

COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST

A Story of People, Power and a Region United





In the Columbia Basin, the waters mirror the sky and reflect a vast and spellbinding landscape of thick green forest...



...and dramatic mountain peaks.



*At the heart of the Basin lies the Columbia River.
The river's headwaters rise from Columbia Lake,
nestled deep in the Rocky Mountain Trench of
southeastern British Columbia.*



From there, the river winds northwest through the Columbia Valley until it bends southward, rushing downstream and gaining strength from its many tributaries.



*Stretching 2,000 kilometres across two countries,
the Columbia River runs through British
Columbia, Oregon and Washington before it
meets the Pacific Ocean.*

We would like to express our gratitude and thanks to all those that contributed to this book by lending your voice, your knowledge, your wisdom, your archives, your expertise, your time, your passion and so much more.

So many memories, stories, conversations, newspaper clippings and artefacts have been woven together to share this story of how the people of the Columbia Basin came together to change our collective future and create the Columbia Basin Trust.

Thank you to the team at Know History Inc. and Chris Rowat Design for bringing it all together on these pages.



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By Columbia Basin Trust
Designed by Chris Rowat Design

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COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST

A Story of People, Power and a Region United



*For the visionaries who imagined the impossible,
for the founding directors who charted a path forward,
for all of the directors and staff who brought us here,
and for all the people of the Columbia Basin who put
their trust in us to create a legacy now and for future
generations, this book is dedicated you.*

CONTENTS

Foreword 15

ONE **RIVER POWER** 17

TWO **CREATING THE TRUST** 43

THREE **BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE** 77

FOUR **LEARNING CURVES** 99

FIVE **RESTORING THE TRUST** 121

SIX **CHARTING A PATH** 139

Afterword 159

Endnotes 162

Image Credits 166

Index 168



Columbia Basin Trust Region

The Trust serves the region consisting of all the watersheds that flow into the Columbia River in Canada and operates in the traditional territories of the Ktunaxa, Lheidli T'enneh, Secwepemc, Sinixt and Syilx peoples. The region encompasses nearly 80,000 km² in southeastern British Columbia and has a population of 164,647 people (2018 Census).

Treaty Dams

1. Mica Dam
2. Duncan Dam
3. Hugh Keenleyside Dam
4. Libby Dam

Hydropower Facilities*

5. Arrow Lakes Generating Station
6. Brilliant Dam and Generating Station
7. Brilliant Expansion Generating Station
8. Waneta Expansion Generating Station

*Owned 50/50 by the Trust and Columbia Power Corporation

FOREWORD

Twenty-five years ago, our first Board of Directors gathered on the steps of the B.C. Legislature to celebrate the passing of the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*. This moment was the culmination of years of hard work and dedication by Columbia Basin residents seeking greater influence over their communities and the Basin region. The founding of Columbia Basin Trust represented a new chapter, a new opportunity and the start of a remarkable journey.

Standing on those steps, the Board members could not have imagined what the Trust would eventually become. Since our founding in 1995, we've grown alongside the people of the region to help them transform their ideas into reality. With this support, they're better able to achieve their goals and make a difference in their communities.

Our growth didn't follow a perfect path. We've had to learn to adapt to many roles—from funder, partner and investor to manager, guide and facilitator. We've had to discover how to turn problems into opportunities. We've had to develop and deploy expertise where it was most needed, while preserving our grassroots origins. There have been mistakes along the way for certain, but Basin residents have always been there to guide us back when needed.

This commemorative book marks our 25th anniversary. From small steps to major milestones, it explores how we grew from a seed of a concept into a community

organization with an established presence around the region, with multiple offices, staff members, partners and assets.

It also highlights the Basin's people. It's the residents who saw the need for the Trust, created our organization and have guided our development. Residents, Board members, staff, partners and others opened up to us to describe their personal experiences during extraordinary times. No one book could capture all these valuable memories, but this one provides a glimpse. We thank everyone who shared.

The Trust was once described as a social experiment that succeeded despite the odds. After 25 years, there is much to be proud of, but an even greater future to imagine. We invite you to explore this story and join in the celebration of individual and collective persistence and resiliency.

Johnny Strilaeff
President and Chief Executive Officer



ONE

RIVER POWER

In the Columbia Basin, the waters mirror the sky and reflect a vast and spellbinding landscape of thick green forest and dramatic mountain peaks. At the heart of the Basin lies the Columbia River. The river's headwaters flow from Columbia Lake, nestled deep in the Rocky Mountain Trench of southeastern British Columbia. From there, the river winds northwest through the Columbia Valley until it bends southward, rushing downstream and gaining strength from its many tributaries. Stretching 2,000 kilometres across two countries, the Columbia River runs through British Columbia, Montana, Oregon and Washington before it meets the Pacific Ocean.

Life in the Basin has been guided by the powerful waters of the Columbia River for thousands of years. This is the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa, Lheidli T'enneh, Secwepemc, Sinixt and Syilx Peoples, whose ancestors relied on the Columbia and its tributaries. The lands and waters of the Basin are central to their creation stories, to their cultures and identities, and they are the source of their livelihoods. The first Europeans arrived as explorers, mapping the terrain, waterways and resources of the Basin. They were followed by fur traders who forged trade relationships with First Nations and established routes along the waterways, the arteries of the fur trade. In the 1860s, hundreds of hopeful prospectors flocked to the region after gold was discovered at Wild Horse Creek on Kootenay River and on the Big

Bend of the upper Columbia River. After the glitter of the gold rush faded, prospectors stayed to mine lead, copper and zinc. Others turned to agriculture or forestry. Communities grew and new ones sprang up, populated by settlers carried to the region on the newly completed Canadian Pacific Railway.

The growth of settlement and industry created new demands for power. In 1896, British Columbia's first hydropower plant opened on Cottonwood Creek to supply electricity to the city of Nelson. The following year, hydropower was used to fuel industry for the first time when a plant opened in the mining town of Sandon. The plant fuelled operations at Silversmith Mines and the local mill.

The Basin is particularly well-suited for hydropower because of the abundance of water and the diverse landscape through which it flows; deep valleys and tall mountain peaks create natural changes in elevation, which are needed to produce power. Small power-houses and hydropower dams continued to be built throughout the region on tributaries of the Columbia River. Hydropower was still a young technology, and these smaller, less powerful waterways provided enough energy to meet the demands of turn-of-the-century industry and infrastructure.

The 1930s marked the beginning of North America's "big dam era," when large-scale damming projects

The flooding of Arrow Lakes Reservoir in 1967 displaced 2,000 people and submerged entire communities, like Arrow Park, Galena Bay, Needles, Renata, Syringa Creek and others. While most buildings were burned or bulldozed, some were saved and moved to higher ground, including St. John the Divine Church in East Arrow Park. The church was loaded onto a barge and floated 20 kilometres north along Upper Arrow Lake until it reached Nakusp, where it was reconsecrated as St. Mark's Anglican Church.



were built not only to generate hydropower, but also to control flooding and improve irrigation. By this time, technology had advanced enough to harness the mighty Columbia River. Grand Coulee Dam in Washington was the largest project to be built on the Columbia River during this era, and remains so today. When completed in 1942, nine years after construction began, Grand Coulee was the world's largest dam, chronicled by American folk singer Woody Guthrie as “the biggest thing that man has ever done.” Although it decimated the fish population, Grand Coulee was a boon to agriculture and industry, and the United States quickly began plans to build additional dams on the river.

THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

In Canada, wartime industry sent power demands soaring and it too began to contemplate large-scale hydropower development on the Columbia River.¹ In 1944, three years after Grand Coulee Dam's turbines began to spin, the United States and Canada ordered an investigation into how they might jointly develop the river.² Both countries hoped to benefit from the construction of a series of storage dams on the upper Columbia River in British Columbia that would allow for the manipulation of water volume and supply, optimizing power generation at facilities downstream.

Directing the flow of water would also help the two

countries prevent flooding. In 1948, the Columbia River swelled to near-historic levels. The flood destroyed the city of Vanport, Oregon, displacing 18,700 residents and killing at least 16.³ In British Columbia, the city of Trail was hit particularly hard. Winding through the city centre, the river divides Trail in two, and rising waters posed a significant threat. Ordinary life ground to a halt as flood levels reached between 30 and 40 feet. Homes were evacuated. Water crept up to the box office window of the local theatre and lapped at the roof of the old skating arena.⁴ Residents relied on canoes to navigate the streets. Similar scenes played out in towns and cities across the Basin. Canada and the United States were more motivated than ever to produce a water management system that might prevent another catastrophe.

However, it would take another 10 years before the necessary plans and recommendations for such a complicated strategy were completed. In December 1959, the International Joint Commission—which had been tasked with drafting this plan back in 1944—released a report recommending the construction of three storage dams on the upper Columbia River in British Columbia. It also included the option to build an additional dam on Kootenay River in Montana; this too would require water storage north of the international border. After several rounds of negotiations between Canada and the United States, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and President

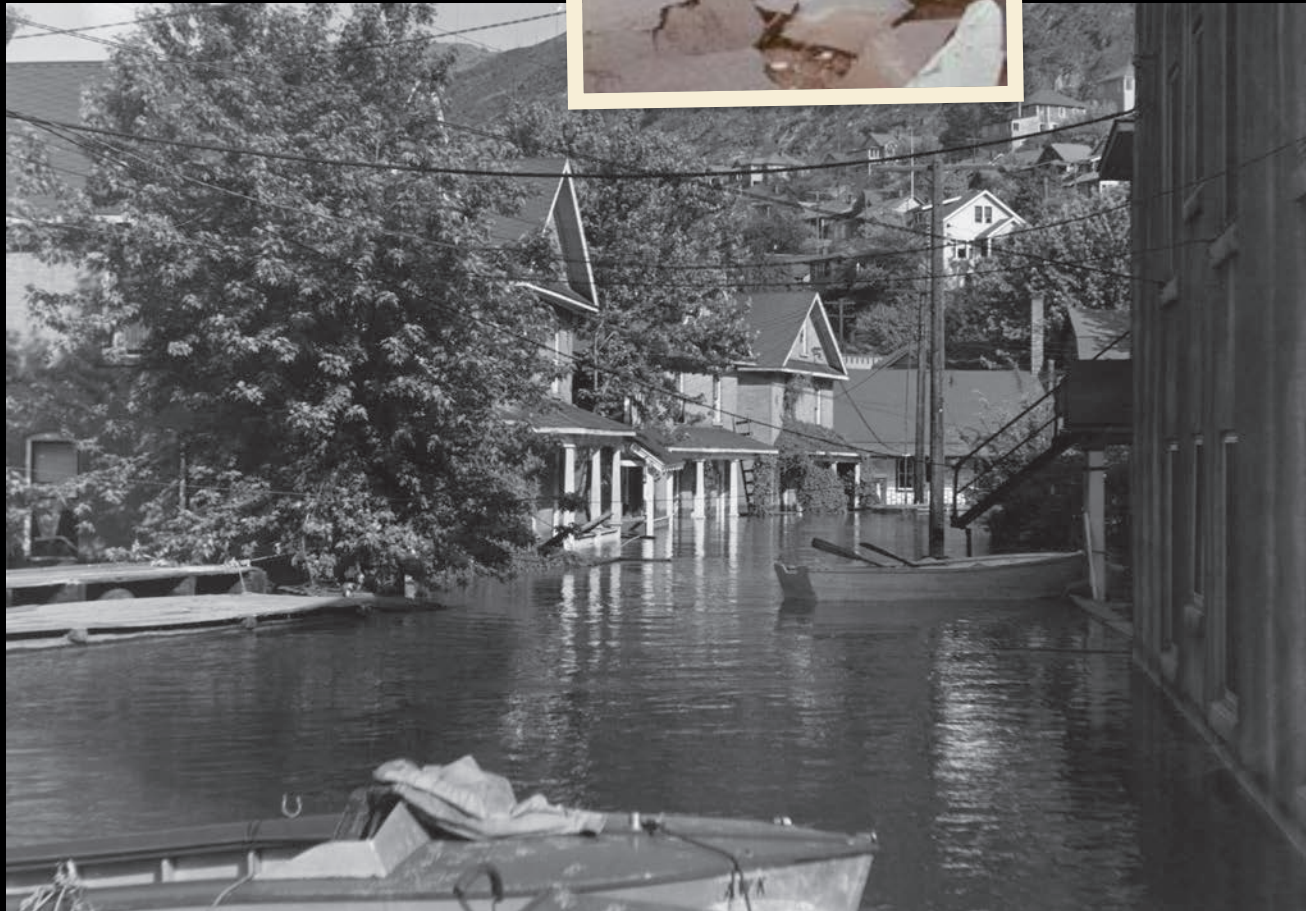
Opposite, top. Cottonwood Creek Dam was built by the Nelson Electric Light Company in 1896. It was the first hydropower plant in B.C.

Opposite, bottom. Today, Sandon is a ghost town, but in the 1890s it was a mining boomtown and the site of the first hydropower generating station built to fuel mining operations in B.C.

Above. Although Grand Coulee Dam, completed in 1941, was the largest dam built on the Columbia River, the first one completed was Rock Island Dam, in December 1932. Bonneville Dam (pictured) was the second dam completed. It too drew many visitors, who flocked to the site when it opened in 1938.

The Flood of 1948

Communities across the Columbia Basin were devastated by the 1948 flood. In British Columbia, the city of Trail was hit particularly hard. As waters surged up to 40 feet, many residents took to canoes and small boats to navigate city streets. Roads collapsed under the weight of the water, and pumps ran constantly to drain water away from the city, struggling to keep pace with the rising river. Downtown businesses closed their doors as water seeped in through the windows. When the two-week fight was finally over, newspapers celebrated the victory, and residents breathed a sigh of relief as they began to repair the damage.



TRAIL RESIDENTS WIN GREAT FIGHT

CM&S Gets Credit for Epic River Victory

By CHARLES R. STARK JR.
TRAIL, B. C., June 13.—Trail apparently has won its two weeks fight against the Columbia. Unless a sudden cloudburst hits in the mountains or extreme hot weather sends the remaining snow tumbling down the sides of the mountains in new torrents no further damage to the city is expected.

The Washington state highway department was not so fortunate. The new highway bridge at Northport, only partially completed, is wrecked, and probably will have to be begun all over again.

Here at Trail the river is still roaring past the city at a rate of 17 miles per hour, and is 30 to 40 feet deep in places where it has no business to be at all, but it is dropping. A one-foot gain on the depth was reported this morning.

Theater Is Swamped

Ordinarily such a drop is registered on a gauge somewhere but means just a figure in most people's minds. But this one can be seen without an official gauge. Last night we drove into the city past the Odeon theater which stands appropriately enough, at the corner of Bay avenue and Portland street. The water was just below the peep hole where the cashier asks, "How many please?" This morning the counter is just looking through the flood. The sign over the entrance has been changed to read, "Closed until further notice," which seems rather a waste of words, it might just as well have stopped with "Closed."

Methods Worth Knowing

It will be a long time before Trail returns to normal, and before the full history of the flood can be evaluated, but one thing sticks out above everything else, the defense of the city against the encroaching river has been well planned and wonderfully executed. Cities in the United States subject to flood conditions will do well to study the methods and plan accordingly.

Everyone says the same thing: "If it hadn't been for our company—" This is my first trip here and I suspect, up to this time, it has been "the company," meaning the Consolidated Mining & Smelting company, which sprawls all over the hill above the town. The smelter, as far as business in Trail is concerned, has been the focal point, as a trust corporation it has

Downtown Trail, B. C., Takes a Battering as Columbia Runs Amok



Here are the houses on Bay avenue on the Trail side of the bridge across the Columbia river. Downstream from the bridge they are under to the height of the

bottom story. Great damage has been done but the worst is believed over. (Photo by Dale Morgan, staff photographer of The Spokesman-Review.)

PEO SISTERHOOD CONFERENCE SET

26th Annual State Sessions to Open Monday

MISSOULA, Mont., June 13.—The first session of the 26th annual convention of the Montana state chapter of the PEO sisterhood will be held Monday afternoon at the Hotel Florence. Mrs. Nora H. Chalkley, Butte, state president, will preside.

Hedra, chairman for the con-

OMAK GRADUATE WINS SCARLET ARROW AWARD

EASTERN WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, CHENEY, June 13.—Bob Carlton, outstanding Omak high school senior, has been announced as winner of one of the two Scarlet Arrow scholarships, according to Gordon Nelson, Spokane, who is president of the men's honorary. Carlton holds the honor of receiving the Omak high school achievement award two years in succession. He is president of the high school student body, an outstanding athlete and active in dramatics.

His brother, Gerald Carlson, ETC, sophomore, will be

TOURISTS TO GET MORE SERVICE

Chamber of Commerce to Keep Bureau Open Longer

MISSOULA, Mont., June 13.—As a service to tourists the Missoula Chamber of Commerce will maintain its information bureau, manned by Jack Riskin, from 9 a. m. to 10 p. m. daily. Previously the bureau has been open only until 5 p. m.

The chamber Secretary, Berlin

BARN, ANIMALS SWEEPED IN FLOOD

Cow Creek Damage Mounts in Ritzville Area

RITZVILLE, Wash., June 13.—Reports are coming in of more damage done by the rainstorm and flash flood Thursday night. Cow creek, about 10 miles north of here, went on a rampage, washing out alfalfa fields and gardens and leaving them covered with silt and debris.

Rob White, who lives on Cow



Left. John Diefenbaker and Dwight D. Eisenhower at the signing of the Columbia River Treaty in Washington, D.C., January 1961.

Right. This political cartoon by Carl Bonelli was published in the *Oregon Journal* after the Columbia River Treaty was ratified in 1964.

