

Canadian Regional Development:  
A Critical Review of Theory, Practice and Potentials  
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## A Profile of the Kootenay Region

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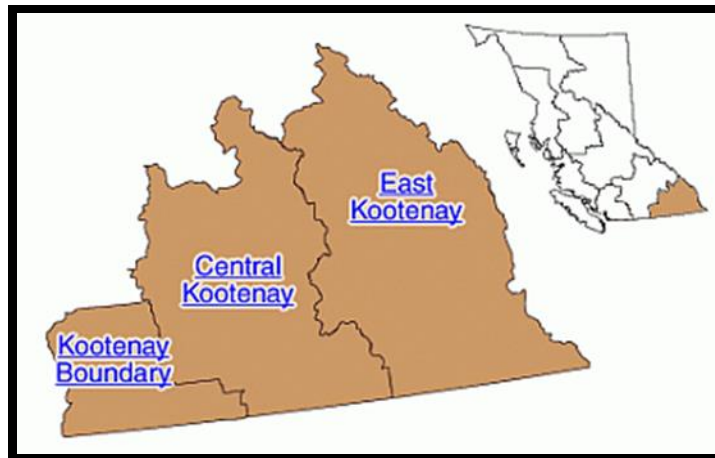


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## **Introduction and Location**

The Kootenay Region of British Columbia (the Kootenays) encompasses the south-east corner of the province. It is split into three Regional Districts which are, from west to east, Kootenay Boundary, Central Kootenay, and East Kootenay (see Figure 1). These three Regional Districts form the Kootenay Development Region.



**Figure 1 - The Kootenay Region** (Government of British Columbia, n.d.)

## **Brief History of Region**

The history of the Kootenays is tied with the region's geography and abundant natural resources. The history of the region can be roughly divided into six phases<sup>1</sup>: pre-contact, European exploration, prospecting and mining, railway building and settlement, the forestry era, and restructuring and diversification.

The first phase is that of the First Nations peoples prior to European arrival. Dating back ~10,000 years, there were many groups of First Nations that moved throughout the Kootenays (Parks Canada, 2009a). The First Nation peoples included the Carrier (Dakelhne), Secwepemc (Shuswap), Okanagan, the Lakes people (Castlegar, 2010), and the Ktunaxa (Kootenay) people (Parks Canada, 2009a; Stevenson et al., 2011). The diversity of the landscape, in particular the flora and fauna, provided a rich region for the First Nations peoples to draw upon for their livelihoods (Stevenson et al., 2011).

Beginning in the early 1800s European explorers moved westward into the Kootenay Region (Stevenson et al., 2011). In search of furs, the West Trading Company and the Hudson Bay Company expanded their territories (Jessen,

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that these phases are not mutually exclusive, but are divided by topic and presented in a loosely chronological fashion.

n.d.), and explorers such as David Thompson (1807 and 1811) and James Hector (1858) were among the first to arrive in the region (City of Cranbrook, 2012).

As a result of the geology of the region (see Physiographic Description, page 2), the Kootenays is mineral rich and therefore mining played a key role in its development (Turnbull, 1988). Prospectors began to arrive in the 1850s (BC Parks, n.d.). The isolated and rugged region, complete with natural disasters such as forest fires and avalanches, provided little deterrent as claims and mines spread throughout the region. Historical accounts point to a wild territory, with a history of steamboats, claim jumping, and the frequent settlement and abandonment of mining towns (Turnbull, 1988). By the late 1800s mining sites within the Kootenays reached international fame and included deposits of galena, lead, silver, zinc, copper, and gold (Castlegar, 2010; City of Kimberley, 2012; City of Trail, 2004; Jessen, n.d.; Rossland Chamber of Commerce, 2011). While many of these mines only exist now in historical records or in the form of the abandoned mine shafts that are scattered throughout the region, facilities such as the Teck-Cominco smelter in Trail are indicative of the central role mining has played and continues to play within the Kootenays.

Alongside the mines came the building of the railways. Starting in the 1880s, the Canadian Pacific Railway came through the Rogers and Crows Nest passes and into the Kootenays, as well as the building of various smaller railway lines throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s (Stevenson et al., 2011; Turnbull, 1988). Railways were built in both east-west and north-south directions, aiding not only the mines in the extraction of minerals, but also in the settlement of the region (Turnbull, 1988).

The provincial government, as well as private developers, perpetuated land development schemes in an effort to erect town sites and push through the railways (Jessen, n.d.). With the settlement of communities also came cultivation and farming, which, in certain areas, remains today (City of Grand Forks, 2011). The Doukhobor people, religious refugees from Russia, settled in the region in the early 1900s and adding to the mix of cultural heritage (Castlegar, 2010). Many attempted communities never came to be and remained only in the minds of developers, while others faded into ghost towns or succumbed to disaster (Turnbull, 1988). However, other communities remained and formed the fabric of the modern Kootenay region.

