



### **Regional Development in the Kootenays:**

The Canadian Regional Development project selected five different regions to provide a local level perspective on regional development. Regions were selected to ensure diversity in population size, rural-urban interaction, industry dependence, regional development experience, and organizational frameworks and approaches. The Kootenay Region presented an excellent opportunity to learn about regional development in a unique area that combines geographic isolation with access to urban centres directly outside the region. A complex region, with overlapping regional jurisdictions, the Kootenay region greatly reflects the importance of place and context in development, presenting a valuable learning opportunity.

### **2011 Information Gathering:**

Twenty-six people were interviewed in 2011. We wished to interview as many local people as possible who hold/held positions related to regional development, including not only economic development, but recreation and environmental stewardship/water issues as well. There was a mix of public sector representatives, development groups, and other community agencies. Overall there were 10 municipal government interviews, 5 economic development agencies, 3 general regional interviews, 3 regional planning interviews, 2 regional environment interviews, 2 regional recreation interviews, and 1 other regional agency. Collection of information is ongoing.

### **Preliminary Findings:**

A preliminary review of interviews completed to date highlights six core themes:

1. The importance of and barriers to effective **collaboration**;
2. How the diverse and fractured **geography** of the region both complicates communication and builds a strong sense of identity;
3. The prospects for regionalism to help address current demographic challenges and future **human capacity** needs;
4. The influence and impacts associated with **external actors and forces** operating on the region (i.e. tourists, second home owners, policy-makers, etc.);
5. The challenges associated with top-down and bottom-up **planning** and how to foster a commitment to long-term planning that is contextually appropriate;
6. How regional development **institutions** affect long-term planning for the region and may work together to address critical **infrastructure** needs.

Each of these themes reflect areas of active and lively debate within the literature on regional development practice and policy. The complete document can be found at the web link below. Comments on these initial findings are welcome. The preliminary report can be found here: <http://cdnregdev.wordpress.com/projdes/case-studies/kootenays/preliminary-report-2011/>

### **Contact Information**

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