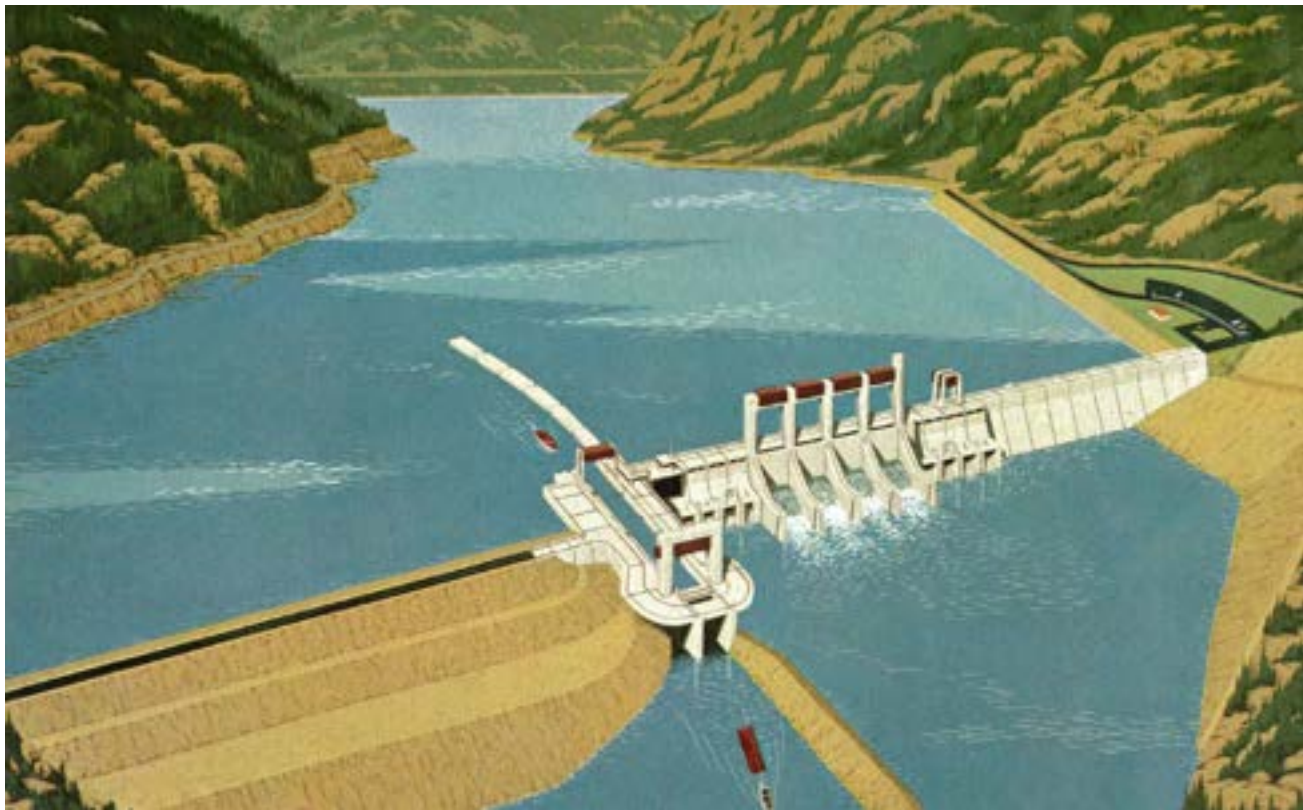
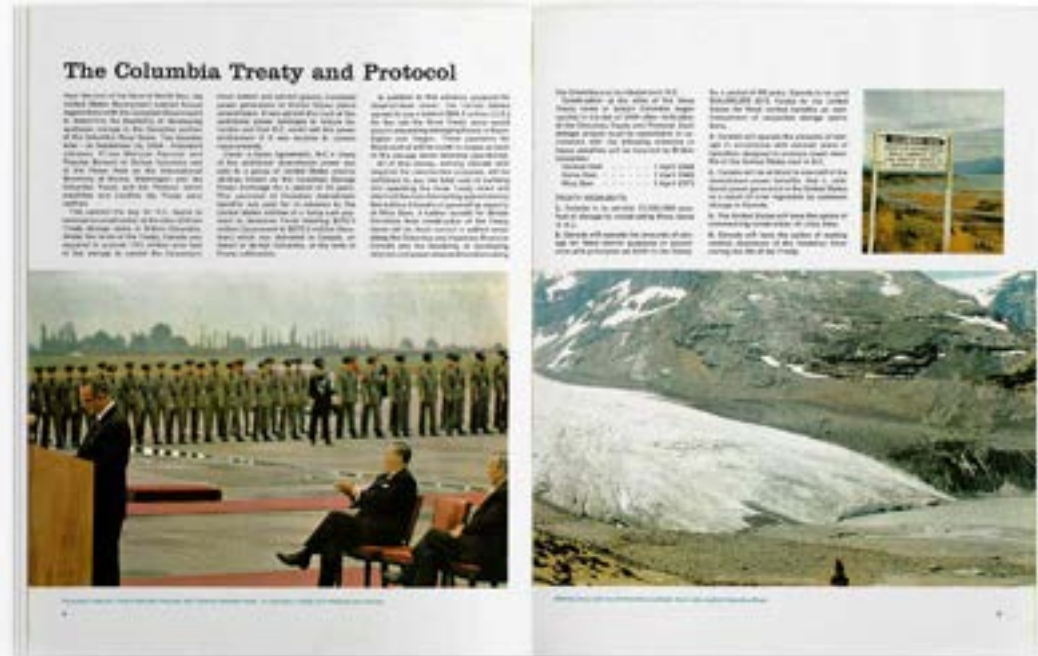
Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Columbia River Treaty in Washington, D.C., on January 17, 1961. The process was far from over, though. Canada had yet to reach an agreement with the Government of British Columbia.

The federal and provincial governments had conflicting ideas about how to implement the Treaty. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker’s energy policy envisioned a national power grid in which hydro-rich provinces like British Columbia would share power with other provinces in order to evenly distribute access to affordable, reliable power. This would promote greater industrial and economic growth across the country, rather than restrict opportunities to regions that already had access to cheap hydropower.⁵ This contradicted British Columbia Premier W.A.C. Bennett’s provincial power strategy. Bennett wanted to build a series of hydropower dams on the Columbia and Peace rivers to generate cheap power for the province and make money that could be put back into the provincial economy.⁶ Sharing the power and profits gained through the Columbia River Treaty with Canada did not fit within Bennett’s plans. Instead, he wanted to see British Columbia paid cash in exchange for downstream benefits—the additional power that could be generated in the United States as a result of the dams.

Canada and British Columbia resolved their competing visions for the Treaty in 1963, when Diefenbaker’s Progressive Conservative government was replaced

“May this treaty which we launch today be an example to the world of what nations can do by joint endeavour to contribute to the economic welfare of mankind.”

PRIME MINISTER JOHN DIEFENBAKER



In 1965, BC Hydro published an informational booklet on the Columbia River Treaty. The booklet provided details on the upcoming construction of the three Canadian Treaty dams, including High Arrow Dam (Hugh Keenleyside Dam), pictured left.



Left. On May 19, 1965, B.C. Premier W.A.C. Bennett detonated a ceremonial explosion to mark the beginning of construction on Duncan Dam.

Right, top. Premier Bennett (middle) welcomed Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson (right) and U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson (left) at the September 1964 signing of the Columbia River Treaty.

Right, bottom. U.S. President Johnson signed the Columbia River Treaty, September 1964.

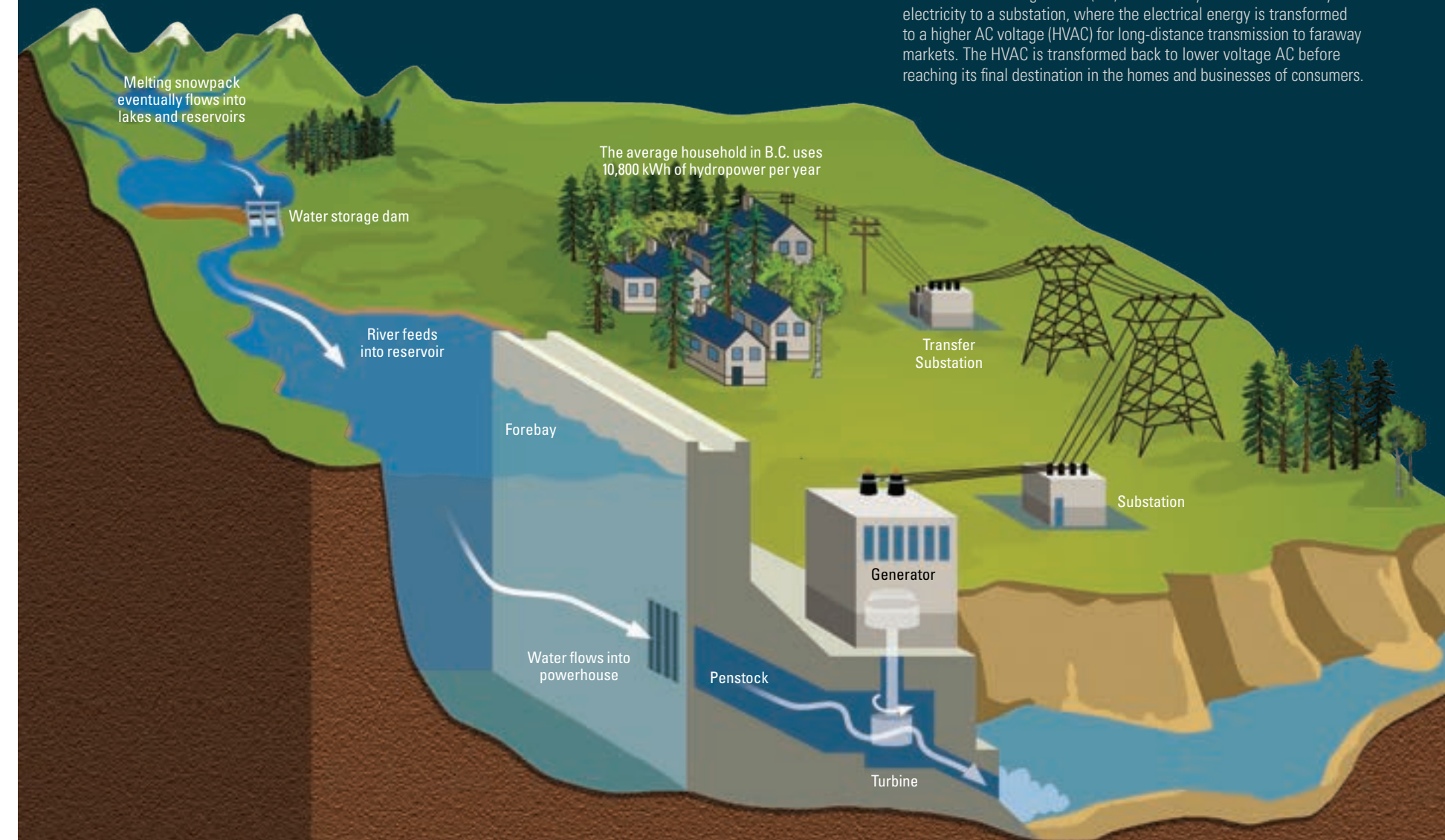
by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson. Pearson believed the Diefenbaker government had rushed into the Treaty, bowing to Washington's demands rather than trying to advance Canadian interests. Contrary to previous federal policies that barred the long-term export of electricity, Pearson supported Premier Bennett's wish to sell the downstream benefits instead of distributing electricity to other provinces.⁷ In July 1963, the British Columbian and Canadian governments signed an agreement to transfer the rights, benefits and operations related to the Treaty and proposed Treaty dams to British Columbia.⁸

With negotiations complete, Prime Minister Pearson, United States President Lyndon B. Johnson and Premier Bennett signed an updated Columbia River Treaty on September 16, 1964. The signing took place at the Peace Arch, located on the international boundary at Surrey, British Columbia, and Blaine, Washington. Like the 1961 document, the ratified Treaty covered two

main objectives: optimize hydropower production and coordinate flood control. To accomplish these outcomes, Canada was required to provide 15.5 million acre-feet of water storage annually through the three storage dams it would construct in British Columbia at Duncan, Mica Creek and Arrow Lakes. The Treaty also gave the United States the option to build a fourth dam at Libby, Montana, which would rely on British Columbia for water storage. There was a strict timeline for the completion of the Canadian Treaty dams. Duncan Dam and Reservoir were to be completed by 1967, followed by High Arrow Dam (Arrow Lakes Reservoir) in 1968 and Mica Dam (Kinbasket Reservoir) in 1973. The Treaty had no expiration date but was guaranteed for a minimum of 60 years. The earliest date either country could terminate the agreement was 2024, providing they gave written notice 10 years prior to withdrawal.⁹

The Treaty also included what is known as the Canadian Entitlement. In exchange for water storage,

How Hydropower Is Generated



Hydropower is produced from the energy of falling water as it flows through a turbine. Hydropower generating stations are built on rivers where there is a natural drop in elevation or alongside dams, which create a reservoir of stored water that can be released according to power demand. By controlling the volume of water and the elevation at which it falls, dams can increase the amount of power that is generated.

Water from the upper elevation, or forebay, flows down a pipe called a penstock, and hits the blades of a turbine, causing it to turn. The turbine is connected to a generator by a drive shaft. As the generator spins, magnets inside move past copper coils, stimulating electrons to create an alternating current (AC) of electricity. Power lines convey the electricity to a substation, where the electrical energy is transformed to a higher AC voltage (HVAC) for long-distance transmission to faraway markets. The HVAC is transformed back to lower voltage AC before reaching its final destination in the homes and businesses of consumers.



and the additional hydropower and flood control that this storage enabled, Canada was entitled to half of the anticipated downstream power benefits generated in the United States.¹⁰ For the first 30 years, British Columbia opted to exchange this entitlement for a cash payment. Rather than collecting its share of the downstream benefits in the form of hydropower, British Columbia received a total of \$254 million US. This number was based on the revenue the excess power was expected to generate over 30 years. British Columbia used much of this money to finance dam construction. After the first 30 years, the agreement could be renegotiated.

With an agreement in place and dam construction set to begin, these massive hydropower projects were under way. The Basin was on the cusp of irreversible change and, as Basin residents would soon discover, power came at a price.

THE PRICE OF POWER

If the voices of Basin residents seem absent from the origin story of the Columbia River Treaty, it is because, on the pages of the Treaty, they were. The Treaty was negotiated and ratified in the interests of national and provincial economic growth. Despite their vocal opposition, the people of the Basin became casualties on the road to prosperity. Had their concerns been considered and acted upon, the Basin and those who called it home might

have been spared some of the severe social, economic and environmental impacts of the Treaty dams. Instead, both land and lives were forever changed by an agreement that rendered residents powerless against development.

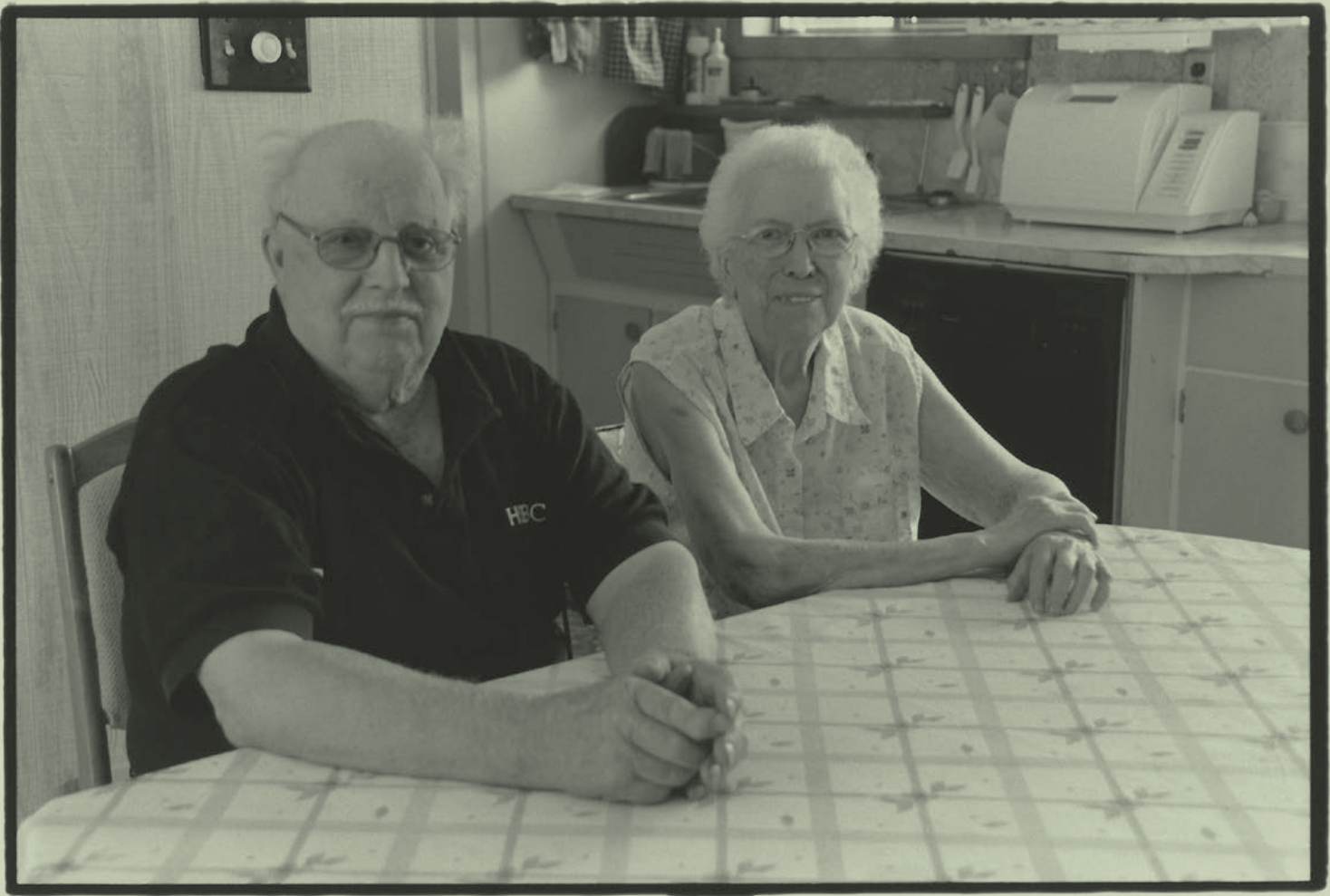
To store the 15.5 million acre-feet of water required of Canada under the Treaty, British Columbia needed land — 270,000 acres of it.¹¹ The dams would create large reservoirs that flooded lowlands in the river valleys, either permanently or intermittently throughout the year. The sites of the Treaty dams — Mica Creek, Arrow Lakes, Duncan and Libby — were already home to dozens of small communities that were now in the way. Lloyd Sharpe, a lifelong resident of the East Kootenay whose land, along with that of 70 other property owners, was expropriated for Libby Dam in 1971, voiced the distress of people living throughout the Basin when he said, “We were people in the way. And the attitude was to get rid of them.”¹²

Across the basin, the people in the way totalled 2,300. The majority resided in the Arrow Lakes region, where High Arrow Dam (later renamed Hugh Keenleyside Dam) displaced over 15 communities, like Burton, Edgewood, Fauquier and Howser. Christopher and Jean Spicer had a 60-acre farm in Nakusp that they tended for 15 years before it was flooded to make way for the dam. Like other landowners in the area, the Spicers hoped a Treaty promising such significant profits would surely

Opposite. Christopher Spicer tends his carrot crop by Arrow Lakes, alongside his pet goose, Goosander. The Spicer family owned a 60-acre farm in Nakusp before it was flooded by Arrow Lakes Reservoir.

Above, left. Daisy Welsh remembered setting up her easels “to do some painting and try to live a little normal life” amid the uncertainty that surrounded flooding and land deals. One autumn day, she was painting when several BC Hydro workers arrived unannounced to inspect the house. Daisy was often left angry and upset by these visits, which she felt were meant to bully landowners into accepting low offers.

Above, right. Brian Gadbois was a young boy when his family lost portions of their Revelstoke farm to Arrow Lakes Reservoir. He was too young to remember the negotiation process but recalled watching the survey crews working in their fields.



The Berry Family

Ethel Berry couldn’t watch as her husband, Charlie, set fire to their family home near Burton in 1967. Although it was customary for BC Hydro to burn any buildings located below the high-water level on dam reservoirs, Charlie wanted to do it himself. The land had been in the family since 1938. This was also the couple’s first home together and the place where they had started their family. Still, the Berrys felt fortunate they were not losing their land entirely.

They had struck a deal with BC Hydro known as a “flowage easement,” which allowed them to keep their land as long as they didn’t interfere with the portion flooded by Arrow Lakes Reservoir or the new access road that cut across their property. BC Hydro owned the water, but the Berrys owned the land. It was not a solution offered to others, as far as Charlie knew, but one he had insisted upon. “This is our property,” Charlie told BC Hydro. “Our name is on the deed. You cannot take it from us.”

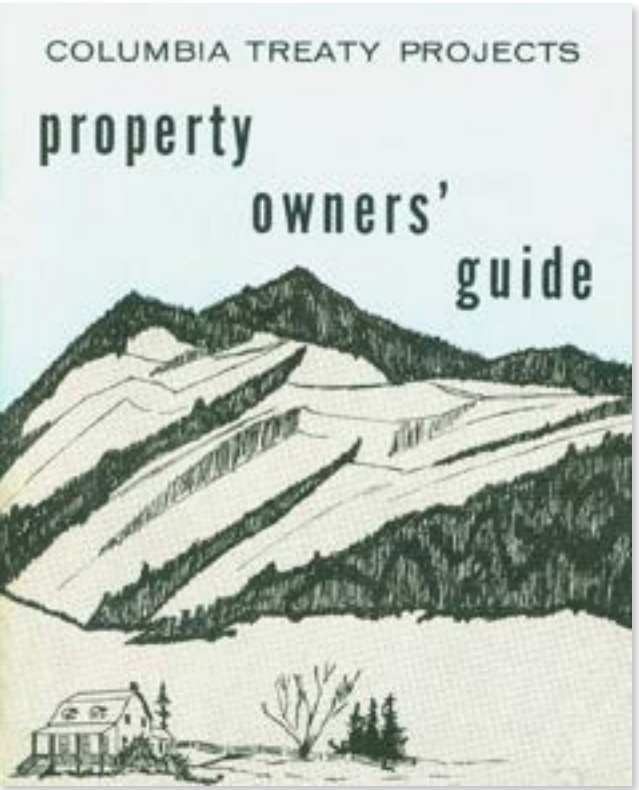
However, they did have to agree to leave the property for several years while construction and flooding took place. They moved to Nakusp, along with many other families in the Arrow Lakes region who lost their lands permanently. Burton had been a close-knit community, and the Berrys missed that sense of connection with their friends and neighbours. Though people kept in touch, Charlie and Ethel’s daughter Vivien remembered “there was still that sense you lost something along the way.”