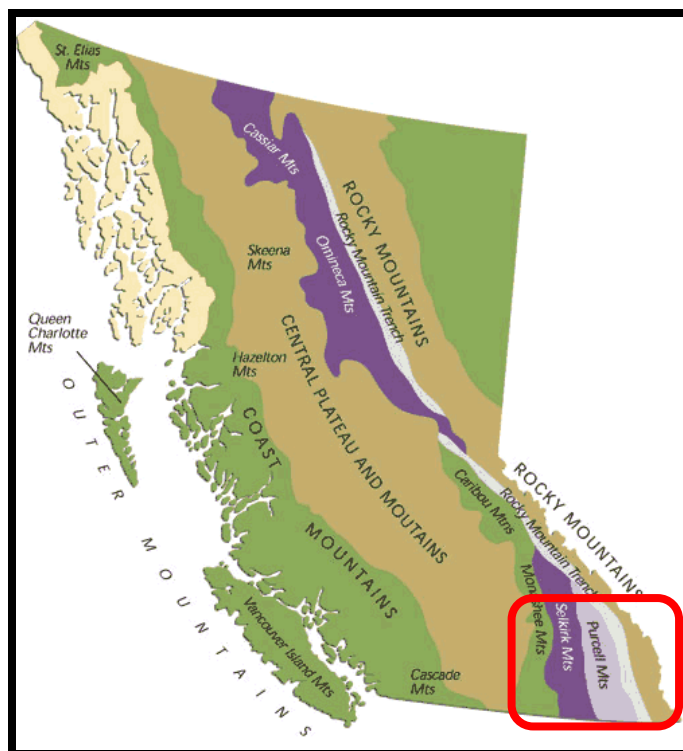
The early 1900s also saw the rise of the forestry industry which, like the mines, was an integral part of the development of the Kootenays (Stevenson et al., 2011). As an area rich in forests, logging, lumber mills, and pulp mills have been prominent throughout the region since the early 1900s (Castlegar, 2010; City of Grand Forks, 2011). The importance of forestry, with changes in international agreements and markets, as well as issues such as the Mountain Pine Beetle, has declined.

With the challenges faced by the mining and forestry industry, the Kootenay Region has seen economic restructuring and diversification, including a focus on

recreation and amenities, building on other historic strengths such as parks. The presence of parks and recreation has been constant within the Kootenays, with parks such as Kootenay National Park dating back to the 1920s, home to hot springs, climbing, and breathtaking scenery (Parks Canada, 2009a). Newer parks, such as Valhalla Provincial Park (established in 1983) have been developed, as well as conservation areas, and resorts such as Big White, Fernie, and Panorama, and soon to include the Jumbo Pass Resort. With changing global and national markets and the declining importance of mining and forestry within the region there has been an economic shift to recreation and amenities. Diversification of the economy has been aided by the Columbia Basin Trust, created in 1995 as compensation for the damage caused in the region by the 1964 Columbia River Treaty that resulted in the flooding of valley bottoms, agricultural land, and former communities through the construction of several large scale hydroelectric facilities (Columbia Basin Trust, 2007). The local recreation and amenities combined with agencies like the Columbia Basin Trust are ushering in a new era within the Kootenays.

## **Physiographic Description**

The Kootenay Region is mountainous; encompassing four mountain ranges, from east to west: the Rocky Mountains, the Purcell Mountains, the Selkirk Mountains, and the Monashee Mountains (see red box on Figure 2). The region extends from the Alberta border in the east to the Okanagan Similkameen Regional District in the west and the Columbia-Shuswap Regional District in the north, encompassing the Canadian portion of the Columbia River Basin. As a result of mountainous geography the region is isolated, with an area of 57,786.8 km<sup>2</sup>, or 6.2% of British Columbia's land mass, but with only 3.3% of the provincial population (BC Stats, 2010a). The natural features of the region contribute to an economy strongly rooted in natural resources (e.g., forestry, mining, hydroelectric power generation, and tourism). The region includes all or part of the following watersheds: Elk River, Kootenay River, Bull River, St. Mary's River, Columbia River, Kootenay Lake, Lower Arrow Lake, Slocan River, Kettle River, Upper Arrow Lake, Duncan Lake, Kicking Horse River (BC Ministry of Environment, n.d.).



**Figure 2 – Kootenay Mountain Ranges** (Harbour Publishing, 2012)

The physical setting of the Kootenays resulted in many of its distinct attributes. For example, while the Rocky Mountains are predominantly limestone, the geology of the Purcells, the Selkirks, and the Monashees is volcanic in origin (Stevenson et al., 2011). These mountain ranges began as island arcs that were transformed and metamorphosed over time, and then subsequently subject to glaciation and erosion resulting in their present state (Stevenson et al., 2011). It is this geologic history, particularly the volcanism, which accounts for the rich mineral deposits, as well as the rich agriculture, geothermal potential, and world class climbing opportunities.

