that given our current planning we anticipate that the partnership will continue to be beneficial and rewarding. The cooperation between the communities highlights industry sectors while showcasing the differences between Quesnel and Lillooet. For example, both communities benefit from the agricultural sector, but in very different ways. Lillooet is home to a growing viticulture and Quesnel is home to an expanding birch sap and syrup industry. Both communities are able to maximize their budgets, human resources, and time to attract visitors and investors interested in beautiful British Columbia and to ensure that both communities have a strategic focus when applying for grants over the next 12 months.

9. *Does this partnership set a benchmark to which other communities can aspire to?*

Absolutely. The cooperation between both communities highlights the uniqueness of each of the communities in a non-exclusive way. Visitors, who are attracted to one community, may find similar complimentary attributes in another. Though the communities are four hours apart, they have managed to ‘sell the package’ in a very appealing way, ensuring brochures are placed at key locations on the route to both communities maximizing their exposure. Being creative and working effectively with regional partners is essential as each of these communities move forward. Both communities continue to be impacted by the mountain pine beetle and ever changing global markets, these kinds of partnerships make recruitment and attraction significantly more cost effective and optimize both staff time and budgets.

10. *Remember to include a list of all partners involved in the submission*

Partners in this project are:

- District of Lillooet Dennis Bontron, Mayor
- City of Quesnel Mary Sjostrom, Mayor
- Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation

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Partners in this project are:

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