Charlie and Ethel returned to their property in the late 1970s. They built a new house on higher ground, away from the flood line. They felt like they were among the lucky ones. Years later, however, Ethel still found it difficult to see photographs of their burning home. They had gotten their land back, but never recovered the sense of home and community they had once enjoyed.¹³

take care of those most affected by it. Yet, as time went on, landowners’ hopes for compensation began to fade. Jean Spicer wrote a letter to the editor of *Arrow Lakes News*: “Are not we, the main sufferers from High Arrow, entitled to a major slice of the pie or have not my first suspicions been confirmed, and there is really no pie at all?”¹⁴

From the signing of the Treaty to the flooding of the reservoirs, Basin residents living in the shadow of the dams felt confused, angry and powerless. Though advocates of the dams were confident there would be total compensation and resettlement plans, and saw opportunities for recreational lakes, tourism and economic prosperity, residents realized this was not going to happen. Many felt the provincial government and BC Hydro, which was the Canadian entity responsible for constructing and operating the dams, had prioritized profits over people in their development plans.

“We were under Hydro’s big stick because we had no choice: either be expropriated or sign. We had no choice,” said Robson resident Daisy Welsh.¹⁵ Welsh and her family had a large lakeshore property with an orchard and rental cottages. They had moved to Robson just a few years before discovering that Hugh Keenleyside Dam would be built in the exact place their land was located. Despite promises of fair compensation, BC Hydro’s first offer to the Welshes was just \$5,000 for all buildings and the entire 2.88 acres of land. The Welshes rejected

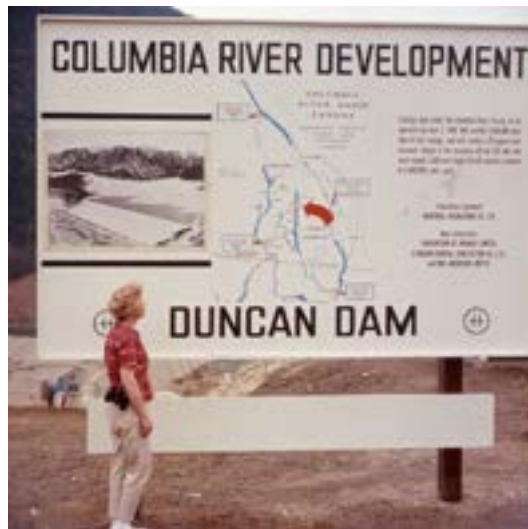


the offer. The next offer was \$8,000, then \$12,000, then \$16,000. Daisy Welsh believed the low starting price and gradual increases were deceitful — BC Hydro was looking for a way to get the land as cheaply as possible.¹⁶

Landowners like Oliver and Helen Buerge of Burton felt the same. They disagreed with the price offered for their 110-acre cattle farm and hired their own appraisers to see if the amounts lined up. They did not. The amount BC Hydro offered was four times lower than what the private appraiser calculated. “They weren’t interested in the facts. They just wanted to get the land for nothing,” Oliver said.¹⁷

Losing their homes and land was traumatic for many residents. “You hear lots of stories of people that were just devastated by it even though they knew it was coming,” remembered Brian Gadbois of Revelstoke. “Some of them stood there and watched as their house was lit on fire.”¹⁸ People forced from their communities looked back to see their homes, schools, churches and businesses destroyed. In some cases, buildings were picked up and moved, but this did little to soften the harsh

People living in affected areas received a *Property Owners’ Guide* with information on how the Treaty projects would impact their land. However, once land expropriations began, many property owners found the process inconsistent and disorganized. They were not given standard rates for their land or property, nor could they count on clear communication from BC Hydro.



As dam construction plans progressed, land and property in the way of the reservoirs had to be cleared. People living in affected communities often saw homes and businesses engulfed in flames. Less frequently, they saw buildings being loaded onto trucks and moved to higher ground—an expensive undertaking but still one that some chose to pursue.



“They weren’t interested in the facts. They just wanted to get the land for nothing.”

OLIVER BUERGE,
DISPLACED LANDOWNER, BURTON

reality. Families had to abandon the land or farms they had cultivated for generations and start over. Pete and Maria Peters had orchards in Renata but decided to move when most of the community—including the school, the post office and stores—was sacrificed to make way for Hugh Keenleyside Dam and Arrow Lakes Reservoir. “We’d still be at the Arrows if it hadn’t been for that dam,” Pete said. “We’d still be there.”¹⁹

The land had value that no amount of money could repay. When the reservoirs flooded, the water also washed away residents’ ties to home, land and community. Wally Penner grew up in Renata. “You can’t go back to the place where you were a kid, where you used to play in the sandbox, and your homestead,” he said. “You can’t do that and that’s one of the hardest things... Renata is still here but you look at the stumps of the trees that were cut, the fruit trees where you used to pick. You look at the foundation of your home that is left. I used to come back and look at what is there and try and picture it.”²⁰

Starting over was difficult. Displaced landowners found themselves unable to find new properties comparable to what they already owned. Before the dams, Christopher and Jean Spicer’s family built their entire livelihood around their subsistence farm in Nakusp. “We were totally dependent on our land,” said their daughter Janet. “It was our security and it was our livelihood. We had no other income other than what we grew

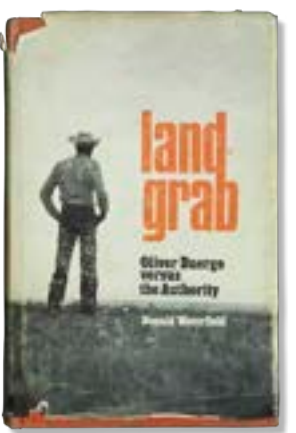


Oliver and Helen Buerge had a 110-acre farm in Burton before they lost their land to Arrow Lakes Reservoir. Aerial images of the property captured before the reservoir filled show that the Buerge’s farm and homestead would be left completely underwater. Years later, author Donald Waterfield wrote *Land Grab*, capturing the Buerge’s story and their fight for a fair deal against BC Hydro.

on the piece of land that was flooded out.”²¹ Once they learned their land would be flooded by Arrow Lakes Reservoir, the Spicer family drove across the province in search of comparable land where they could rebuild. They discovered that, although BC Hydro had offered them \$60,000 for the farm, anything similar would cost at least \$175,000. Their land was lost and so too the prosperity and livelihood they had enjoyed in Nakusp.

First Nations suffered the destruction of ancient and important cultural sites. Archaeologists estimate that Libby Dam and Lake Koocanusa reservoir alone flooded some 400 archaeological sites.²² “When those lands were flooded,” recalled Hazel Squakin of the Syilx First Nation, “they did not consider what damage it would do to the Native Peoples’ villages, to the Native Peoples’ sweat lodges. And they did not do it by consulting the people. There were burial grounds, which I know people protested loud and clear, but they were not heard.”²³

The Ktunaxa suffered significant impacts from the loss of cultural sites and land that had long been a source of identity and emotional significance. “Our history forever changed,” said Kathryn Teneese, chair of the Ktunaxa Nation Council. “Access to ancient villages, ancient places, you know, they don’t exist anymore because they’re underwater because of a dam, because of a relationship that we have with the nation states south of the 49th.”²⁴ The loss of territory also disrupted



Construction Begins

Construction on the Canadian Treaty dams began in 1965 with Duncan Dam. Duncan was the first to be completed, opening in 1967. It was followed by High Arrow Dam (renamed Hugh Keenleyside Dam), completed in 1968, and Mica Dam, completed in 1973. Aerial photographs show the immense impact the dams had upon the landscape, not just once the reservoirs were flooded, but during construction as well. Large swaths of land were cleared to make way for the dams, leaving bare, sandy ground where there was once greenery and trees.



High Arrow Dam (renamed Hugh Keenleyside Dam)

Mica Dam



Duncan Dam



Right. The dam reservoirs flooded entire communities, wiping some off the map completely. One of these communities was Renata, a small hamlet accessible only by ferry that once stood on the western shore of Lower Arrow Lake.

Bottom, right. Aerial photographs from August 1965 show the striking difference between Renata's original shoreline and the new shoreline (in red) that would be created once Arrow Lakes Reservoir filled.

Below. Families were warned several years before Renata was flooded. Rose Rohn and her family were some of the last to leave, and they spent those years watching as their friends and neighbours packed up and left, their homes and orchards set ablaze to make way for the reservoir. When the Rohns finally left in 1967, Rose posed for a picture as her home burned.



traditional activities, such as fishing, hunting and gathering, which First Nations had practised in the Columbia and Kootenay watersheds for thousands of years.

BC Hydro made many promises to Basin residents to ease their concerns about the impacts of the dams. Residents were assured reservoirs would create beautiful recreational lakes, with boating and beaches that would draw tourists to the area; however, they quickly learned this was not the case. During periods when water levels dropped, the lakes disappeared to reveal vast expanses of dust and gravel. Debris and tree stumps populated the land where BC Hydro had promised sandy beaches. “Nobody wants to come see stumps,” said Balfour resident Josh Smienk. “They want to see water lapping on the shores, kids running on normal beaches.”²⁵ Any hope of tourism at the reservoir “lakes” was further dimmed by their questionable safety. Dust stirred up by high winds along the reservoir banks aggravated allergies and respiratory difficulties. Even today, airborne silica from Kinbasket Reservoir poses a health risk to nearby residents.

Not only did the dams fail to create the new tourist sites BC Hydro promised, but they flooded existing ones as well. The natural Canoe Hot Springs in Valemount was a prime example, lost under the waters of Kinbasket Reservoir. Recreational fishing and boating on flooded rapids and falls were eliminated. Residents



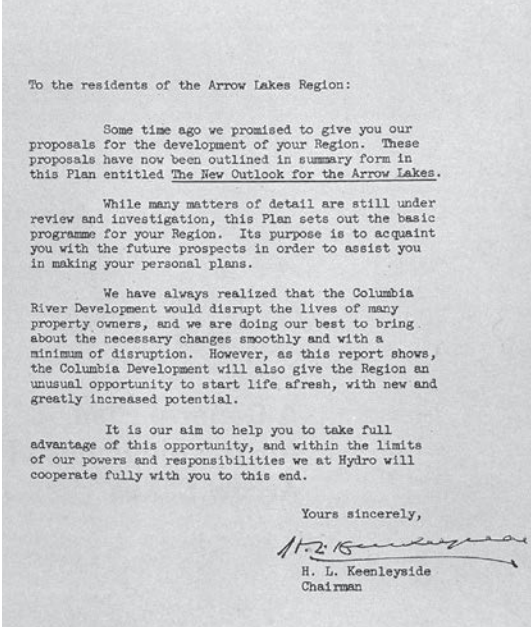
Damage to the forestry industry is visible in diagrams showing wide swaths of forest land slated to be flooded by Kinbasket Reservoir. Over 28,000 hectares were cleared to make way for Mica Dam and the adjoining reservoir. Clearing operations often left smaller debris behind, creating an unsightly scene when the water rose.



and tourists had reduced access to sites such as Hamber Provincial Park; in 1961, the park boundaries were redrawn to make way for Kinbasket Reservoir, and Hamber was reduced to just a small fraction of its original size.²⁶ Damming and fluctuating reservoir levels also impeded canoeing, kayaking and other boating activities.²⁷

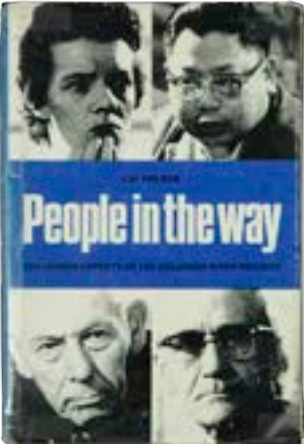
The dams hurt the forestry industry as reservoirs destroyed thousands of acres of productive forest lands. Flooded logging roads cut off access to forests, and forestry companies lost money as they were forced to construct replacement roads or take longer, more expensive routes.²⁸ Damage to the timber supply led to job loss; for example, up to 60 forestry jobs were lost in Valemount and 72 in Golden.²⁹ Potential jobs were lost too; reports estimated that if the flooded forest lands had been harvested before dam construction, thousands of workers could have found temporary employment in places like Golden and Arrow Lakes.³⁰

People hoped dam construction would at least create jobs and boost local economies. The Treaty required that Duncan, Hugh Keenleyside and Mica dams be completed by 1967, 1968 and 1973, respectively, so jobs were created to complete the work on time. At Hugh Keenleyside Dam, the workforce peaked at 1,600 workers in spring 1967. BC Hydro estimated that the construction of Mica Dam would employ an average



of 1,200 workers at any given time, with a peak of 2,700.³¹ But construction introduced new challenges to nearby communities. The influx of workers strained social, health, educational and recreational services in communities like Revelstoke, where food and housing prices rose and the number of people requiring social assistance increased by 43 per cent.³² Employment was only temporary and created unavoidable cycles of boom and bust. Once the dams were complete, the jobs disappeared and local economies suffered.

By the early 1990s, Basin residents understood the damaging emotional, social, economic and environmental impacts that occurred in the name of progress. Residents were forced to adapt to changing communities, environments and ways of life. As promises were made and broken, residents lost any hopes they might have had for the Treaty or for fair compensation. As the 30-year anniversary of the Treaty approached, so too did the end of the original Canadian Entitlement agreement. British Columbia would have the opportunity to draft a new agreement around the downstream benefits they had exchanged for money in those first decades. Basin residents wanted change. This was their chance to make sure that, this time, their voices were heard.



Opposite. Mica Dam was the largest of the Canadian Treaty dams and, originally, the only one designed to generate power. During its construction, the Columbia River was diverted through two 45-foot tunnels, each stretching over 3,000 feet. With the water diverted, construction could begin on the empty riverbed.

Above, left. Land was cleared only haphazardly before the reservoirs were flooded. The tree stumps and debris that were left behind in places like Arrow Lakes are visible when reservoir levels are low.

Above, middle. Arrow Lakes Reservoir displaced 2,000 residents, who received letters like this from BC Hydro, informing them that their land would be flooded.

Above, right. “People in the way” became a common phrase to describe the people impacted by the Columbia River Treaty. In 1973, J.W. Wilson used it as the title of his book chronicling the stories of displaced residents and landowners.





Kootenay-Columbia Symposium hashes out past grievances and sets future development direction

RIGHTING past WRONGS

What they said

We got all our anger out on the first night, then, by the next day, we could start talking. People were able to get an awful lot off their chests.

—Roy Millar Regional District of East Kootenay representative on Columbia River Treaty Committee, on the tragic and sad stories he heard Friday evening from people who had been affected by the building of dams.

I really hope they are willing to discuss flow regimes, which determines water levels and has an incredible effect on fish and wildlife. This is an interesting process, but without truly knowing what B.C. Hydro is going to do, we're not going to get anywhere.

—Grace Conzon, representative from the Trail Fish and Wildlife Association, speaking about the distrust many people feel for B.C. Hydro's possible agenda, which involves fluctuating water levels.

I believe there is a genuine effort here to involve us in the process. How deep that commitment is ... I guess we'll have to see. Nonetheless, this area should be adamant about taking an active role. We're no longer the poor second cousins.

—Ken Wyllie, Area 1 Director on the Regional District of Central Kootenay, commenting on the renewed hope that people in the Columbia Basin are experiencing, now that they have been included in a process that hopes to right past wrongs done to this area by government and B.C. Hydro.

Different areas of the Columbia Basin have different problems ... this symposium

Symposium in Castlegar draws more than 100 from Columbia Basin

SHARLENE IMHOFF
Sun Editor

Discussion of past issues and setting the tone for future development were the key functions of a symposium held in Castlegar June 18, 19 and 20. More than 100 paid delegates signed up for the symposium, which was co-sponsored by the provincial government and the Columbia River Treaty Committee, which is made up of elected officials from five regional districts and the Kwantlen-Kinbasket Tribal Council.

The symposium was the first of its kind for the Columbia Basin, held not only to hear past grievances, but also to establish some key policy directions for the provincial government, which is renegotiating the Canadian Entitlement portion of the Columbia River Treaty. The Canadian Entitlement is one-half of the extra power produced in the U.S. as a result of the Treaty—called the Downstream Benefits—was sold to a group of U.S. utilities for 30-year periods which began with the scheduled completion of each of the three Treaty dams in B.C. This Entitlement is owned by B.C. and will begin to return in 1998, the 30-year anniversary of the Duncan dam. This will be shortly followed by 30-year anniversaries of the Keenleyside and Mica dams. "Our negotiations will be about how to take that Entitlement back," said Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, Anne Edwards. "The downstream benefits are a provincial resource. The people who live in the Kootenay-Columbia System have said for years that they haven't had a reasonable return for the disbenefits they experienced due to the development of the Columbia River System."

Also present for the symposium were Labor and Consumer Services Minister Moe Sihota, and Economic Development, Small Business and Trade Minister David Zirnheilt. With both provincial government and B.C. Hydro heavyweights present at the Symposium, it was no holds barred for delegates who relayed emotional stories about past experiences due to development of the Columbia River System. Severe loss of the land base, including prime farming land as well as timber supplies, were relayed by people who lost their homes, businesses and way of life due to the creation of large reservoirs to generate electricity. Others talked about



MOE SIHOTA



ANNE EDWARDS



DAVID ZIRNHEILT

the losses suffered by fisheries and wildlife, due mainly to the fluctuating levels of working reservoirs. After suffering almost three decades of silence, or of having complaints fall upon ears in Victoria plagued with selective hearing, the floodgates were open to high emotion.

"I've waited more than 25 years to be heard," said Jim Robertson, a Butte resident who was displaced earlier when the creation of a reservoir resulted in the loss of both his home and his business. Other delegates spoke of the anger and distrust they feel towards B.C. Hydro and past provincial governments for using the resources of the Columbia Basin in order to "keep the lights on in the Lower Mainland, without any compensation for the major negative impacts that resulted."

"The people who live in the Columbia Basin feel they have been taken advantage of for many years, and they have every right to feel that way," continued Edwards, herself a resident of the East Kootenay. The emotional hiatus which started the Symposium was cooled somewhat the next day when delegates were divided into eight working groups, challenged to prepare positive ideas for change and future development. Resource people from B.C. Hydro were on hand to continue answering questions, and all three ministers were included in the working sessions, providing a show of faith to promises of real change. After reviewing a large number of suggestions for the future of development on the Columbia River, including suggestions for mitigation, a thematic summary of the main points derived from working sessions was presented. "When we started this process on Friday evening, we could appreciate that we were attending a historical event. This commitment to a public process by both the government and the Columbia River Treaty Committee has truly been outstanding. Not a single person who wished to attend was turned away," said Rosemarie Johnson, Mayor of Nakusp and member of the Columbia River Treaty Committee. Josh Smienk, Chairman of the Columbia River Treaty, was credited for his dedication and hard work in bringing the symposium to a reality. He defined the symposium as a way in which the people of the Columbia Basin are redefining the area in which they live. "The future is ours to decide, and this weekend was an excellent start to the amount of decision-making that is yet to come."