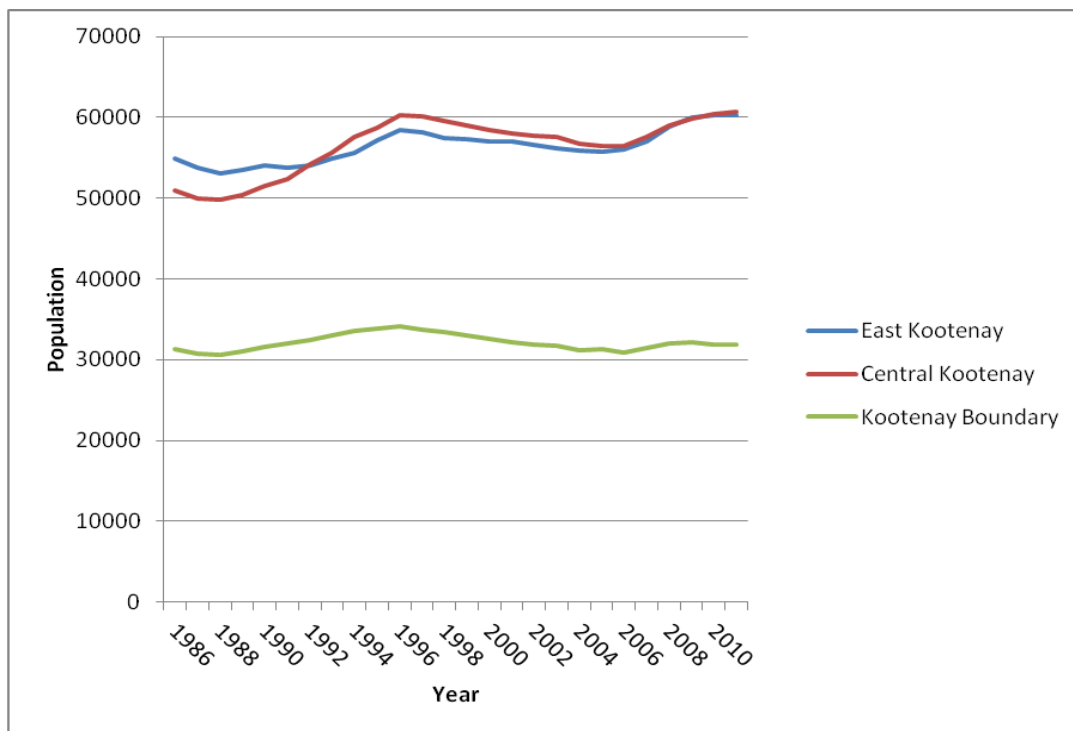
On a national scale the Kootenays fall within the Mountain Cordillera Ecozone, which consists of mountains and interior plains (Parks Canada, 2009b). This ecozone is characterized by long, cold winters, and short, warm summers with a range in the amount of precipitation (Parks Canada, 2009b). At a more localized scale, much of the Kootenays is characterized by British Columbia's inland rainforest, a unique and diverse ecosystem (Stevenson et al., 2011), while other portions of the region, such as the Boundary or the Columbia Valley are more arid.

A high level of biodiversity exists in the region. Plant communities include species such as western hemlock, western red cedar (Stevenson et al., 2011), and lodgepole pine (Parks Canada, 2009b). Wildlife is diverse, characterized by some specific species that have close association with areas of low human

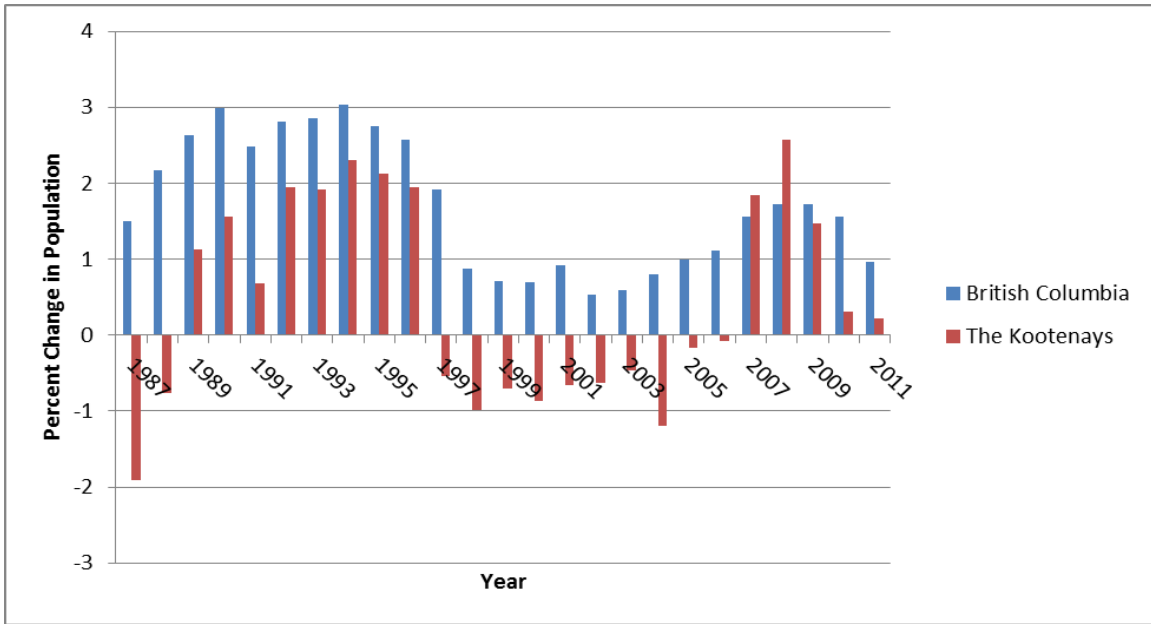
influence such as: grizzly bear, gray wolf, marten, wolverine, and mountain caribou, as well as many others (Stevenson et al., 2011).