History of the Treaty

Discussion about regulation of the Columbia River began as early as 1944. This was when Canadian and American federal governments began to look at whether the development of the water resources on the Canadian side would be practical and worthwhile. Both countries were facing two major challenges at the time: the untamed Columbia River caused periodic and sometimes devastating flooding to the area; and an upswing in the post-war economy and population meant there was a need for greater energy resources. To solve these challenges, water storage needed to be developed in the upper reaches of the basin, located in Canada.

Canada and the United States asked the International Joint Commission, an organization formed by both countries under the Boundary Waters Treaty in 1909, to look into the possibilities. The commission established the International Columbia River Engineering Board to carry out water management studies in the basin.

In 1959, the board confirmed that a number of sites in Canada were well-suited for the construction of large storage reservoirs that could be used to regulate the Columbia River to the benefit of both countries. The commission recognized that development and regulation of Canadian storage would prevent the river water from flowing unchecked and would allow a greater amount of useable energy and a higher level of dependable capacity to be generated at American power plants that was possible without



was further defined through a Proto-

Castlegar Mayor calls for Columbia River Authority

In her welcoming speech to delegates, B.C. Hydro and provincial government officials attending the symposium last weekend, Castlegar Mayor Audrey Moore stressed the need for Columbia Basin residents to serve on a Columbia River Authority Board—the first suggestion of its kind to oversee the development of the Basin.

Moore stressed the need for members on the Authority Board to be elected, not appointed, in order for them to be accountable to residents of the area.

The board, said Moore, would also be suitable managers of a Downstream Benefit Trust Fund for the Basin. "As I said earlier, our provincial government is placed in a stewardship role over our water and is entrusted by the citizens to manage this resource. This stewardship provides the



AUDREY MOORE

land base for human settlement; loss of taxable property; loss of heritage values; infrastructure, agriculture, fish and wildlife; flooding of land; expropriation of land and the displacement of 2,300 people who once lived on

TWO

CREATING THE TRUST

1989–1995

On a spring day in 1992, Ed Conroy arrived at Castlegar's local baseball park, a trailer of cows in tow. A cattle rancher, Conroy was moving his cows to summer pasture but paused for a meeting. He had recently been elected to the provincial legislature representing Rossland-Trail, and he was concerned about the impact of the Columbia River Treaty on the people and land in the place he called home. Sharing Conroy's concerns were politicians Larry Brierley, Corky Evans, Josh Smienk and Dieter Bogs, who were waiting at a picnic table. They had gathered to discuss how they might work together to address the approaching end of the Treaty's downstream benefits agreement and ensure some of the revenues from the sale of hydropower could be returned to the region. This meeting—participants later referred to it as the "cow meeting"—represented a watershed moment in the history of Columbia Basin residents' concerted, grassroots efforts to lobby the Province for a share in the Treaty's profits. It also laid the groundwork for the founding of Columbia Basin Trust.

COMING TOGETHER

Several years before the "cow meeting," Corky Evans found himself at another baseball field, this time in the Slocan Valley. He was serving as a director for the Regional District of Central Kootenay and had been approached by the local baseball team about

maintenance and repairs to the community diamond. After speaking with an administrator at the regional recreation department, Evans learned there was no money available to restore the field. The region had a low tax base, largely due to a special order passed by W.A.C. Bennett's government in 1968, which exempted BC Hydro from paying full property taxes on its dams along the Columbia and Peace rivers—part of his vision to advance the provincial economy by developing hydropower projects along these river systems. BC Hydro paid grants in lieu of taxes as a way of partially compensating municipalities. Evans was frustrated to learn that these grants were much lower than what BC Hydro would have paid in taxes, and that regions were losing out on significant potential tax revenues.¹ Without that money, communities had a difficult time funding essentials, like emergency and fire, waste management and hospital services.²

Realizing the powerful effects this had on his district and its communities, Evans spoke with other Central Kootenay directors who agreed that, if BC Hydro was taxed on dams in other parts of the province, it should pay taxes on its Columbia River assets. It was "discrimination on the grounds of geography," said district director Martin Vanderpol. "People in this area are being cheated."³ Together, in 1982, the district directors in Central Kootenay sought legal



advice about suing the provincial government over BC Hydro's tax exemptions.⁴ By 1989, directors from the regional districts of Kootenay Boundary, East Kootenay and Columbia-Shuswap were on board. BC Hydro offered an extra \$2.4 million in grants in lieu of taxes to be distributed over two years among regional districts affected by Treaty dams.⁵ The regional districts were not satisfied with this offer and continued to plan for a lawsuit. A year later, in 1990, the provincial government and BC Hydro increased the grant money and adjusted how grants were distributed, which eased some of the frustration felt within the regional districts.⁶

Other lobbying efforts related to Columbia River Treaty impacts gained traction across the Basin. In Valemount, Mayor Jeannette Townsend sought

compensation for the forestry industry. The construction of Mica Dam had flooded forest areas and cut off access to logging roads, causing timber shortages and eliminating potential work in the area. Townsend was anxious to prevent further challenges. When she became mayor in 1990, she pressed the provincial government to award local lumber company Slocan Forest Products a contract to harvest 100,000 cubic metres of available forest lands. Slocan Forest Products was the community's biggest employer and winning the contract would help create job stability.⁷ She spoke about the issue on CBC Radio and, while Slocan Forest Products was only awarded half of the contract, her interview alerted other Basin politicians to the issue.⁸ People across the Basin were beginning to recognize

Opposite. The construction of Mica Dam had a devastating impact on forestry, flooding forest area and cutting off access to logging roads.

Above. During low-water periods on Arrow Lakes Reservoir, the Nakusp shoreline recedes to reveal wide stretches of dust and debris. This photo shows the bare shoreline as it appeared in April 1970.



their common fight against Treaty impacts.

Ongoing damage to fisheries was also a cause for action. Dam construction, beginning with Grand Coulee Dam in 1933 and made worse by the construction of the Treaty dams, blocked fish migration routes and destroyed fish habitats. This devastated fish populations. In 1988, BC Hydro announced an \$11-million fund to address damage to fish and wildlife caused by dams in the Peace and Williston areas. Organizations in the Basin called for the same consideration, demanding a similar fund be created for their region.⁹ Concerned about declining fish populations in Kootenay Lake, the Nelson Rod and Gun Club called on BC Hydro to address the problem. Club President Jess Ridge echoed the sentiment of many Nelson residents when he insisted, “If we’re going to be used, and we’re going to be used further in the future (more dams are planned), we’ve got to have proper compensation.”¹⁰

Josh Smienk, a director for the Regional District of Central Kootenay, shared the club’s concerns. Smienk was associated with the Kootenay Lake Fisheries Advisory Committee and was searching for a solution that might offset economic losses caused by damage to local fisheries. He brought the issue to the Association of Kootenay Boundary Municipalities (AKBM), which agreed to form a committee on the subject.¹¹ Smienk was appointed chair and was joined by Trail City Councillor



Dieter Bogs and Kimberley Mayor Jim Ogilvie. The AKBM contributed funds to conduct research into the Columbia River Treaty, and the committee would present its findings at AKBM’s annual meeting in 1992. The hope was that the committee could better inform the AKBM about the Treaty and its impacts so it could craft a unified plan to gain a fair deal for the Basin.

The political shift that took place in the region and across British Columbia in 1991 made it easier to take collective action throughout the Basin. That year, the Social Credit government, which had been in power for the better part of four decades, was defeated by the New Democratic Party (NDP) in a landslide victory where the NDP won 51 out of 75 seats in the legislature. In the Basin, all four elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) belonged to the NDP: Corky Evans became MLA for Nelson-Creston, Jim Doyle for Columbia River-Revelstoke, Ed Conroy for Rossland-Trail and Anne Edwards for Kootenay.¹² Edwards also became Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources in the provincial cabinet. While the Treaty was not a central election issue, the Basin MLAs were united by their common understanding of the Treaty’s impacts and a shared goal of obtaining benefits for the region and the people who lived there.¹³

It was good timing. The grassroots and political movements to secure shared benefits for the region

aligned with the end of the Columbia River Treaty’s downstream benefits agreement, in which British Columbia had sold its share of the downstream power benefits to American utility companies in exchange for a cash payment. British Columbia and the United States entered negotiations for a new deal, and the Province’s new premier, Mike Harcourt, played a lead role in demanding benefits for the region. Going forward, the Province wanted to receive its share of the benefits directly as hydropower, not money. BC Hydro could then distribute and sell the power at market prices, ideally generating greater profits than a cash payment based on anticipated prices.

Knowing negotiations were about to start, Basin lobbyists and politicians began to prepare for the major role they hoped they would play in these talks and how to move forward with sharing benefits. Josh Smienk echoed the sentiments of many when he told the AKBM that the efforts of individual communities would not be enough to achieve that goal: “If we don’t organize as one group we will be in the same boat in the year when the Treaty expires,” Smienk warned.¹⁴ The call for unification had been made; it was up to Basin communities to answer it.

It was during this call for collective action that the “cow meeting” took place. As Ed Conroy’s cows rested in a shady spot nearby, he and Larry Brierley, Josh

Above. B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt was elected in 1991 in a landslide victory for the provincial NDP. In the Basin, all four MLAs represented the NDP, making it easier for them to work together to address the Treaty’s impacts.

Opposite. The impact of the Columbia River Treaty sowed discontent in communities across the Basin that persisted into the 1970s and 1980s. Pictured here during that time are Nakusp (top), Revelstoke (middle), and Nelson (bottom).



Herb Marcolli
“I helped to build the dams, which in turn destroyed my history.” For Herb Marcolli, the Treaty dams brought mixed experiences. He was among the few thousand workers who were employed in dam construction. Herb helped clear land where Hugh Keenleyside Dam and Arrow Lakes Reservoir were built and serviced equipment during the construction of Mica Dam. This was a big boost for his young family: his yearly earnings on the dam projects were double what he might have made in logging work.

During construction on Mica Dam, Herb lived in one of the construction camps, going home to Revelstoke whenever he could. After nine-hour shifts, workers played cards, darts and pool. Each labour union formed a baseball team and held regular games and tournaments. Despite the good wages and the memories he made, years later Herb found it difficult to reconcile that the work he did erased his own family history. Herb’s ancestors had arrived in the Arrow Lakes area in the early 1900s and established farms and orchards. The farms had remained in the family until they were bought out by BC Hydro. “Then, it was good for me because I had lots of work,” Herb reflected. “Now I look at it—I can’t go back and show my grandkids or great-grandkids where we came from.”

Smienk, Dieter Bogs and Corky Evans made plans at the Castlegar picnic table. They discussed their vision for the Basin and how securing a piece of the downstream benefits might help them achieve that vision. At the meeting’s conclusion, Smienk, Bogs and Brierley promised to unite the regional districts in support of the cause, while Evans and Conroy would unite their fellow provincial MLAs. The idea to create something bigger, something that would involve the entire Basin, had taken root.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
As support for the cause grew, Basin politicians needed to organize themselves more formally. In 1993, the Columbia River Treaty Committee (CRTC) was formed to protect the interests of Basin residents and make sure they were treated fairly in the upcoming renegotiation of the downstream benefits agreement. The committee, chaired by Smienk, addressed problems and prioritized the concerns of Basin residents relating to the original downstream benefits agreement outlined in the Treaty, such as its impacts on the environment, forestry and mining industries; fisheries; economic development; and social well-being.¹⁶ CRTC membership included representatives from five regional districts: Central Kootenay, Columbia-Shuswap, East Kootenay, Fraser-Fort George and Kootenay Boundary.¹⁷ It also included



two representatives from the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council (KKTC).¹⁸ At first, the KKTC was hesitant to join. It initially pursued its concerns independently, conducting careful research on the Treaty’s impact on Indigenous fisheries.¹⁹ The KKTC was determined to stabilize water levels and nutrients and revive the fisheries that had been depleted by damming since construction on Grand Coulee Dam began in the 1930s. Local politicians Corky Evans and Anne Edwards recognized they shared the same goals and hoped the KKTC would join efforts unfolding across the Basin—but this did not happen immediately. Instead, the partnership developed gradually. “It’s like all relationships,” explained Sophie Pierre, Chief of St. Mary’s Band. “You have to build it [trust] in order to really move forward and do things like partnerships. You don’t jump into partnerships first. You’ve got to build a relationship first.”²⁰ After attending meetings and communicating with Evans, Edwards, and other advocates for a piece of the downstream benefits, the KKTC was ready to participate in a shared vision for the future of the fisheries and the Basin. “When we started to realize in the discussions that this was a way that we could bring back the salmon,” Chief Pierre recalled, “that was the clincher.” She acknowledged the significance of this new collaboration:

Among the CRTC members whose discussions led to the formation of Columbia Basin Trust were Kootenay MLA Anne Edwards (left) and Sophie Pierre of the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council.



“This was us as residents trying to have a conversation and build something that we wanted. Our job was to try to distill it and bring it back to them, so it rang true and resonated.”

GARRY MERKEL, CHAIR, 2007–2012

Up until that point, any time the Ktunaxa, or any Indigenous group in Canada, quite frankly, wanted to be recognized or to be involved in something, you usually had to go and bang on the doors and you were very seldom invited to come in and participate. And this was a little bit different, you know, right off the bat. People that were involved...in the renegotiation, they recognized that the only way that we were really going to have any benefits come back into the Basin was to have everyone involved and for all of us to be working together.²¹

Although representatives had different reasons for joining the CRTC, all hoped to improve the well-being of their districts and communities. “There’s more strength in numbers,” Valemount Mayor Jeannette Townsend said.²² Garry Merkel, KKTC representative and vice-chair of the CRTC, agreed that “this was us as residents trying to have a conversation and build something that we wanted. Our job was to try to distill it and bring it back to them, so it rang true and resonated.”²³

Residents were already talking at restaurants, hotel rooms, kitchen tables and community halls about the renegotiation of the Treaty’s downstream benefits. To bring these conversations together, the CRTC hosted its first symposium in June 1993. It was the first of three symposiums that gave Basin residents a platform to tell provincial representatives their opinions and ideas

about the Treaty and the downstream benefits agreement. Held in Castlegar, the first event was sponsored in partnership with the Province of British Columbia.²⁴

While the provincial government wanted to carefully vet the list of symposium participants, the CRTC insisted the event should have balanced representation from across the Basin, with both residents and government representatives in attendance. The CRTC was so eager for this balance that its members were willing to do whatever it took to ensure that Basin residents were able to attend the meeting, whether by covering mileage costs or paying babysitting fees.²⁵ Over three days, the symposium drew 150 participants who represented residents, as well as regional districts, municipal governments, unions, BC Hydro and the provincial government.²⁶ Basin residents knew if they wanted to present a united front in negotiations with the government, they needed to agree upon what those benefits would look like, how they would be distributed, and to whom. Among those who attended were people who had been relocated, lost their homes and lived with the impacts of the Treaty daily. Others who attended were not as severely affected but still hoped to see the region benefit from hydropower profits.

For some people, the symposium was their first opportunity to address BC Hydro and provincial politicians. Emotions ran high. “I’ve waited more than



Tears over treaty Emotions high as symposium reviews past

By JOHN BETTS

CASTLEGAR - The Columbia River Treaty was signed almost 30 years ago and for the first time since the dams were built politicians, BC Hydro and the people affected got together to discuss the consequences. It happened this weekend and for some it was an emotional moment. “I’ve been waiting 25 years to say this,” said Jim Roberts who was a teenager when BC Hydro expropriated his family from their house, store and property in Burton before the flooding of the Arrow Reservoir in the late sixties. “BC Hydro bought us out,” said Roberts. “We lost our land, our house and our business.” Roberts came to the symposium hoping to find people to listen. He was also hoping to find some ways to right the injustices of the past. There were over 120 others at the meeting. Three prominent cabinet ministers, Moe Sihota,

minister responsible for BC Hydro, Energy Minister Anne Edwards, and David Zirnheft, Minister of Economic Development, all mixed informally with public delegates in three days of workshops and meetings. They were accompanied by the region’s MLAs, BC Hydro executives, a host of technical experts and representatives from regional and municipal governments. “It almost brings you to tears to hear the stories of people dislocated,” said Sihota at the first evening of meetings that dealt with the history of the Treaty.

Columbia Treaty meeting attracts area participants

CASTLEGAR - Jim Robertson of Burton waited 25 years and finally had a chance to speak his mind. “You should be ashamed,” he said pointing a finger at B.C. Hydro officials at the symposium on the Columbia River Treaty here Saturday. He was referring to the flooding of the Arrow Lakes. My mother got a cheque for \$47.00. We had a store, six commercial lots, and one and a half acres of land.” Robertson’s case was only one of the many emotional stories heard at the first ever symposium on the Columbia River Treaty. Over 150 people, representing communities along the Columbia River Basin, met with B.C. Hydro engineers and decision-makers to discuss the treaty and how it will impact on those communities in the future. While Hydro wanted public input as to the downstream benefits due to revert back to Canada in 1998, most delegates expressed dismay at the lake’s fluctuation and low water levels. According to the treaty, Hydro must keep the level at 1,444 feet in order to provide enough water to run the turbines in the downstream dams. If there is no risk of flood, the level can go to 1,446 feet. But if Hydro wants to raise the level by restricting the outflow, they would have to compensate at the rate of one million dollars per foot per year (the amount the Americans would be losing in power). Jean Townsend, Mayor of Valemount, said when McNaughton Lake was flooded to become Kinbasket Reservoir, it devastated her community. And water levels in recent years have only made things worse. “There is a marina with a boat ramp,” she says, “but the water is nearly 25 kilometres away,” said Townsend. Nineteen thousand hectares of forest in one reservoir (Kinbasket) breaks down to 2,500 truckloads per year or nearly \$150 million,” said Evans. Besides the adverse effects on logging, delegates complained about climate changes, reduced recreation, debris and dust storms, loss of a tax base, riparian zones, farmland, fish and wildlife, and the displacement of 2,000 people, many of whom were not paid a fair market value for their land. “The thing that will trigger it,” says Castlegar Mayor Audrey Moore, “is if those funds are allocated according to the priorities set by local fish and wildlife clubs.”

editorial comment

Redefining who has done the giving— and the taking

If the provincial government failed to recognize the number of negative impacts that have plagued this area in the past as a result of the building of treaty dams, it was given more than an earful during the Kootenay-Columbia Symposium, held in Castlegar just this past weekend. Sure, one could argue the provincial government might not have been completely deaf to this area’s concerns in the past, but for far too long, the government, and BC Hydro for that matter, have had a bad case of selective hearing. For the past few decades, no matter how loudly the people of the Kootenay-Columbia Basin spoke about the negative affects of the Columbia River Treaty, the concerns were passed up, or banked as being the ill-affects of a few, which serve to benefit the growing needs of the many. The ability to assist in providing electricity to the rest of the province and northern United States have had serious consequences on this area: the creation of 1,000 acres of land, 26,000 acres of agriculture land; valuable forest rendered; not to mention the loss of fish and wildlife; and of course, of 2,300 people who once resided in the Arrow lakes. Finally is the provincial government inequities that were created when mental and social costs to this area redefined before the development of the basin surged ahead all those years ago. ie. renum did anything, it redefined and rength of the people who call the ‘home’. It redefined not only a ater, but a strength in will. The will, but demand that the rest of the d take notice just who has done the nurse, the taking. actor Ken Wyllie aptly stated, “We poor second cousins.”

he Columbia Basin are now a force reckoned. When it comes to their obs, their heritage, their livelihood, shed around to satisfy the needs of for too long, have taken without



Charles Lynn and Lita Salanski

Growing up on the Lynn family farm near Newgate, siblings Charles Lynn and Lita Lynn (married name Salanski) never imagined their home would someday be underwater. “We had a lovely log home that our parents built,” Lita recalled. “We loved that house. It was just the centre of our world, really.” Outside, Lita enjoyed horseback riding while Charles fished on Kootenay River, near where the family had additional land located on river islands. They pitched in on the farm where the family kept cattle and grew corn and wheat.