## **Demographic Profile**

Like many rural Canadian regions the Kootenay Region is currently experiencing a demographic transition. Recently, in terms of overall population the trend has been positive. Between the 2006 and the 2011 national census, the population of the region increased 2.9%, from 142,110 to 146,264 (3.3% of BC's 4,400,057 population) (BC Stats, 2012a). Subdividing the region into Regional Districts, as shown in Figure 3, while the overall population trend for the East and Central Kootenays has been positive, the population of the Kootenay Boundary has generally remained stable. While the population change has been positive on the whole for the Kootenays, the region has lagged in comparison with the provincial trends (see Figure 4).

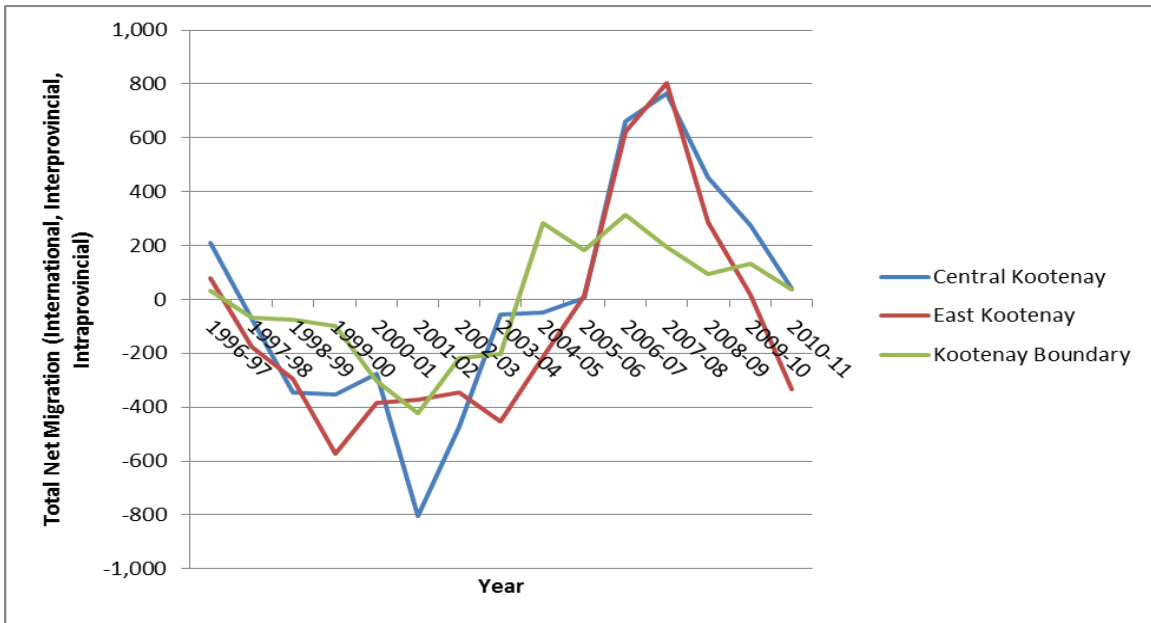


**Figure 3 - Kootenay Regional Districts Population: 1986-2011 (BC Stats, 2012a)**



**Figure 4 - Percent Population Change: 1986-2011 (BC Stats, 2012a)**

Similarly to the population decline experienced in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a net loss in migration at that time (see Figure 5). Briefly in the mid-2000s there was an increase in migration, which has since trended downwards to present day.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 5 - Kootenay Regional Districts Net Migration 1996-2011 (BC Stats, 2012b)**

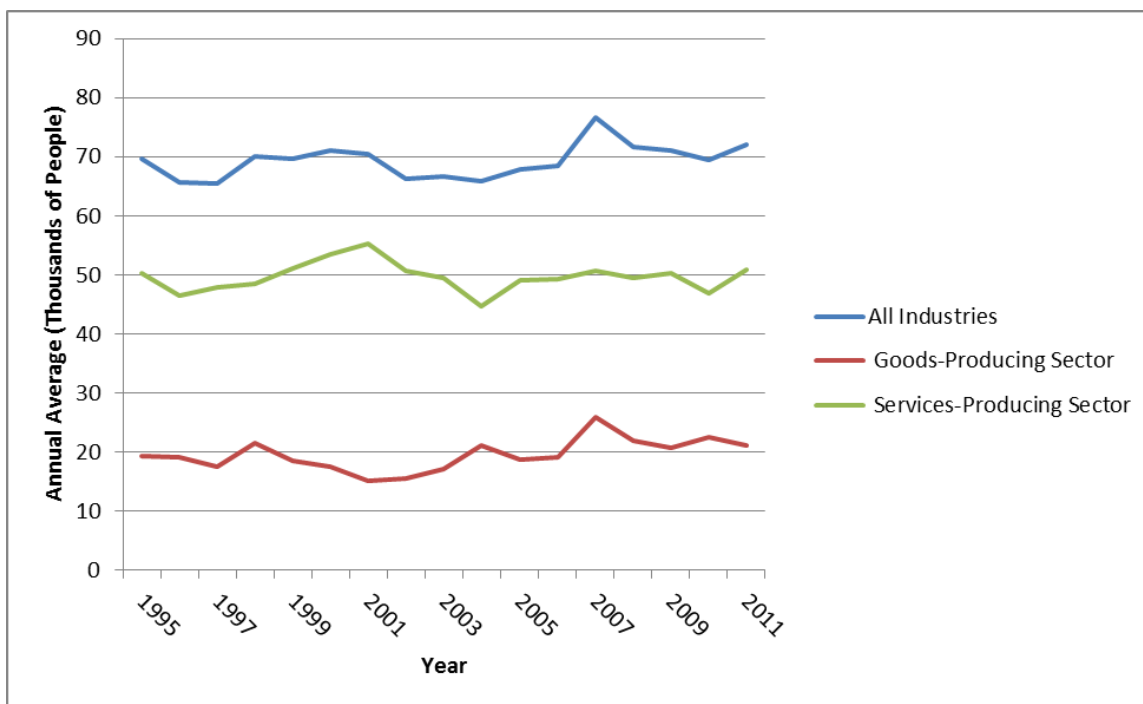
<sup>2</sup> While fluctuations in migration appear more drastic than population change this is a function of the scale of the graphs.



Finally, in terms of demographic transition, is the aspect of aging. In 2010 dependent seniors accounted for 27.2% of the population, which was higher than the provincial average of 22.6% (BC Stats, 2010a). Within the Kootenays, this number is expected to increase to 40.9% by 2020, at which point the provincial average is projected to be only 29.9% (BC Stats, 2010a).