By the 1960s, Charles and Lita’s parents had both passed and the siblings were running the farm. At this time, rumours began to spread that landowners throughout the region would be displaced by flooding caused by Libby Dam. “We were the first ones,” Charles said. “We were at the border and we were the first ones to get hit.” The Department of Highways handled land acquisitions for Libby Dam (the only Treaty dam not handled by BC Hydro) and offered the Lynns \$100 an acre for their cleared land. “It should have been \$1,000 an acre. If you wanted to buy [similar land] anywhere it would have cost you \$1,000 an acre for cleared land,” Charles said. Years later, Charles and Lita learned that other flooded landowners received very different prices. They were bothered by a sense of inconsistency and unfair treatment. Ultimately, however, “everybody went through their own hell,” Lita said. “We had that beautiful house and suddenly we had no land and the house was going to be destroyed. It’s not easy to lose your place.”

25 years to be heard,” Burton resident Jim Robertson told delegates. In 1967, he had lost both his home and his family’s business after being displaced by the flooding that created Arrow Lakes Reservoir. He spoke about the stress this experience had placed on his family and the damaging effects that persisted throughout the Arrow Lakes region. But he also spoke about new beginnings and ensuring that past wrongs were not repeated.²⁸ “If this Symposium did anything,” the *Castlegar Sun* reported, “it redefined and reaffirmed the strength of the people who call the Columbia Basin ‘home.’ It redefined not only a strength in character, but a strength in will. The will to no longer ask, but demand that the rest of the province sit up and take notice [of] just who has done the giving.”²⁹

Learning how other communities had been affected was eye-opening for symposium delegates. Corky Evans remembered learning for the first time about the impact the Treaty had on ranchers and orchardists in Renata and Valemount.³⁰ Joe Tatangelo, a CRTC member representing the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, had a similar experience: “Different areas of the Columbia Basin have different problems... A lot of them I never knew even existed.”³¹ The symposium allowed people like Tatangelo and Evans to understand the perspectives of all affected areas. Karen Hamling, a municipal councillor in Nakusp, saw the importance of guaranteeing that every community was part of the process.³² The future of the Basin included all communities, not just those flooded by the dams.

The conversation then shifted. “We got all our anger out on the first night, then, by the next day, we could start talking. People were able to get an awful lot off their chests,” said East Kootenay Regional District director Roy Millar.³³ “People came away prepared to move forward,” said Nakusp Mayor and CRTC member Rosemarie Johnson.³⁴ Symposium participants began to discuss the future of the Basin, rather than argue over who was most deserving or damaged. They agreed that, even though those who had lost their land and livelihoods undoubtedly suffered, it was more important to look forward than it was to make amends for the past.



In the lead-up to the 1993 Columbia-Kootenay Symposium, the CRTC held a series of community meetings to inform residents about the event and their ongoing discussions with the Province to gain a share of the downstream benefits. Meetings were held in Kaslo, Valemount, Cranbrook, Golden, Revelstoke, Castlegar and Nakusp, pictured here.

“The government realized that, here’s 160,000-some people that are united and they are serious... they want some changes and they want some benefits, and we better be there and we better do something about it.”

DIETER BOGS, COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY COMMITTEE MEMBER AND TRAIL CITY COUNCILLOR

Evans remembered the change in attitude as people began to realize, “We can’t abandon the future generations and we can’t abandon the ducks and geese that used to land in the wetlands... and the elk and caribou and the grizzly bears, and we can’t abandon the future of this land base.”³⁵ Delegates wanted to see solutions to their problems. They wanted reservoir levels stabilized, fisheries restored and industries protected.

The decision was made that individuals who had been relocated or similarly devastated by the Treaty should not receive compensation. Instead, the Basin prioritized a sustainable future where downstream benefits money was used to support a wide variety of issues and ideas.³⁶ The 1993 symposium reinforced the conviction of CRTC members that the Treaty’s downstream benefits belonged to all the people of the Basin. “We’re not just people in the way,” Castlegar Mayor Audrey Moore told the delegates. “We’re people to be reckoned with.”³⁷

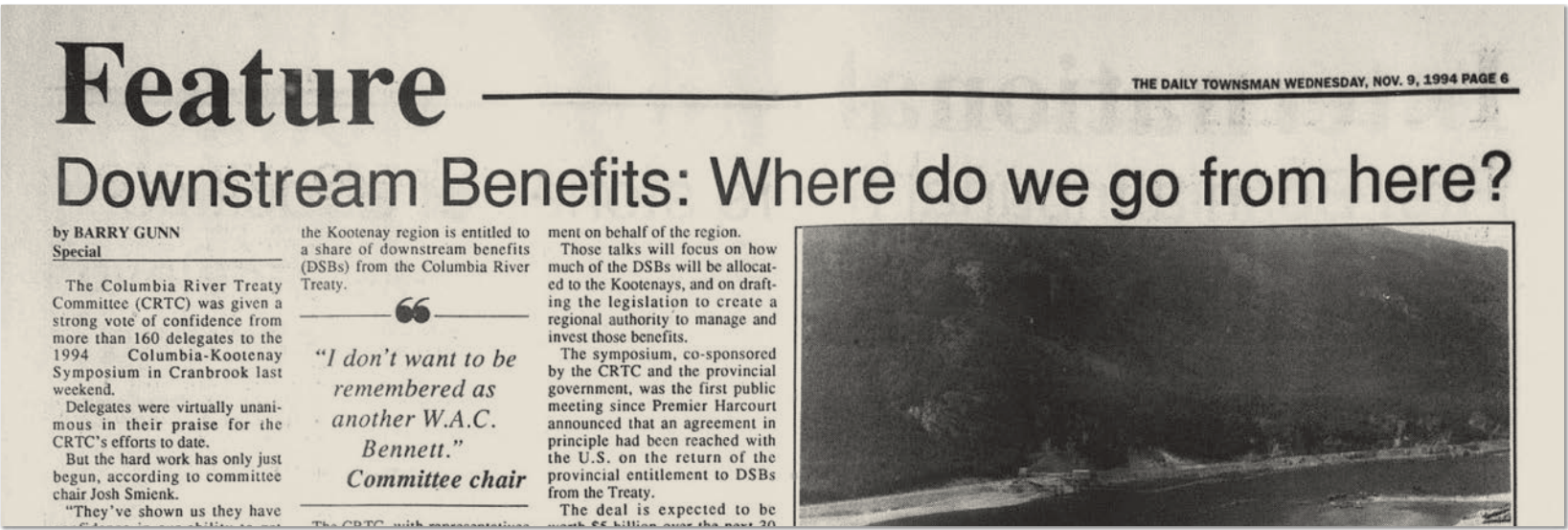
CRTC member and Nakusp Mayor Rosemarie Johnson hoped the symposium had “cemented the groundwork to stride into the future by growing beyond the anguish of the past.”³⁸ To start on this path, symposium participants agreed the CRTC would represent the Basin in talks with the provincial government. CRTC members left the symposium confident about the direction the organization was moving in, with plans for a second symposium the following year. “We had all

the public; we had the media; we had everyone in this region saying, ‘You’re doing a great job... keep at it and we’re behind you one hundred per cent,’” Josh Smienk recalled of the first symposium. “And it was obviously a pretty good feeling.”³⁹

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Discussions between the Province and the CRTC continued. The collective action taken by Basin residents to secure a piece of the downstream benefits was becoming too loud to ignore. “That’s why we were successful,” Dieter Bogs said. “The government realized that, here’s 160,000-some people that are united and they are serious... they want some changes and they want some benefits, and we better be there and we better do something about it.”⁴⁰

When British Columbia and the United States reached an agreement about the downstream benefits in September 1994, the Province announced its commitment to return a share of those benefits to the Basin. Under the new agreement, British Columbia would receive its share of the benefits as hydropower, to be sold by BC Hydro. How the profits from hydropower sales would be shared with the Basin remained uncertain. “We knew we were going to get benefits at that point,” Smienk remembered. “There were discussions, but numbers weren’t being talked about... there was a lot of



speculation.”⁴¹ The Province signed a letter of intent to discuss numbers with the CRTC at its 1994 symposium so that benefits would be shared equally.⁴²

In the lead-up to the 1994 symposium, the CRTC realized that, even with the letter of intent, it had no legal right to sign an agreement. Lawyer Don Lidstone offered a solution: if the CRTC were to incorporate, it would become an independent legal entity with the power of a natural citizen, meaning it could negotiate binding agreements with the Province and take legal action against the government or BC Hydro if necessary.⁴³ The CRTC agreed. Columbia River Treaty Committee Inc. was officially incorporated on November 18, 1994. This was only a temporary solution. Even as an incorporated body, CRTC Inc. would not have the power to distribute benefits or participate in political negotiations and economic development initiatives. A formal, organized entity needed to be established if the Basin was to obtain control over the promised benefits.

CRTC Inc. began investigating what this new entity might look like. It landed on an “authority,” with a structure that blended a Crown corporation with a trust company. Like a Crown corporation, the proposed authority would be funded by the government with the mandate to provide citizens with goods and services. It would be accountable to the people of the Basin and comply with British Columbia’s governance and accountability

standards. However, unlike a Crown corporation, the authority would have control over its assets and operations and function at arm’s length from the Province. Its board of directors would be appointed by the region, not the Province, and all revenues would be retained and controlled by the authority. The result was a form of customized Crown corporation with an unprecedented level of autonomy.

As discussions progressed, committee members began to refer to the proposed entity as a trust. Details on the trust’s scope, mandate and membership were on the agenda for the 1994 symposium. Held in Cranbrook from November 4 to 6, the event welcomed representatives from local, regional, provincial and First Nations governments and BC Hydro, along with interested parties from across the Basin. In total, approximately 200 delegates gathered to hear and contribute to the CRTC’s proposal about the four principles that should guide the trust.

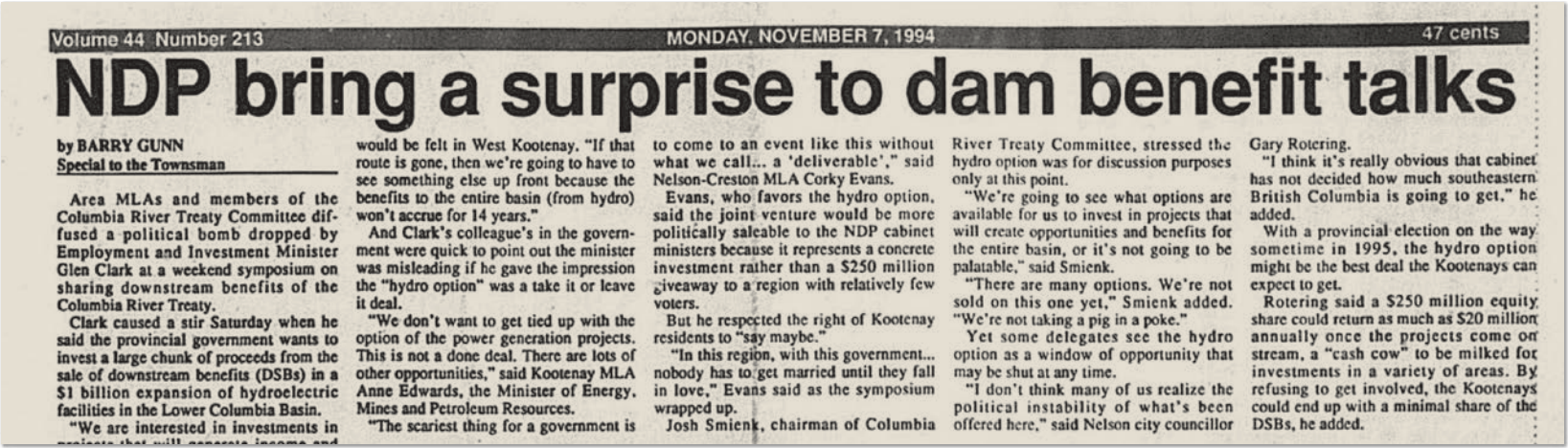
First, it should represent the entire Basin region; second, it should retain local control over decisions; third, any activities it undertook should benefit the region as a whole; and fourth, those activities should not favour one region over another but instead maintain a Basin-wide perspective. Symposium delegates agreed the trust would act in the interests of future generations through long-term and sustainable investment and development in the Basin. Finally, the trust should not simply exist as

Max Wiesner

When his family lost their Renata home to Arrow Lakes Reservoir, Max Wiesner took something unusual with him: the town schoolhouse. “I bought the schoolhouse for \$15,” Max said. “We pulled it across the creek with skids I built.” Constructed in 1911, the schoolhouse was one of Renata’s oldest landmarks — but that was not why Max salvaged it: “I wanted to get even with the schoolteachers in there ‘cause they kicked me out of school... I figured now’s my chance to buy it and I can go back to school to learn what I want to learn and when.”

Only a few buildings in Renata were saved before the reservoir flooded the town. Max recalled that the Morgenstein and Reimer families moved their houses on a barge that carried them across the creek. Other buildings were bought by locals, including Max, and dismantled for lumber and other materials. Several congregations in the Arrow Lakes region moved their churches to higher ground. As for the schoolhouse, Max kept it intact and used it as a summer cabin.

It was difficult for Max to watch as his community disappeared. Condemned buildings were painted with an X, he remembered, and left to be bulldozed or burned. These were the homes, businesses and gathering places where Renata families had lived for generations. “All their livelihoods that were there since the 1800s, you know, and all of a sudden everything goes up in smoke,” Max said.



an investment corporation. It should be an advocate for residents and celebrate the Basin community.⁴⁵

The CRTC was adamant the voices of Basin residents be at the centre of the trust. At the same time, the provincial government wanted to ensure it too had a voice, arguing that any new entity must include one-third of its representatives from the Province, and two-thirds from the region. A few delegates wanted board representation to be determined by population size to safeguard against one voice or another becoming too dominant, and to support diversity and representation of all parties. Symposium participants agreed communication and public involvement in the trust were crucial. Among the suggestions were the creation of advisory groups, an annual meeting or symposium and an educational role by which the trust would provide residents with materials and information on sustainability, environmental issues and investment options.⁴⁶

The other topic of discussion at the 1994 symposium was how downstream benefits money should be spent. Many delegates believed funds should be used to develop tourism and heritage resources to make the area affected by the Treaty dams a more attractive place to live and visit. Value-added initiatives, such as resorts, interpretive centres and heritage attractions could draw people and money to the region. Kimberley Mayor Jim Ogilvie noted that money should be invested in a

wide variety of projects to help strengthen the regional economy. Others preferred to see money put toward initiatives that would counter some of the environmental damage caused by the Treaty dams.⁴⁷

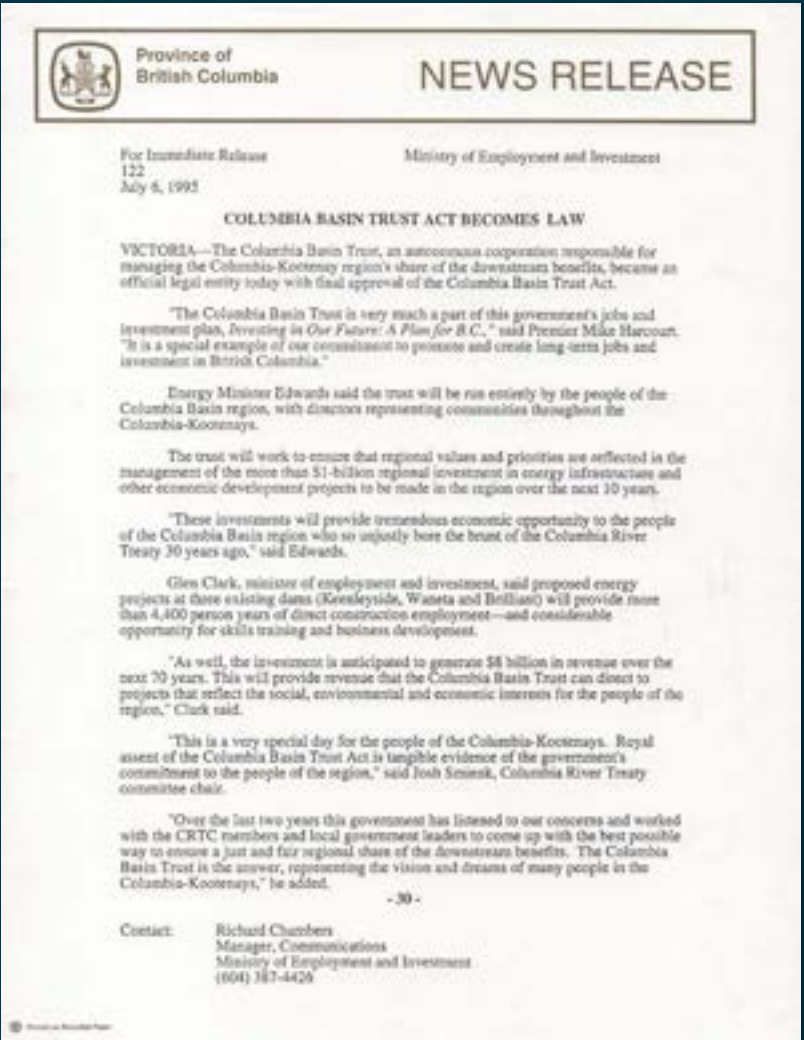
Another option was to invest in hydropower. This option was raised by British Columbia Employment and Investment Minister Glen Clark, who told delegates the provincial government hoped to invest the downstream benefits money in hydropower projects in order to generate long-term revenue.⁴⁸ The Province was already considering building a generating station at Hugh Keenleyside Dam and had recently acquired expansion rights to Brilliant and Waneta dams. Transferring these rights to the proposed trust would allow it to build and profit from generating stations at the dams. Investing in hydropower would provide a sustainable source of income and allow the trust to gradually grow its funds rather than deplete them over time.

Although this investment opportunity was tempting to some at the symposium, others were cautious. After all, hydropower dams were responsible for many of the Basin’s struggles in the first place. Nakusp councillor Karen Hamling looked around the room to see varied responses to Clark’s suggestion. “We just all looked at him and thought he was nuts,” she remembered. “There was a bunch of people who thought it was a great idea and other people thought, ‘Oh my God,

Columbia Basin Trust Act

Columbia Basin Trust was officially established in 1995 through the passing of the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*. The Act is the document by which the Trust is governed, and defines the organization’s purpose, structure and relationship to government.

The Trust is mandated to invest, spend and manage its assets for the ongoing social, economic and environmental benefit of the region. This does not relieve government from its obligations to the region, but instead creates a relationship between the Trust and the Province of British Columbia in which the Trust operates similarly to a Crown corporation. The Act grants the Trust an unprecedented amount of autonomy, giving those who call the Basin home control over their own future.



are you kidding?”⁴⁹ Not only was it a costly endeavour, but dissenters argued that investing in the energy sector did not guarantee stable employment and might prove a less attractive option compared to investing in other industries.⁵⁰

Participants established criteria and guidelines the trust should consider when selecting its projects and investments. They maintained that investments should prioritize the needs of Basin communities rather than be distributed as compensation funds for individuals; there should be a balance between short- and long-term goals; and the benefits package should be spread around rather than concentrated on a single option—in other words, they should not put all their eggs in one basket.⁵¹

After the 1994 symposium, CRTC Inc. pursued its plans to establish what would come to be called Columbia Basin Trust. Provincial legislation needed to be passed, so CRTC administrator Reid Henderson drafted a bill to submit to Cabinet for consideration. Lawyer Don Lidstone was hired to help refine the legislation and better articulate the proposed relationship of the trust to local and provincial governments.⁵² The CRTC’s eagerness to reach a binding agreement encountered a willing but slow-moving government, which was tied up with a Cabinet shuffle and unable to speed up negotiations. The CRTC grew frustrated with the Province, a frustration that increased when the

“*Let’s let the people of the region have a say in their destiny for a change.*”

GLEN CLARK, MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT

Treaty’s downstream benefits agreement was updated in September 1994. Under the new deal, British Columbia’s entitlement amounted to approximately \$5 billion over the next 30 years.⁵³ The CRTC wanted the government’s commitment to support a trust that would receive and distribute the Basin’s share of these benefits.