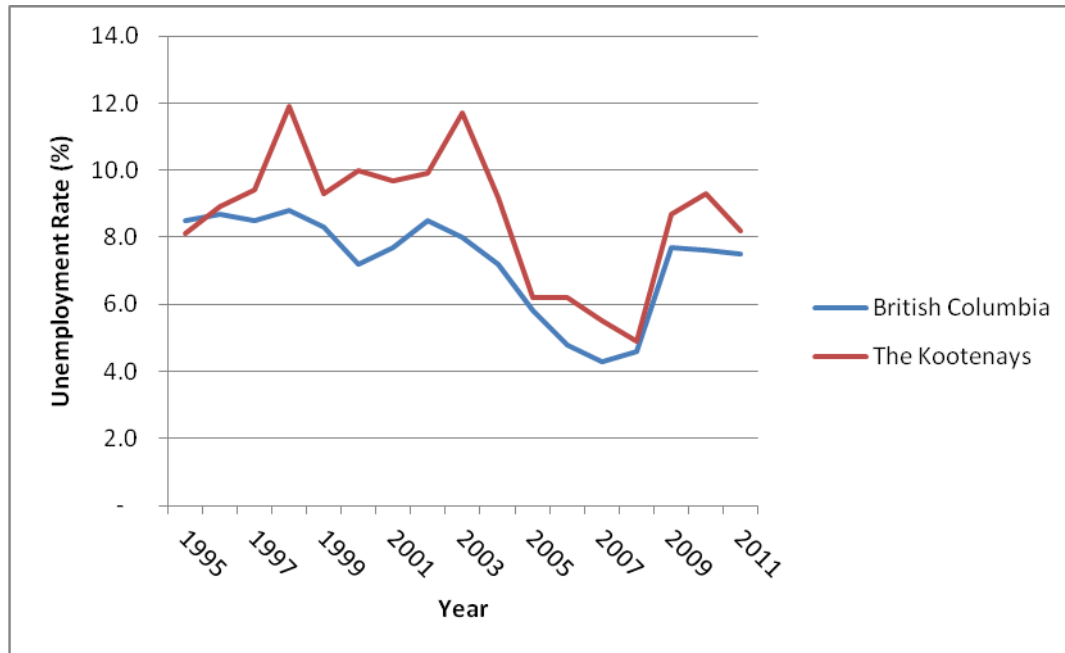
## **Employment Characteristics**

Between 1995 and 2011 the average annual employment in the Kootenays has fluctuated within a range of 10,000, generally keeping around ~70,000 people employed in all industries. Both the goods and service producing sectors have seen similar fluctuations (see Figure 6). Within the goods producing sector manufacturing was dominant, and within the service producing sector trade was dominant (BC Stats, 2012c). While this may give the impression that the region has moved away from being natural resource dominant, it is important to remember that included in manufacturing and trade are the processing and export of natural resource goods, which continues to be important to the region, as well as the importance of service sectors such as health, education, and tourism (BC Stats, 2012c; Baxter, Berlin, & Ramlo, 2005). One aspect not reflected on this graph is the transient workforce, both in terms of people living outside the region and working there, as well as those people living in the region and working elsewhere.



**Figure 6 – Kootenay Region Employment by Industry: 1995-2011 (BC Stats, 2012c)**

Overall the unemployment rate within the Kootenays has remained higher than the provincial average. Generally the unemployment trends have been similar, excepting that the Kootenays has experienced more dramatic changes relative to the province (see Figure 7). This reflects the booms and busts associated with the region's natural resource sectors.



**Figure 7 - Unemployment Rate: 1995-2011** (BC Stats, 2012d)

Income in the Kootenay region is lower than the provincial average. The average family income in 2005 for BC was \$80,511, whereas in the Kootenays the lowest was in Central Kootenay (\$62,003), followed by Kootenay-Boundary (\$66,291), and East Kootenay (\$75,013) (BC Stats, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d).

## **Local Government**

The Kootenay Development Region is an aggregation of three of British Columbia's Regional Districts: East Kootenay, Central Kootenay, and Kootenay Boundary. Development Regions cover the entire province, aggregating regional districts and with the same boundaries as the economic regions observed by Statistics Canada (BC Stats, n.d.). The Regional Districts date to the 1960s, established as a reaction to the rapid expansion of rural BC in areas that did not have a general purpose local government, and were subsequently lacking standardization and accountability (BC Ministry of Community Services, 2006). The creation of the Regional Districts was an amendment to the Municipal Act in 1965, and by 1968 all 29 regional districts had been incorporated (BC Ministry of Community Services, 2006). Regional Districts have three primary roles: 1) provision of local government for unincorporated areas, 2) provision of a

framework for intermunicipal cooperation, and 3) provision of regional government for both voluntary activities and provincially mandated activities (BC Ministry of Community Services, 2006). The Regional Districts cover services and facilities such as recreation facilities, water systems, economic development, waste management, etc.

Regional Districts are granted their power through the provincial government and are governed primarily by the *Local Government Act* and the *Community Charter* (Regional District of Central Kootenay, 2012). Each Regional District Board is comprised of Electoral Area Directors and Municipal Directors. The Electoral Area Directors represent the unincorporated areas, from which they are elected. Municipal Directors represent the incorporated communities and must first be elected to local council and then appointed to the regional board. Within the Central Kootenay there are 11 Electoral Area Directors and 9 Municipal Directors (Regional District of Central Kootenay, 2012). Within both the East Kootenay and the Kootenay Boundary there are 6 electoral area directors and 9 municipal directors (Regional District of East Kootenay, 2012; Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, 2011).

In addition to the municipalities, Regional Districts, and Development Region, there are also school board areas, health service delivery areas, local health areas, and college areas which divide and govern the province. Within the Kootenays, these various jurisdictional boundaries both differ and overlap. Additionally there are provincial and federal electoral districts, which have their own local representatives and do not necessarily match up to the regional boundaries. With these various jurisdictions, regional and sub-regional boundaries within and surrounding the Kootenays are blurry and shifting.

## **Regional Actors**

The Kootenays are home to a number of agencies who represent various interests at a regional level, including economic development, tourism, and investment. A brief description of a few key regional actors is provided below.

### **Columbia Basin Trust (CBT)**

When the Columbia River Treaty was ratified in 1964, a lack of local consultation combined with the subsequent dam construction and flooding meant that the region was not adequately compensated for its losses (Columbia Basin Trust, 2007). In the early 1990s the Columbia River Treaty Committee formed in order to press the Province for recognition, resulting in the 1995 creation of the Columbia Basin Trust, through the *Columbia Basin Trust Act* (Columbia Basin Trust, 2007). Funding and an endowment were established for the CBT in order to ensure that the assets were used for the ongoing economic, environmental, and social benefit of the region. CBT has portfolios on youth initiatives, water, environment, social, and economic.

### Innovation Councils: KRIC and KAST

KRIC (Kootenay Rockies Innovation Council) and KAST (Kootenay Association for Science and Technology) are dedicated to fostering innovation across the Kootenays in partnership with the BC Innovation Council. KRIC is dedicated to innovation, science, and technology in the East Kootenay region, with the intent of fostering a diverse and resilient economy through science and technology (Kootenay Rockies Innovation Council, n.d.). KAST works throughout the West Kootenay-Boundary region, fostering a culture that links science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship as pertaining to local industry, business, education, and government (Kootenay Association for Science and Technology, 2011).

### Community Futures

Community Futures Canada is a pan-Canadian organization that represents regional organizations established in 1986 by the federal government (Western Economic Diversification Canada, 2008). The initial objective of Community Futures was to create and support community-based development, as well as adjustment initiatives for rural areas experiencing economic stress (Western Economic Diversification Canada, 2008). This mandate has evolved, and currently Community Futures has both a socio-economic and business focus, supporting Community Economic Development, economic diversification, as well as other services (Western Economic Diversification Canada, 2008). Business development loans, technical support, training and information, strategic planning, and community economic development projects are provided by Community Futures (Community Futures Canada, n.d.). There are three Community Futures organizations within the Kootenays, one in each of the regional districts.

### Economic Development Partnerships

Within the overall region, sub-regional economic development partnerships have formed. While these groups focus on strengthening the local and sub-regional economies, these groups recognize the connection between the economy, environment, and social aspects of communities and regions. Examples include the Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership and the Lower Columbia Community Development Team (LCCDT).

The LCCDT within the Kootenay portion of the Kootenay Boundary Regional District (Trail, Rossland, and area) is working to advance the social and economic strengths of this sub-region. Comprised of multiple committees addressing issues such as housing, energy, health, and tourism, the LCCDT board consists of local government, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and other community members (Lower Columbia Community Development Team, 2012). Included under this umbrella is the Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation, a partnership between municipalities designed to undertake programs and projects intended to grow and diversify the local economy (Lower Columbia Community Development Team, 2012).

### Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Government (AKBLG)

The AKBLG is one of five area associations within the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM), although the AKBLG is the only one of these associations that pre-dates UBCM, and were involved in its formation (The Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments, 2011). The AKBLG was formed in 1933, and is a coalition of cities, municipalities, regional districts, townships, and villages (The Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments, 2011). Their mission is to “promote effective, responsible, and accountable local government for the benefit of all citizens” (The Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments, 2011). The AKBLG encourages dialogue between elected officials, provides learning and training opportunities, fosters shared interests, and advocates on behalf of member interests. They focus on issues that impact the economy, environment, and social wellbeing of South Eastern BC. The boundaries of the AKBLG include beyond that of the Kootenay Development Region, including communities such as Golden, BC.

### Tourism Associations

There is no one single overarching tourism association for the Kootenay Region. Most municipalities have their own approach to tourism. Groups from within smaller sub-regions and corridors, such as the Boundary Region, South Kootenays/Lower Columbia, or the Columbia Valley have collaborated to form tourism associations for areas larger than one community. There is also the Kootenay Rockies destination management and marketing organization, one of six tourism regions within British Columbia (Kootenay Rockies, 2009). In large part, these tourism associations reflect attempts to accurately portray the unique character of the region, as well as reflecting the different identities that exist throughout the smaller sub-regions and communities.

Additionally, there is a “tourist to investor” attraction strategy through Invest Kootenay. This organization is a joint initiative including local government, economic development organizations, and Chambers of Commerce within the region (Invest Kootenay, n.d.). Invest Kootenay uses the lifestyle element which attracts many tourists to attempt to turn these same tourists into investors within the region.

### Regional Innovation Chair (RIC) and Rural Development Institute (RDI)

Established in 2006, the RIC is intended to research rural economic development, and is the only one of its kind in a rural setting in Canada (Selkirk College, n.d.). Supported through the BC Leading Edge Endowment Fund, the research focuses on regional priorities and partnerships (Selkirk College, n.d.). Goals include developing capacity in the region, assisting in diversification of the regional economy, and supporting provincial and national networks undertaking applied relevant research.

In 2010 collaboration between Selkirk College and CBT led to the formation of the RDI. The goals of the RDI are to support informed planning and decision

making throughout the region (Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, 2012). While the region covered by the RIC is that of Selkirk College, but the RDI includes the catchments of CBT and Selkirk College, which extends slightly beyond the boundaries of the Kootenays as defined within this summary.

By no means are these the only regional stakeholders in the Kootenays; rather, these agencies represent a sample of those involved in regional development. Many other regional groups are engaged in development-related activities ranging from health care to arts and culture. For examples, there are over 10 regional and sub-regional organizations supporting arts and culture, over and above the single community organizations.