After months of negotiations, the Province and CRTC Inc. established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to sign the Columbia Basin Accord. The MOU outlined the proposed agreement between the Province and the legislated trust. The Province committed to giving the future trust \$500 million from the downstream benefits to install a generating station at Hugh Keenleyside Dam and expand the dams at Brilliant and Waneta; the Province would transfer the expansion rights to these projects to the trust. Revenues from these hydropower projects would be used to finance future initiatives.⁵⁴

In addition to providing funds for hydropower expansion, the MOU promised to give the trust a greater role in water-management decisions in the Basin. The CRTC wanted the trust to be represented on the BC Hydro Board of Directors and included in any potential future negotiations for the Treaty. The Province committed to involving the trust in fish and wildlife compensation programs, BC Hydro’s future debris clean-up and water access operations, and any future decisions about BC Hydro’s operations in the Basin. The Province would

provide additional funds to cover the trust’s operating costs and help it deliver programs in its first few years. The trust would receive \$2 million annually from 1996 to 2011 for operating expenses, and an up-front payment of \$45 million in 1995–96 to start investing and delivering projects and programs. These payments were intended to bolster the trust’s assets until its hydro-power investments began to generate revenue.⁵⁵

The Columbia Basin Accord made the agreement outlined in the MOU official. Once all details were finalized, the Province and Basin leaders gathered to sign the Accord on a cool, cloudy Sunday in Castlegar on March 19, 1995. Premier Mike Harcourt described the significance of the occasion, saying the Accord would “mark the beginning of an end to the disruption and despair that the Columbia-Kootenay region has endured as a result of the Columbia River Treaty.” He added that the Basin, which had borne the brunt of Treaty impacts, could “now move ahead to a sustainable, stable future of opportunity and growth.”⁵⁶

With the Columbia Basin Accord signed, just one step remained: passing legislation to create the Columbia Basin Trust. Discussions in the legislature concerning the *Columbia Basin Trust Act* were heated. Plans for the trust firmly insisted it would be an independent entity with regional control and autonomy. Although it would be accountable to government rules and

Top. After the signing of the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*, CRTC members—now Trust Board members—celebrated their achievements at the B.C. Legislature with MLA Anne Edwards (second from left) and Lieutenant Governor Garde Gardom (middle). Board members pictured are Josh Smienk (left) and (from right) Ed Conroy, Shelby Harvey and Dieter Bogs.



Middle. (Left to right) Minister of Employment and Investment Glen Clark celebrated with new Trust directors Josh Smienk, Jim Doyle and Dieter Bogs.



Bottom: Josh Smienk addressed the crowd gathered to celebrate the occasion.



Opposite. Several months before the Act was passed, CRTC members gathered in Castlegar for the signing of the Columbia Basin Accord. Speakers included CRTC member and Nakusp Mayor Rosemarie Johnson (left) and B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt (right). Both Johnson and Harcourt signed the Accord alongside other politicians and CRTC members, including Kootenay MLA and Minister of Energy and Mines Anne Edwards and CRTC chair Josh Smienk (middle).

regulations, the trust would ultimately have the power to choose how it operated and how it spent and invested its funds. Some politicians vehemently opposed granting this unprecedented level of regional control, but proponents like Minister Glen Clark had faith in the people of the region, while acknowledging things would not be perfect. However, it was not about perfection; it was about the people of the Basin having control over their own home and future. “Let’s let the people of the region have a say in their destiny for a change,” Clark said.⁵⁷

Every element of the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*—and through it Columbia Basin Trust—was debated, contemplated and negotiated in the B.C. Legislature. It was tailor-made for the needs, desires and people of the Basin. The Act received royal assent on July 6, 1995. CRTC members and the Lieutenant Governor attended a small reception at the provincial legislature in Victoria. The celebration was captured in photographs taken on the legislature’s steps. The next day, July 7, 1995, the final meeting of the CRTC became the first meeting of Columbia Basin Trust, as the group gathered in the Birch Room of the legislature. Corky Evans was proud of what the people of the Basin had accomplished. He realized they had “done something that no other region of British Columbia has ever tried.” Against all opposition, he said, “We got it done.”⁵⁸



“We got it done. Against all the people who said, ‘Don’t create another level of government and you can’t decentralize power,’ and all the naysayers and all the people who said regional districts could never get along and all the people who said Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people couldn’t get along and all the people who said the province and the region couldn’t get along—we now have done something that no other region of British Columbia has ever tried.”

CORKY EVANS, MLA FOR NELSON-CRESTON



Castlegar



Golden



Fernie



New Denver



Invermere



Kenpesqt



Slokan



Nakusp



Fruitvale



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Warfield



Nelson



Kimberley





Trail



Creston



Rossland



Revelstoke



yaqan nu?kiy

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yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓iʔit

Valemount



Radium Hot Springs



Elkford



Cranbrook



ʔakisq̓nuk



Silverton



Sparwood



THREE

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

1995–1998

Board members of the newly established Columbia Basin Trust returned from Victoria no longer committee members seeking to improve the lives of Basin residents, but as representatives of an organization with the power and resources to make that dream a reality. But the Trust's work was just beginning. The *Columbia Basin Trust Act* required that its Board set out long-term objectives, priorities and programs based on input from Basin residents. In the meantime, Board members needed a plan to guide them in the short-term, as well as office space and staff. The Trust was eager to get these things in place so it could fulfill its commitments to Basin residents to return benefits to the region and create a legacy of well-being. Building on the same hard work and dedication that led to the Columbia Basin Accord and the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*, the Trust set about charting a clear path forward.

CHARTING A PATH

In autumn 1995, the Board began a nationwide search for a chief executive officer (CEO) and evaluated some 250 applicants. In the end, the successful candidate was Ivan Robinson. Robinson came to the Trust from the Calgary Regional Planning Commission, where he served as director for over 15 years. A “planner by nature,” Robinson helped guide the Trust and Basin residents as they determined how to structure and operate

the new organization and how to distribute benefits.¹

One of the first orders of business was to find a location for the Trust's head office. The Trust chose Nakusp, where the rise and fall of water levels in Arrow Lakes Reservoir made visible the ongoing impacts of the Treaty. Corky Evans viewed this as a powerful reminder to employees and Board members that their work was necessary and meaningful: “I want [them] to be able to look out the window and see the water go down,” Evans said, “and the water come back, and the children try to go swimming across the mud flats.”² In August 1995, the Trust announced Nakusp would become its first headquarters.

Although its head office was in Nakusp, the Trust was active across the Basin. It hosted a series of open houses in autumn 1995 to share information about the *Columbia Basin Trust Act* and obtain community input on its short- and long-term goals. These were held in 11 communities: Cranbrook, Creston, Golden, Invermere, Jaffray, Kaslo, Nakusp, Nelson, Revelstoke, Trail and Valemount. Residents shared their questions, ideas and concerns about the newly formed Trust and its plans for investing downstream benefits. Kaslo residents, for example, were concerned they would not see the same economic return as people in the Castlegar-Trail area, where power projects were located. They wanted to see the Trust investing in diverse

Members of the first Columbia Basin Trust Board of Directors on the steps of the B.C. Legislature after the signing of the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*, July 1995.



The Trust's first office was in Nakusp, a community where the fluctuating waters of the Arrow Lakes Reservoir were a visible reminder of the damage caused by the Columbia River Treaty.

options that would benefit present and future generations across the Basin.³

Information gathered through these open houses was the basis for discussion at the 1995 symposium. Wanting to keep residents at the heart of all decisions, the Trust used the symposium to bring people up to speed on the organization's progress and gain feedback as it moved forward. From October 20 to 22, over 200 delegates from across the Basin gathered in Golden to discuss the Trust's goals and structure. Greg Deck, who attended the symposium as a Trust Board member, recalled the overarching question that shaped the event: "What are we going to do with the money we've got?"⁴

Participants came up with varied responses. Larry Brierley, a director of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, suggested the creation of a "Columbia Trail," modelled after the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island. Other suggestions were similarly geared toward developing recreation and tourism, with particular interest in heritage tourism opportunities. Participants also encouraged the Trust to explore restoration opportunities, such as a Natural Heritage Reserve between Canal Flats and Donald.⁵ The lands between the two communities featured wetlands, grasslands and hoodoo formations and would appeal to tourists interested in nature and natural history.

Delegates also recommended spending on environ-

mental initiatives, such as water management, energy conservation, fish and wildlife enhancement, and waste reduction.⁶ Regaining control over water-management decisions that had been made outside the Basin for more than 30 years was a common refrain, especially when it came to stabilizing reservoir levels behind Treaty dams. Not only could stabilizing water levels optimize power benefits and perhaps reduce hydro-power costs for consumers, but it could also boost tourism and recreation and improve hunting and fishing after years of environmental damage.⁷ Ultimately, environmental initiatives would help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Basin and create opportunities for social and economic gains.

The 1995 symposium participants also discussed the hydropower investments that were outlined in the Columbia Basin Accord signed earlier that year. Where the Accord indicated the possible expansion of Brilliant Dam, one suggestion at the symposium was that the Trust should in fact purchase the dam.⁸ While some delegates were cautiously optimistic about investing in hydropower, others were more hesitant. An editorial published in the *Golden Star* stated that, although such projects would not involve any new flooding, the Trust's "grand scheme" was still unclear. The Trust was cautioned not to repeat the mistakes made on past hydropower projects.⁹

1995 Symposium, Golden

The newly formed Columbia Basin Trust held its first symposium in Golden from October 20 to 22, 1995. Knowing that the Basin had secured a piece of the Treaty's downstream benefits, participants discussed how that money might be invested to improve the well-being of the Basin.



Trust begins work on Columbia Basin Plan

Residents and community leaders from around the Columbia-Kootenay area met in Golden over the weekend to begin work on a 20-year environmental and economic plan for the Columbia River Basin. Sponsored by the newly-formed Columbia Basin Trust and the provincial government, the three-day symposium put more than 200 delegates to work figuring out how to invest \$600 million in the area flowing from the Downstream Benefits to the Columbia River Treaty. "We're going to do something different," said Josh Smienk, chair of the Trust in an address to the assembly. "Instead of doing what previous federal and provincial governments have done along, which is spend as much as they can and more than have in the space of the years to get re-elected, going to very carefully plan what we have and how going to use it."

Already the Trust is in as an equal partner with province in a proposed \$1.1-billion plan to install operate new power-generating plants in the Basin. If it power projects at Keenleyside, Waneta Brilliant Dams near Co-

prove to be environmentally and economically viable, they will eventually generate billions of dollars over the next 70 years to be put back into the Basin. That money is intended to work to revitalize the Basin's economy and respond to the social and environmental damage done by the Columbia River Treaty dams built in the region almost 30 years ago. The government will kick start the trust with a \$45 million lump payment next spring. That money will be invested back into the Columbia Basin using input from an ongoing process of public consultation. "The information we received

Some of those talks ranged from developing community investment strategies in the Columbia Basin to restoring salmon stocks in the Columbia River. In an effort to have more say in managing Columbia River affairs in the Basin, delegates considered a proposal to have a Trust director sit on the BC Hydro board of directors. They also reviewed applying to have the Trust sit on the Permanent Engineering Board a vital bi-national panel that oversees the operating of the Columbia River Treaty. With an eye to the past injustices done to the region

Benefits should improve quality of life

DANIELLE BELBECK
Star Staff

Delegates to the 1995 Columbia Kootenay Symposium held last weekend in Golden said downstream benefits money coming to the region should go towards investments that improve the quality of life and maximize employment for residents in the Columbia Basin.

Projects that are economically viable that will bring ongoing employment to the people of the basin was a key issue discussed at the three day symposium. "When considering the

hancement environment should be thought of," said one delegate. "A job creation strategy needs to be designed to ensure long-term sustainable employment."

Columbia Basin Trust director Jo Brown outlined a potential employment strategy paper for discussion. Brown suggested employment benefits could be maximized if included in investment criteria.

"One approach is that each and every economic development initiative, investment or project can be evaluated in terms of how it can be undertaken to maximize the number of jobs it creates," said Brown.

had several issues to address and discuss. Summary of the groups' work revealed many common issues were separately agreed upon.

Most groups thought the investments to be considered should be made within the basin, to comply with social, economic and environmental criteria. One group called the \$45 million lump sum to be received by the Trust in April of next year a 'golden noose', suggesting the Trust could hang itself if the plan wasn't designed with caution.

Sustainability remained a key issue for all delegates, who suggested in-

the Trust could use the interest for projects in consideration.

CBT vice-chair Gary Merkel was quick to point out in the opening remarks on Friday night that the Trust's purpose was not to hand out money, but to develop a long-term investment plan that would be inter-generational for years to come.

"This is not a compensation package," said Merkel. "The Trust was not made to hand out money. We are here to listen to the public and build a plan. We want our great grandchildren to eventually be part of the Trust



“We don’t need experts and consultants to tell us how to do things in our own backyard. We are the beneficiaries of the legacy of the Trust, and are able and willing to plot our own future.”

JOSH SMIENK, CHAIR, 1995–2006

Despite the many and varied suggestions received at the symposium, participants agreed that any investments the Trust made should concentrate on the entire Basin rather than any individual community, that the Trust should aim to provide employment opportunities and improve quality of life for Basin residents, and that any management plans or long-term objectives should reflect those ideas. Delegates were also clear that the Trust had an intergenerational responsibility to “protect and enhance the well-being of people, land and water of the Basin.”¹⁰

No matter what the Trust chose to invest in, clear communication with Basin residents was critical. People wanted regular opportunities to respond to the Trust and evaluate its work. Pleased with the results of previous symposiums and open houses arranged by the Columbia River Treaty Committee, residents asked that the Trust continue to hold public events as a way of keeping them informed of the Trust’s activities and measuring their progress. Residents also wanted to ensure they were at the centre of all the Trust’s decisions, since they were the ones who would live with the results. Symposium delegates recommended the Trust establish public advisory groups to help it create short- and long-term plans. During the planning phase and beyond, these advisory groups could identify issues, provide feedback to the Trust and communicate with residents.¹¹

Through public engagement, residents hoped the Trust would represent diverse interests and remain accessible to people of all ages, cultures and geographies. Part of this was a continued commitment to including First Nations in Trust decisions and operations. Participants at the 1995 symposium wanted to see even greater First Nations representation, recognizing “the special relationship of First Nations to the land and water of the Basin.”¹² Like the Columbia River Treaty Committee, the Trust’s Board included representation from the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council.

“THE POWER IS IN THE PLAN”

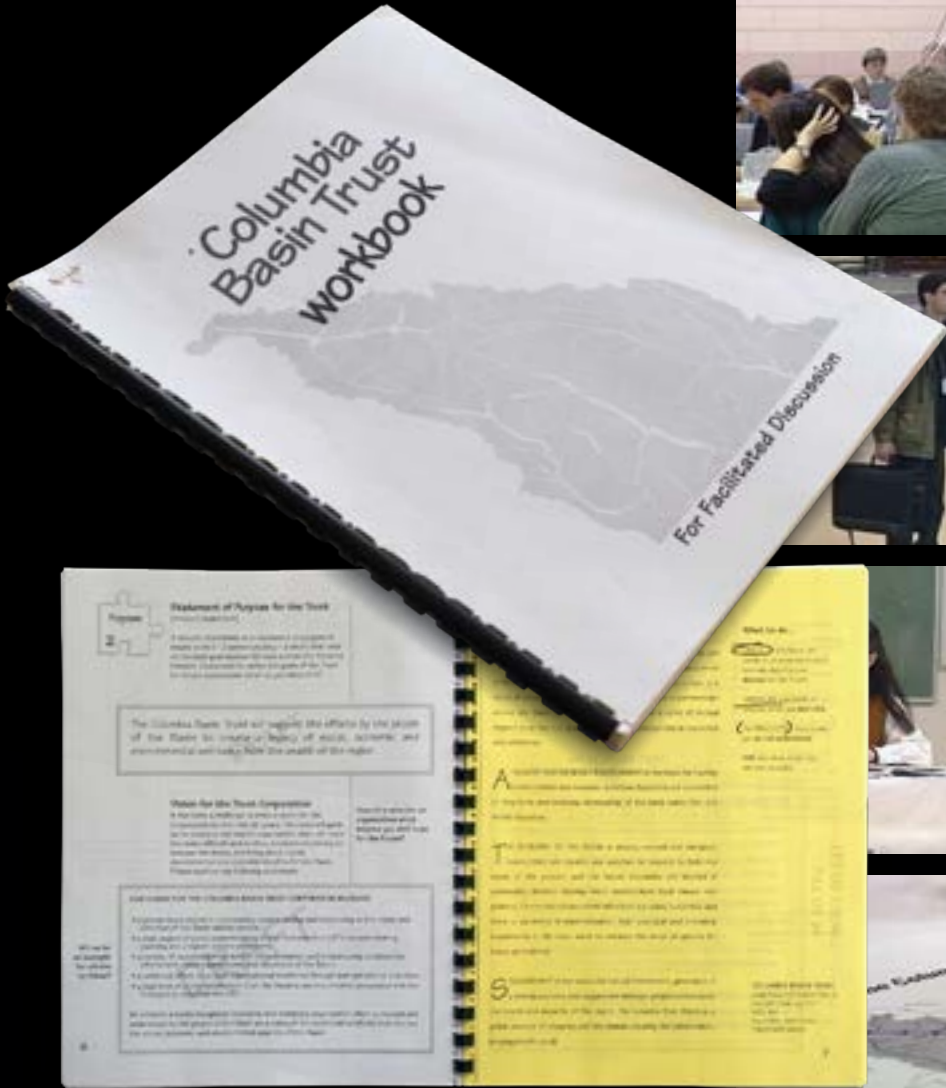
Armed with clear directives from Basin residents, the Trust set to work on the Columbia Basin Management Plan (CBMP). According to the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*, the Trust had until July 1997 to create a long-term plan that would establish “objectives, priorities, and programs to achieve the social, economic and environmental purposes of the Trust.”¹³ The plan would serve as the “backbone” of the Trust, to make the Basin secure for generations to come.¹⁴ “The power is in the plan,” said Vice-Chair Garry Merkel. “This is not a compensation package. The Trust was not made to hand out money. We are here to listen to the public and build a plan. We want our great-grandchildren to eventually be part of the Trust.”¹⁵



The Province presented the Trust’s Board of Directors with a commemorative cheque to mark the first investment payment — \$45 million — on April 20, 1996. The cheque was created as a puzzle, with each piece representing the five regional districts and the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council that had come together to form Columbia Basin Trust. Board members visited each community, cheque in tow, to announce the investment.

1997 Symposium, Revelstoke

One of the key tasks of the 1997 symposium was to review and refine the Columbia Basin Management Plan (CBMP). In the year leading up to the symposium, the Trust held workshops and consulted with residents and advisory committees to come up with a plan to guide the Trust’s long-term objectives. It distributed workbooks throughout the Basin to gauge residents’ values and priorities. Using this feedback, the Trust came up with a draft CBMP for symposium participants to discuss when they gathered in Revelstoke in April 1997. These discussions helped the Trust further refine the CBMP, which was finalized three months later.



By March 1996, the Trust had made significant strides toward engaging the public in its work. It established an advisory committee of seven individuals who reflected “the diverse interests of the region” to advise the Board’s Corporate Planning Committee on a short-term strategy for the organization.¹⁶ One of these committee members was Lloyd Sharpe, who had lost his family farm to the floodwaters of Lake Koocanusa reservoir. He was joined by Laurel Douglas of Nelson, Don Bennett of Valemount, Stu McKay of Trail, Bill Green of Kimberley, John Bergenske of Skookumchuk and Paul Hambruch of Golden. Hambruch recalled the early days of the Trust: “That was a very important time. I mean, that was when we had to figure out what the Trust [was] going to be all about. We couldn’t imagine that the Trust would ever have more than 10 employees in those days.”¹⁷

The short-term strategy included a draft mission statement and core function, as well as criteria to evaluate the Trust’s efforts and outcomes, corporate priorities and operational strategies.¹⁸ The Corporate Planning Committee presented the plan to the Trust’s Board of Directors at a meeting in June 1996. Next, the Board established a second advisory committee to design the CBMP. This committee comprised 12 representatives from Basin communities, such as Valemount, Golden, Winlaw and Kimberley. The representatives included three members of the original

advisory committee — Bill Green, Lloyd Sharpe and Paul Hambruch — as well as one youth representative, Kristen Carlson.

To develop the CBMP, the Trust and the advisory committee established an outreach program to share information with and receive feedback from residents across the region. The Trust also created a workbook for individuals to fill in, and planned workshops to stimulate dialogue. It encouraged people to sit down in a “kitchen table-style” setting and discuss ideas with others.¹⁹ The workbooks presented the current plans and directives for the Trust and asked residents to indicate what they agreed or disagreed with, and to comment on what they wanted the Trust to accomplish. Residents recorded their responses on tear-out sheets and mailed them back to the Trust’s office in Nakusp. Of the more than 2,000 workbooks distributed across the Basin, some 500 tear-out sheets were returned.

Using the feedback gathered from workbooks, meetings and earlier symposiums, the Trust presented a draft of the CBMP to participants at the 1997 symposium in Revelstoke that April. Trust Chair Josh Smienk told the 250 delegates the draft plan was just that: a draft “written in jello, not stone.”²⁰ There was still room to make changes. One of the main purposes of the symposium was for residents to review and provide their thoughts on the plan. The *Nelson Daily News* reported that people

“The most difficult task the Trust faces is maintaining the balance between its broad environmental, economic, and social objectives. It does not appear we’ve had to compromise any of these with this plan.”

IVAN ROBINSON, PRESIDENT AND CEO, 1996–1998



“dove into the 80-page draft document with zeal” as they discussed job creation, employment equity, youth education and environmental issues.²¹

In principle, delegates agreed with the kind of sustainable and secure future outlined in the plan. They stressed the Trust must adhere to high standards of accountability and equitability. The Trust had to create tools and processes to monitor the organization and its progress, such as expanded advisory committees and regular symposiums. Further, it had to create projects and programs valuable to the wider Basin and not just to individual interests, groups or regions. The delegates also wanted to make sure that decisions on the future of the Basin would continue to be made at the grassroots level, and the Trust would seek input and reflect those grassroots interests and priorities in its work.²²

Narrowing down the final version of the CBMP was difficult. Garry Merkel remembered the challenge the Trust faced in ensuring the plan captured their values and visions.²³ There was a large volume of material and suggestions to bring together in the final version. Residents and Trust members wanted the language of the document to be easy to understand.²⁴ Corky Evans said the plan needed to be manageable and asked for something “little.” One Board member found humour in this challenge and drove to a local print shop to make an extra-small copy of the plan. They presented



the “little plan” to Evans the next day.²⁵

The final CBMP was not as little as Evans’ gift, but the Trust managed to consolidate the ideas into a 35-page version that was shared with Basin residents in July 1997. The plan emphasized that the Trust’s initiatives and funding decisions should stand on the three pillars—social, economic and environmental—developed before the *Columbia Basin Trust Act* was passed.²⁶ These were reflected in the Trust’s mission to establish and support financially sound projects that created social benefits and had a low environmental impact. Of this mission, CEO Ivan Robinson explained that the “most difficult task the Trust faces is maintaining the balance between its broad environmental, economic and social objectives. It does not appear we’ve had to compromise any of these with this plan.”²⁷

HYDROPOWER INVESTMENTS

At the same time as the CBMP was taking shape, the Trust started work on its hydropower projects in partnership with Columbia Power Corporation, a Crown corporation created in 1994 to hold the Province’s expansion rights to Brilliant and Waneta dams. The Province purchased the rights from mining corporation Cominco, which was in deep financial trouble after it invested heavily in a new smelter at its Trail facility. The smelter failed, and Cominco was about to

lay off 2,600 workers in Trail and Kimberley to recoup its losses. Local protestors led a “Save Our Smelter” campaign, pressuring the Province to protect their jobs by offering Cominco a bailout package. However, the Province wanted something in return and, in 1994, tasked the BC Investment Office (BCIO) with investigating options to purchase some of Cominco’s assets. This solution would give Cominco the money it needed to replace the faulty smelter, while also benefitting the Province. After determining that Cominco was not using all the water at its Brilliant and Waneta dams and power plants, BCIO recommended the Province purchase the expansion rights to the dams so it could expand the power plants and take full advantage of the potential hydropower.²⁸

After lengthy negotiations, British Columbia purchased the expansion rights to Brilliant and Waneta dams for \$52 million. To hold those rights, the Province established Columbia Power Corporation. When Columbia Basin Trust was established a year later, it was granted a share. It would co-own the rights to expand Brilliant and Waneta in partnership with Columbia Power. The partners also shared rights to a third project, Arrow Lakes Generating Station.²⁹ Under the Columbia Basin Accord, the Trust and Columbia Power would operate and develop these hydropower projects for the benefit of the Basin.

Columbia Power Corporation

Columbia Power Corporation is the Trust’s partner on hydropower projects. The Province created Columbia Power in April 1994; its purpose was to hold the expansion rights to Brilliant and Waneta dams, which the Province purchased from Cominco in the same year. When Columbia Basin Trust was created the following year, Columbia Power was appointed to represent the Province in its partnership with the Trust. The Columbia Basin Accord gave them equal ownership over three hydropower assets: Arrow Lakes Generating Station, Brilliant Expansion and Waneta Expansion. They obtained a fourth asset, Brilliant Dam, in 1996. Columbia Power is tasked with developing, managing and operating these facilities.





From the beginning, Columbia Power did things differently, said President and CEO Lorne Sivertson. The company recognized the legacy of the Columbia River Treaty and the complex relationship Basin residents had with hydropower projects as a result. For these new projects, Columbia Power would prioritize residents' involvement. Opening its headquarters in Castlegar, the company worked and communicated closely with the Trust and the people of the Basin. It also committed to creating jobs in the region. "It was local hiring to the maximum amount," said Sivertson. "Local training, local contractors. We broke up the bid packages so local companies could compete."³⁰ To sustain these jobs, work on hydropower projects occurred in stages. Not only was this more manageable for Columbia Power as a small company, but it also protected the regional economy and labour market against cycles of boom and bust.

The first project was Arrow Lakes Generating Station. This involved constructing a new powerhouse downstream from Hugh Keenleyside Dam to take advantage of excess water, otherwise spilled when levels at Arrow Lakes Reservoir were high. Originally built as a storage dam, Hugh Keenleyside Dam did not generate its own power but instead prevented flooding and controlled the flow of water to power-producing dams downstream in the United States. Preparations for Arrow Lakes Generating Station began in 1995.



Determined not to repeat the lack of community consultation that characterized the original Treaty dams, Columbia Power consulted extensively with Basin communities on the Arrow Lakes project. Between 1995 and 1998, the company met with stakeholders, the wider public and special interest groups. It also met with First Nations elders and citizens about the proposed route for the transmission line connecting the new powerhouse with the Selkirk Substation, and provided them with resources to conduct traditional-use studies along that corridor.³¹ To facilitate community relationships, Columbia Power opened a public consultation office in Castlegar to receive feedback on the project proposal.³² Efforts to involve the wider community did not stop with the consultation process. The project was expected to generate direct employment for 1,000 people during its first four years of construction and operation. Columbia Power earmarked \$50 million in direct wages, 85 per cent of which was targeted to area residents.³³

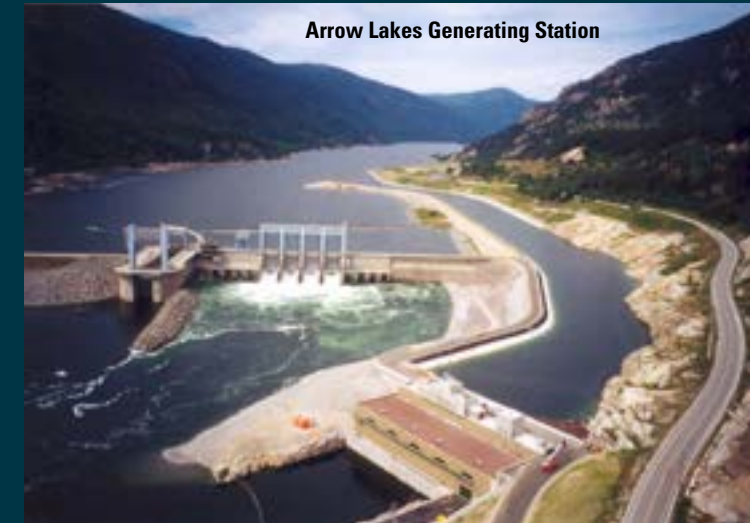
While planning on Arrow Lakes Generating Station progressed, the Trust and Columbia Power acquired the rights to another hydropower asset: Brilliant Dam. Previously owned by mining corporation Cominco, Brilliant Dam was constructed during the Second World War to keep up with the demand for power at the company's Trail smelting facility. In 1996, Cominco

Opposite. The Arrow Lakes Generating Station project broke ground in March 1999. When completed, the project received multiple awards for excellence.

Above. Trust Chair Josh Smienk (middle right) celebrates the groundbreaking of Arrow Lakes Generating Station alongside Columbia Power Corporation's Victor Jmaeff and Wally Penner (left) and Greg Dixon (right) of Peter Kiewit Sons Co., which won the bid to build the project.

Hydropower Assets

Columbia Basin Trust and Columbia Power Corporation share equal ownership in four hydropower facilities in the Basin: Arrow Lakes Generating Station, Brilliant Expansion, Waneta Expansion and Brilliant Dam, the latter of which the partners acquired in 1996. Developed, constructed and completed over two decades, these projects generated hundreds of jobs and injected millions of dollars into their home communities. They continue to provide the Trust with a sustained source of revenue to enrich the lives of people in the Basin.



Arrow Lakes Generating Station



Waneta Expansion Generating Station



Brilliant Dam

Brilliant Expansion Generating Station

Brilliant Dam and Generating Station Purchased: 1996

The Trust and Columbia Power purchased Brilliant Dam from mining corporation Cominco for \$130 million. Although not part of their original asset agreement, the dam had potential revenues that made the investment more than worthwhile. Since purchasing the dam, the partners have invested \$100 million in upgrades and repairs, transforming what was once a 125-megawatt station into one capable of producing 140 megawatts of energy.

Arrow Lakes Generating Station Constructed: 1999 to 2002

This was the first project that the Trust and Columbia Power developed. Located near Castlegar on the Columbia River, the generating station takes advantage of water spilled by Hugh Keenleyside Dam. It has the capacity to generate up to 185 megawatts of electricity.

Despite some costly repairs and setbacks during its

first few years of operation, it provided a successful model for subsequent hydropower projects and received several technical and environmental awards. Over 80 per cent of the workers hired to construct the facility lived within 100 kilometres of Castlegar, and at peak construction the project employed up to 400 workers.

Brilliant Expansion Generating Station Constructed: 2003 to 2007

Brilliant Expansion is the smallest of the Trust and Columbia Power's four hydropower facilities, located on the Kootenay River near Castlegar. A single-turbine powerhouse was constructed below Brilliant Dam. Eighty-five per cent of workers employed during the construction phase were local, and these wages injected an estimated \$50 million into the local economy. The facility can generate up to 120 megawatts of electricity.

Waneta Expansion Generating Station Constructed: 2010 to 2015

The fourth and final project the Trust and Columbia Power developed was Waneta Expansion. It involved adding a second powerhouse adjacent to Waneta Dam on the Pend d'Oreille River and a new transmission line that would deliver electricity to BC Hydro's Selkirk Substation, 10 kilometres northeast of the dam. Waneta required an unprecedented investment by the partners, along with a third partner, Fortis Inc., which assumed 51 per cent ownership. Not only did Fortis contribute much-needed funds and expertise to the \$900-million project, but it agreed to purchase surplus power not required by BC Hydro, ensuring the project was profitable enough to make the partners' investments worthwhile.

In 2019, the Trust and Columbia Power bought back Fortis's shares in Waneta Expansion, successfully cementing their full and joint ownership over all four of their hydropower assets.

Opposite: Fort Steele Heritage Town was one of the Trust’s earliest funding recipients. Through the Living Landscapes program, a partnership with Victoria’s Royal BC Museum, Fort Steele established a new museum exhibit titled “Don’t Let the Sun Set on My Face.” Fort Steele also hosted a conference celebrating the conclusion of Living Landscapes in 1999.

put the dam up for sale after determining that Brilliant Dam generated more power than it needed to operate its new smelter. Columbia Power and the Trust saw this as a valuable investment opportunity. With construction on Arrow Lakes Generating Station just beginning, and the expansions at Brilliant and Waneta yet to be realized, the Trust knew it would take several years before its other three hydropower commitments began to generate revenue. Brilliant Dam, on the other hand, was already operational and promised immediate returns.

Before approaching Cominco with an offer, the partners had to negotiate with West Kootenay Power Limited (WKP), which had a right of first refusal for Brilliant Dam. This meant that Cominco had to give WKP the chance to purchase the dam before opening it up to other bidders. Columbia Power approached WKP with the request that it waive that right. The two organizations spent weeks in negotiation meetings before they agreed that WKP would not purchase Brilliant Dam on the condition that Columbia Power and the Trust would sell WKP the power that it generated.³⁴

The Trust and Columbia Power approached Cominco with their proposal to purchase Brilliant Dam. Josh Smienk recalled sitting at Cominco’s boardroom table in Trail, with four Trust and Columbia Power representatives on one side and a crowd of Cominco officials on the other. Although their contingent was small, the

partners’ offer was not: Columbia Power and the Trust offered \$10 million more than the highest existing offer.³⁵ When the deal went through in January 1996, the partners paid a total of \$130 million for the dam.³⁶ It was a costly investment, but one that promised an immediate source of revenue for the Trust, since the dam already had a generating station that was producing power. The decision also aligned with the joint partners’ commitment to the economic well-being of the Basin: Cominco could continue its Trail operations, protecting thousands of jobs in the region.

BENEFITS BEGIN

Much of the Trust’s first two years were spent planning. By the time the Trust released its management plan in 1997, people in the Basin were anxious to see benefits start to flow back into the region. The plan outlined a spending program based on 34 objectives in eight goal areas. The Trust knew that meeting its spending goals would happen over time, and they could not do everything at once. The Trust resolved to tackle their goals one by one.

The CBMP identified partnership development as a preferred approach for the delivery of benefits. The Trust would work with partners such as local governments, non-profit organizations, community groups, and First Nations bands and councils to distribute

benefits. It would provide funding to those local partners, which would use the money to deliver programs.³⁷ Communities could make their own decisions on how funding and programs operated, which fulfilled the desire of residents to see decisions made at a local level. Working with partners in the Basin also allowed the Trust to support a variety of priorities across the entire region without duplicating another organization’s work or competing with their programs.³⁸

In autumn 1997, the Trust developed an educational partnership with the Royal BC Museum in Victoria. Living Landscapes was a joint program that gathered and shared information about the natural and human history of the Columbia Basin. This information was then communicated to students, teachers and communities through a website and a series of 31 research and public-education activities. The Trust committed \$180,000 to the project. Kootenay MLA Erda Walsh applauded the initiative for its work to “help people better understand the environmental and historical changes that have occurred and are occurring throughout the Basin.”³⁹

Living Landscapes funded a wide variety of projects, including the study of butterflies in the Pend d’Oreille Valley; the production of a study guide for the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre in New Denver, which explored the history of Japanese internment at the site





Above. Diving in the West Kootenay offers the opportunity to explore underwater archaeology sites, many of which were inventoried as part of the Living Landscapes program.

Right, top. The Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre honours the experiences of Japanese Canadians interned at New Denver during the Second World War. In 1997, the centre produced a study guide with the help of Living Landscapes funding.

Right, bottom. Spanning 7,000 hectares of wetlands, the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area was one of the first community wildlife projects to receive funding through the Trust.



during the Second World War; an inventory of underwater heritage sites in the West Kootenay; and an exhibit at Fort Steele Heritage Town titled “Don’t Let the Sun Set on My Face,” which examined the racism experienced by immigrants to the area and featured interviews with their descendants. The culmination of the Living Landscapes project was a conference at Fort Steele Heritage Town in 1999, which brought together the knowledge gathered and shared through the educational initiatives and funded projects.⁴⁰

In the 1997–98 fiscal year, the Trust devoted significant resources to environmental projects and awareness. Partnering with the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, created by BC Hydro in 1993 to compensate for the impacts of Treaty dams, the Trust supported projects put forward by Basin residents and backed by the community.⁴¹ It delivered a total of \$500,000 to 33 community-initiated fish and wildlife projects across the Basin.⁴²

For example, the Trust worked with the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area to provide short-term operating funds and help develop long-term strategies to support conservation efforts and wetlands protection. The wetlands are both nationally and internationally recognized for their biological diversity, but greater funding was required to continue wildlife conservation efforts and programming, including building an interpretive centre where visitors could learn about local flora and fauna and enjoy interpretive walks or canoeing through the marshes.⁴³ The Trust’s assistance

enabled the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area to maintain and expand its work and make steps toward self-sufficiency.⁴⁴

The Trust’s efforts to foster a legacy in the Basin during its first three years were successful. It was just starting construction on Arrow Lakes Generating Station, had purchased Brilliant Dam and was preparing plans for the Brilliant and Waneta expansion hydro-power projects. It had finalized the CBMP and established advisory committees. In addition, it had started its first spending programs and supported Basin projects and initiatives.

After three years of hard work putting plans in place for the Trust’s ongoing and future operations, 1998 marked the end of CEO Ivan Robinson’s contract. Robinson had played a central role in building the organizational foundation of the Trust and drafting the 1997 management plan. Greg Deck lauded Robinson and his wife Jackie’s “generosity of character.” They had established themselves as part of the local community of Nakusp and set the tone for later CEOs and Board members to do the same.⁴⁵ The leadership could now be passed with confidence to the Trust’s second CEO, Don Johnston. The next phase of the Trust’s life began. People in the Basin had waited a long time to become partners in the development of their region and, in the coming years, would enjoy even greater rewards.





Power sale divides Kootenays

By Bob Keating
Special to The Province

Opposition is building to a plan to sell power-generating assets in the Kootenays to B.C. Hydro.

The hydro facilities near Castlegar and Trail are run by a public body called the Columbia Basin Trust which wants to sell them for \$260 million.



SMIENK

"I think it's just awful," says former NDP cabinet minister Corky Evans. "I have the same revulsion as a person would to a farm auction. This is not a stock portfolio, it's a carefully constructed family farm."

Who controls hydro electric power is a contentious issue in the Kootenays. In the 1960s and '70s, the B.C. and U.S. governments dammed the Columbia River and its tributaries.



EVANS

People were evicted, salmon stopped running and the landscape was changed forever.

But the billions of dollars that flowed from those power projects went outside the region until the 1990s, when the trust was created.

It was given a 50-per-cent share in four power projects including the Brilliant Dam. At full capacity, the hydro assets could generate more than \$40 million a year.

"We had some control over our own resources, now we are going to sell it for 40 pieces of silver," said Evans, who was one of the key players in setting up the



— Province file

The Brilliant Dam near Castlegar is one of four power assets owned by Columbia Basin Trust that may be sold to B.C. Hydro.

trust. "There is no business case for selling a \$250-million asset in a month and that is what they are trying to do."

Evans and others want the trust and Hydro to at least slow down the planned sale.

"I have lots of questions and concerns about it," said Nelson City Coun. Donna MacDonald.

The trust says the sale of the power assets is good for the Kootenays. If the sale is approved, the trust plans to take the \$260 million and invest it.