### **Regional Collaborations and Interdependencies**

Within the Kootenays there are many examples of how multi-agency and multi-community collaborations have come together. At a regional scale, there have been cross-regional initiatives, such as the Carbon Neutral Kootenays, which stretches across the three regional districts. On smaller (sub-regional) scales there are collaborations such as that between the communities of Nelson, Trail, Rossland, and Castlegar, which also includes representation from the Chambers of Commerce, KAST, Community Futures, CBT and the RDI. Smaller committees within the regional districts have formed among the electoral district representatives, the municipal representatives, or among those representatives of specific sub-regions such as the Slocan Valley or the Columbia Valley. The aforementioned RDI is in the process of mapping functional regions, or corridors, based on work, collaboration, development, etc. This initiative will further inform understanding of regional collaboration and interdependencies in the study region.

### **Transportation and Communication Networks**

In terms of transportation, the region is serviced by highways, ferries, buses, and air travel. While the railway was an important part of the region's history there is no longer any passenger rail servicing the region. There are several highways within the Kootenay Region. Running east to west are Highway 1 (the Trans Canada) in the north and Highway 3 in the south. Running north to south, the highways include numbers 6, 31, 33, 93, and 95. Driving distances within the region vary. Some communities are found in clusters, for example, Trail, Castlegar, Rossland, and Nelson are within 70 km of one another. However, total distances from one side of the region to the other are large, for example from Rock Creek in the west to Fernie in the east the distance is 490 km and from Creston in the south to Radium in the north the distance is 250 km. Distances from the region to provincial centres are large as well. For example, Grand Forks to Vancouver is 522 km, and Calgary to Cranbrook is 388 km.

BC Ferries operates several ferries on the lakes within the Kootenay region, connecting the region and providing alternatives to longer routes and mountain passes. These free ferries operate on Kootenay Lake and the Arrow Lakes, connecting the aforementioned highway network. Ferries operate multiple times daily.

Public transit is available in much of the Kootenay region. Each of the regional districts has partnered with BC transit to provide public transit services. Within Central Kootenay the five service areas are: Castlegar and area, Creston Valley, Kaslo and area, Nakusp, and Nelson and area. Within the East Kootenay public transit is available within the Columbia Valley and the Elk Valley. Within Kootenay Boundary there is service within the Trail and Rossland area, as well as in Grand Forks and area. There is also Greyhound bus service available within the region, as well as connecting the Kootenays with the surrounding areas.

The Kootenay Region has three major airports, one in Castlegar, one in Trail, and the other in Cranbrook. Both Castlegar and Trail airports are serviced by Air Canada and Jazz Aviation, and the Cranbrook airports is serviced by Pacific Coastal, Air Georgia, central Mountain Air, and Sunwest Home Aviation. The Trail airport is serviced by Pacific Coastal. The airports have multiple flights daily to Calgary, AB and Vancouver, BC. Airport shuttles are available from some Kootenay communities to the airports, as well as to airports across the US/Canada border (e.g., Spokane). There are also multiple municipal airports and heliports with limited capacity and services within many of the communities within the region.

In terms of communication networks there is a range of both broadband and cell phone coverage within the region. Broadband has been identified as an area of interest for further development, but faces challenges in terms of geography and cost. However, the CBT has initiated a subsidiary called Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation to attempt to address this issue (Columbia Basin Trust, 2012). Additionally, in terms of communication there are local radio stations run by regional radio cooperatives (e.g., Kootenay Co-Op Radio).

## **Summary**

The Kootenay Region of British Columbia is unique, home to a varied landscape, both physically and culturally. This region is currently in transition, both in terms of its population and demographics, but also its economy. The competitive history of the region is evolving as collaborations among communities and sub-regions are established. Many key actors and agencies exist throughout the region, helping to shape a future vision and direction for the Kootenays.

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## **About the Project**

The *Canadian Regional Development: A Critical Review of Theory, Practice and Potentials* project is a multi-year research initiative funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The project is investigating how Canadian regional development has evolved over the past two decades and the degree to which Canadian regional development systems have incorporated New Regionalism into their policy and practice.

The project is conducting an empirical assessment of Canadian regional development using a multi-level network, mixed methods case study approach in four provinces: British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and Québec. The assessment of regional development across the case studies is based on the five key themes of New Regionalism: i) collaborative, multi-level governance; ii) integrated versus sectoral and single objective approaches; iii) fostering knowledge flow, learning and innovation; iv) place-based development; and v) rural-urban interaction and interdependence.

The project is led by Kelly Vodden of the Department of Geography at Memorial University. The research team includes David Douglas (School of Environment Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph), Sean Markey (Geography, Simon Fraser University), and Bill Reimer (Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University). In addition, graduate students at all four universities are engaged on the project.

Further information on the project can be obtained either at <http://cdnregdev.wordpress.com/projdes/case-studies/eastern-ontario/> or by contacting Kelly Vodden at [kvodden@mun.ca](mailto:kvodden@mun.ca).



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