"Even over the next four or five years, it could mean \$50- or \$60-million more in income," said trust chairman Josh Smienk.

He said the trust was never set up as a power company and the decision to sell

the power generating facilities was three years in the making.

The trust is holding eight meetings across the Kootenays to explain the sale. The meetings began last night in Nelson.

The trust wants to take a final plan to its board by mid-December. B.C. Hydro and the Liberal government would then have to approve the sale.

FOUR

LEARNING CURVES

1999–2005

By 1999, Columbia Basin Trust's mandate and infrastructure were formally in place, and a clear path forward was mapped in the Columbia Basin Management Plan. The first full year of delivery of benefits was completed in 1998. Construction had begun on Arrow Lakes Generating Station, the first hydropower project undertaken by the Trust and its partner, Columbia Power Corporation. The Trust was eager to build on this momentum and act on what it was created to do: improve the lives of Basin residents and empower them to make decisions about their own future. Over the next few years, the Trust would expand its influence in the Basin through new projects and initiatives, including non-power investments, social programming and environmental strategies.

The Trust would also face significant challenges in balancing its roles as an investor, funder and community partner. A mix of both triumphs and lessons learned, this period of growth and trial would be characterized by incoming CEO Don Johnston's determination "to be willing to take risks and to learn from our mistakes."¹ Johnston was brought on as CEO in February 1999 to help the Trust navigate the unfamiliar territory of grants and programming. Originally from Nelson, Johnston had served as program director for the Vancouver Foundation, a non-profit, community-oriented funding organization.

The long-term strategies outlined in the Trust's management plan were, in Johnston's words, "daunting." But, he said, "if there was ever an organization that is about potential and striving for that potential, it is the Columbia Basin Trust."² He initiated several changes to the Trust's structure and operations that would help the Trust achieve its goals, while keeping the people of the Basin at the heart of all decisions. The first step was to relocate the Trust's head office. Nakusp, the Trust's original headquarters, was far from an airport and its hydropower projects with Columbia Power. The Trust selected Castlegar, which had a small airport and was close to both Arrow Lakes Generating Station and Brilliant Dam. At approximately 7,000 people, Castlegar also had one of the largest populations in the Basin.³ While Nakusp would still have an office, the Trust's main operations would be moved.

The decision did not pass without criticism. While many agreed Castlegar was a more strategic location, others saw it as a repeat of past decisions — the Columbia River Treaty itself came to mind — that overlooked small communities in favour of larger city centres.⁴ In response, Johnston explained the move made sense for both staff and Basin residents. "Unfortunately, even though we live in a high-tech age, physical presence at meetings is often necessary," said Johnston, "particularly when building relationships around the

By 2001, the Trust had regional offices in four locations: Castlegar, Nakusp, Golden and Cranbrook. Having offices across the Basin enabled the Trust to better communicate and work alongside residents.



Basin.”⁵ Though Corky Evans, an original champion of the Nakusp location, was still convinced that Trust staff should be able to look out the window and see the physical impacts of the Treaty, but he admitted the move was a practical one. The Board was right, and Evans conceded, saying, “I mean, we’re trying to build a power [station] in Castlegar, with an office in Nakusp and Columbia Power’s engineering staff in Victoria.”⁶

The decision to relocate the head office to Castlegar added to the Trust’s investment portfolio. It invested \$4 million in building a 30,000-square-foot office with the intention to move onto the third floor and rent out the rest of the building. Construction was completed in April 2001. A month later, on May 11, 100 people gathered for the official opening. Trust Chair Josh Smienk was joined by Castlegar Mayor Mike O’Connor and Columbia Power President Lorne Sivertson for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.⁷

To expand its presence in the Basin, the Trust opened additional offices in Cranbrook and Golden, and hired community liaisons who lived and worked in each of the Trust’s four locations, offering residents easy, in-person access to the Trust. Not only did this improve communication between residents and the organization, but it also allowed the Trust to better identify and address local concerns.⁸ In addition to working with communities in their assigned regions, each liaison specialized

in specific areas of programming: water management, economic development, the social sector, education and training or arts, culture and heritage.

DELIVERING BENEFITS

The Trust’s delivery of benefits work expanded as well. Two of the first programs it introduced were the Community Initiatives and Affected Areas Programs—both of which still exist today. Working with local government partners, these programs distribute funds annually to projects identified and selected by individual communities. The Affected Areas Program gives additional funding to the areas most impacted by the Columbia River Treaty dams. Individual communities decide which projects get funding and each community has its own selection process. In Nakusp, for example, people seeking project funding present their ideas in a community setting. After viewing displays and speaking to project representatives, residents select their top three or four choices. The votes are then tallied, and the projects with the most votes are approved. Karen Hamling, who served as mayor of Nakusp from 2005 to 2018, highlighted the popularity of the process: “We get more people normally voting for that than for the elections.”⁹

The Community Initiatives and Affected Areas Programs have funded thousands of projects, from bear-proofing in Revelstoke to keeping bus service



running in Elk Valley to new vehicles and equipment for search-and-rescue operations across the region. Community halls have been renovated, playgrounds built and libraries filled.¹⁰ Millions of dollars have been injected directly into Basin communities, which control how the money is spent and prioritize the unique needs of their residents.

Literacy support was one of the Trust’s earliest priorities. The Trust announced the Resources for Family Literacy Program in 2000, inspired by funding requests from Basin residents. The program was devised to support existing family-literacy programs while addressing barriers preventing families from participating in these programs, such as poverty, lack of transportation and access to child care.¹¹ To achieve these goals, the Trust partnered with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), which brought together literacy organizations and programs from across the region under one umbrella to provide communities with equal access to services. One of CBAL’s early managers, Leona Gadsby, remembers seeing clear partnership potential in the Trust. CBAL shared the Trust’s goal of ensuring the social and economic well-being of Basin residents. Literacy skills, Gadsby said, enable people to finish school, go to college and find employment. “People with good literacy skills are able to take part in the whole of society, socially and economically,” she explained.¹² The Trust

The Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy and the Trust began working together to improve literacy in the Basin in 2000.

Youth Links was a summer program for youth aged 17 to 19. For six weeks, participants travelled the Basin to learn more about the social, economic and environmental issues facing the region. They contributed to community projects and developed their own. “I was really impressed by the commitment from the youth to work on the projects and really get as much out of the experience as they could,” said program coordinator Kelly Comishin. “These young adults have a lot to offer our communities.”



“If there was ever an organization that is about potential and striving for that potential, it is the Columbia Basin Trust.”

DON JOHNSTON, PRESIDENT AND CEO, 1999–2005



and CBAL understood the positive influence literacy programming could have on the region. In 2000, the Trust initially contributed \$180,000; by 2017, this had increased to half a million dollars annually.¹³

Since 2001, CBAL has been helping to create strong and resilient communities by advancing the literacy skills of learners of all ages. Its diverse programs promote lifelong learning through meaningful, community-focused programming. One of these programs, Books for Babies, began in 2001 and encouraged new parents to develop literacy in their children from infancy.¹⁴ CBAL also offers adult tutoring, language services for immigrants and early language development initiatives. Since its inception, CBAL has worked with over 54,000 adults and seniors, 48,962 children and youth, and distributed over 94,000 books and other materials.¹⁵

Youth programming was an early priority for the Trust. Photographs from 1999 show a group of 12 youth hiking Rogers Pass through the Selkirk Mountains, pulling knapweed from a field and building a tipi alongside members of the Sinixt Nation. For six weeks, they travelled the Basin as part of the Trust’s Youth Links summer program. They visited communities across the region, exploring social, economic and environmental landscapes while building friendships and gaining valuable work experience.¹⁶ In this and subsequent summers, Basin youth toured museums and heritage sites,

studied plant and animal species, and learned about issues facing First Nations in the area. They viewed the Basin’s economy and industry at the Trail headquarters of mining company Teck Cominco and during tours at Hugh Keenleyside Dam and the Arrow Lakes Generating Station construction site. Not as familiar with the impact of the Columbia River Treaty as their parents and grandparents, they also visited farms affected by the Treaty dams.¹⁷ “Not only did I learn more about specific issues, but also about the Basin as a whole and how different areas relate,” one participant said. “We were given awesome opportunities to learn in ways that wouldn’t normally be accessible to us.”¹⁸

The Youth Links program was designed for youth to leave a lasting legacy in the places they visited and use what they learned to extend that legacy to their own communities. Participants volunteered at community events like Nelson’s Streetfest and the BC Seniors Games. They painted the community hall in Silverton; built trails near Fernie, Invermere and Revelstoke; and did stream restoration work at Kokanee Creek and Wolf Creek near Wasa.¹⁹ At the end of the summer, participants received grants to complete follow-up projects in their home communities using the skills and knowledge gained during their time with Youth Links. In 2004, program participant Brittney Hood organized a sexual health workshop for teenage girls in Elkford,



First published in 2002, *Scratch Magazine* was created by and for Basin youth. Over 26 issues, *Scratch* celebrated youth culture and gave young people a platform to share their thoughts and ideas. The title, suggested by Mark Timko of Nelson, encouraged youth to “scratch” down their ideas and share them with others.

while Mikhel Proulx of Trail designed a website that gave a panoramic view of the city and its surrounding hiking paths.²⁰

Youth Links was just one of many initiatives the Trust introduced in the early 2000s to engage young people. From its symposiums, the Trust knew youth were eager to participate and make their voices and concerns heard. Youth faced their own set of challenges: the lack of educational and employment opportunities; poor transportation between communities; bullying and violence; racism, homophobia and discrimination; and lack of support and resources.²¹ To provide space for youth to discuss these issues and form solutions, the Trust sponsored the first Basin Voice Youth Action Forum in April 2001. Held at Blue Lake Camp near Canal Flats, the forum drew 90 young people from across the Basin. At the conclusion of the forum, a clear message emerged: youth wanted opportunities to connect, network and share information.

To continue those conversations, the Trust established a youth committee to provide young people with a place in the organization in 2001. The committee, composed of members aged 15 to 25, offered input on the Trust’s programming and funding and created new opportunities for young people in the Basin. The committee promoted and encouraged involvement through training and workshops for youth groups and organizations, employment and leadership opportunities, a grant program to fund youth projects and inter-community events and activities.²²

Scratch Magazine also emerged from the Youth

Action Forum. Youth wanted a way to network, exchange ideas and access information relevant to them.²³ *Scratch* encouraged youth to “scratch” their ideas down in the form of articles, poems and drawings. It was entirely written and produced by Basin youth. The theme of the first issue, published in spring 2002, was self-esteem and self-image and explored topics like body issues, commercialism, sex, skateboarding, feminism, abuse, employment and Basin life.²⁴ Later issues covered a broad range of topics, including environmental conservation, educational opportunities and photography.

Another concern that Delivery of Benefits programming sought to address was the environment. In the early 2000s, 30 years after the Columbia River Treaty brought great environmental change to the Basin, the region’s concern over environmental issues sharpened. This reflected the larger, global environmental consciousness that gained momentum in the 1990s with the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change and the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. In the Basin, water management was of primary concern. Kindy Gosal, one of the Trust’s first community liaisons, recalled a spike in conversations among Basin residents at the dawn of the 21st century about fluctuating water levels, the social and cultural importance of water and its role in the Basin economy. “All of those discussions were happening at a community level,” said Gosal.²⁵

The Trust surveyed residents, commissioned a report on water management, brought in consultants to review the Columbia River Treaty and water-management agreements, and worked with American organizations



Created in 2001, the Water Initiatives Program involved residents in water activities such as taking samples from creek beds and assessing sprinkler systems.



to better understand transboundary questions relating to the Columbia River’s ecosystems.²⁶ Armed with this knowledge, the Trust formed a water-management committee and created the Water Initiatives Program in 2001 to educate Basin residents about and involve them in water-management issues. The Trust developed an education strategy and published guides and other resources on water management.²⁷ In 2004, it launched a new website on water issues, dedicated to building an understanding, said Gosal, of “where the water comes from, how it is managed, where it goes and more complex things, like global water shortages and the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty, which could impact all Basin residents and could occur as early as 2024.”²⁸ Water Initiatives encouraged residents to become actively involved in the effort to safeguard Basin waters for future generations.

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

The Trust uses revenues from both hydropower and non-power investments to deliver benefits. Investing in non-power opportunities boosts regional industry and business, while also generating income for the Trust. One of its early investments was affordable housing for seniors. In 2001, the Trust partnered with Golden Life Management, founded three years earlier by Cranbrook resident Endre Lillejord. Golden Life

builds and operates affordable housing for seniors, allowing them to remain in their home communities while still receiving the support they need for quality of life. The Trust’s initial investment of \$1.3 million helped Golden Life build its second care facility, Castle Wood Village, in Castlegar.²⁹ Golden Life was part of the Trust’s real estate investment portfolio, which became a profitable source of revenue that the Trust continues to use to deliver benefits to the Basin.

Not all investments were financially successful. During the early 2000s, the Trust suffered substantial losses on two investments, St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino and HeatWave Drying Systems Limited.

St. Eugene was a former residential school that the Ktunaxa Nation transformed into a golf resort and casino. The Ktunaxa envisioned St. Eugene as a community-centred business that would employ locals and generate profit for the community. More importantly, it was a way for the Ktunaxa, especially residential school survivors, to reclaim their history and identity by transforming a place of hurt into a community asset. The Trust initially joined the St. Eugene project in the late 1990s. From 1998 to 2000, the Trust invested over \$6.7 million in the project—close to \$2 million over its initial commitment. It provided capital for construction costs and committed to a 10-year loan to subsidize operating costs at a rate of 10 per cent per year.³⁰

Golden Life

In the 1990s, Cranbrook resident Endre Lillejord was struggling to find a home for his mother, Ivy. He was disappointed to discover that housing options were scarce for seniors who, like Ivy, needed some assistance but were still largely independent. Lillejord quickly realized his family was not alone: seniors and families across the Basin were looking for alternatives to institutional care. Lillejord decided to take matters into his own hands.

Lillejord founded his own company, Golden Life Management, to design, build and operate seniors’ housing. Golden Life envisioned a supportive, affordable housing model that emulated “the old adage that it takes a village to care.”³¹ The facilities were aptly named “villages,” and the first, Joseph Creek Village, opened in Cranbrook in 1998 with Ivy Lillejord as one of the first residents.

“When you walk through the halls of the village, you’re surrounded by friends and families, and everyone has a goal of ensuring that you have the supports and services in place to live your best quality of life,” said Celeste Mullin, Lillejord’s daughter and Golden Life Vice President of Corporate Business. To maintain and improve these supports, Golden Life saw a real benefit in “finding a strategic partner that we could align with that brought credibility to our seniors’ development, enhanced our brand, was financially strong, and who was really well-integrated within the communities.”

That strategic partner was the Trust. Endre Lillejord reached out to the Trust to discuss a possible collaboration, recognizing that the two organizations shared the value of promoting quality of life for the people of the Basin. The Trust agreed and, in September 2001, committed \$1.3 million for Golden Life’s second housing project, Castle Wood Village. The first of its kind in the West Kootenay, the Castlegar facility

featured 77 suites, as well as a games room, exercise room, library, beauty salon and barbershop, and craft and hobby areas.³²

Celeste Mullin credits the partnership’s success to respect, open communication and a willingness to learn and evolve. In 2006, for example, Golden Life approached the Trust about providing additional assistance for low-income seniors. Together they established an innovative grant program for seniors who might otherwise be unable to pay the market rent at Golden Life’s villages; instead, individuals pay 70 per cent of their incomes in exchange for rent, housekeeping and meals. Mullin sees this program as “a great example of how we’ve met our collective goal of ensuring that people in the Basin have great quality of life, and ensuring that all Basin residents, regardless of their financial resources, have the access to appropriate and affordable housing and services.”³³

Golden Life and the Trust continue to collaborate. Eight of Golden Life’s 17 villages have been completed with the Trust’s support, in the Basin communities of Cranbrook, Castlegar, Creston, Fernie, Fruitvale, Invermere, Kimberley and Nelson.





The hotel and golf course opened in 2000, with plans to expand St. Eugene by building a casino and an addition to the hotel. On the surface, the project was a financial success; however, the project had fallen deep into debt. This was not helped by the fact that its first seasons were hampered by a regional downturn in tourism due to wildfires, inflated fuel prices and fears over global terrorism and the SARS and West Nile outbreaks.³⁴ St. Eugene filed for bankruptcy protection in December 2003 in an attempt to restructure its finances and operations. In the meantime, because St. Eugene was unable to make payments on the Trust’s loan, the Trust classified the loan as a “non-performing” investment, thought by some to be a disappointment. By 2004, the Trust had only recovered a small portion of its original investment and had to absorb the losses.³⁶ Although St. Eugene was a financial loss for the Trust, some saw it as a valuable learning experience. The process echoed CEO Don Johnston’s insistence several years earlier that the Trust must be willing to take risks, even if that led to what some might perceive as mistakes.

Its investment in HeatWave Drying Systems Limited was another learning experience. HeatWave used radio-wave, dry-kiln technology to improve efficiency and reduce the costs of drying large dimensional products such as lumber. The region’s forestry industry made the Basin an attractive place for this

kind of technology and, in spring 2001, the Trust lent HeatWave \$3.5 million to fund operations.³⁷ HeatWave could not get past the testing phase, however, and failed to produce technology that could be sold in time to make good on its loans before other investors backed out. With a lack of income, financial support and resources, HeatWave dissolved. The Trust wrote off its remaining capital.³⁸

Underperformance on investments like HeatWave and St. Eugene resulted in a poor return on the Trust’s investments in 2004–05.³⁹ These losses contributed to a deeper internal pressure during this period, as the Trust struggled to address multiple growing pains: navigating additional revenue losses and tensions with its closest partners, while still delivering programs and funding to Basin residents.

POWER STRUGGLES

The Trust experienced difficulties relating to its hydro-power investments as well. All was going according to plan as Arrow Lakes Generating Station was completed on budget and ahead of schedule in 2002, with construction on Brilliant Expansion beginning the following year. However, the Trust and Columbia Power’s attention was diverted back to Arrow Lakes Generating Station in 2004 when cracks were discovered in an intake channel, forcing two long and

expensive shutdown periods over the next two years. Although repair costs and the loss of revenue during the shutdowns meant low investment returns for the Trust, significant funds were recovered through insurance. Once all repairs were completed in May 2006, the project became profitable again.⁴⁰

Basin residents started to question the Trust’s priorities when, in spring 2001, the Trust and Columbia Power announced their intention to acquire four generating stations owned by West Kootenay Power.⁴¹ The purchase of the stations, located between Nelson and Castlegar and not connected to the partners’ existing hydropower assets, was subject to approval by the BC Utilities Commission. In October 2001, the commission denied the application, citing the possibility that rate-payers would lose money.⁴² Some Basin residents were relieved the deal fell through: they did not want the Trust so heavily concentrated on hydropower projects, and they worried the acquisition of new power projects was outside the Trust’s mandate. Trail City Councillor Norm Gabana was a harsh critic of what he perceived as the Trust’s over-involvement in hydropower projects, going so far as to urge the Province to “dump the whole organization and put it in with BC Hydro.”⁴³

Gabana’s comments were not entirely out of the blue. While the Trust was investigating new power projects, a provincial review process threatened to upend the organization completely. In May 2001, the provincial NDP government that helped create the Trust was replaced by a Liberal majority. The new government took swift action against the hefty provincial debt, which had doubled over the past decade and was projected to reach \$34.7 billion by 2002.⁴⁴ Under Premier Gordon Campbell, the Liberals introduced a deregulation and core services review process to examine all provincial programs and activities, determine the government’s core roles and responsibilities and identify ways to make government services more efficient and cost-effective for taxpayers.⁴⁵

As a provincial organization, the Trust was subject to this process, as was Columbia Power. “Everybody was getting looked at,” Trust director Greg Deck said. He and other Board members were concerned the Province might see the Trust and Columbia Power as redundant, since BC Hydro also operated projects in the region.⁴⁶ Trust Board

members feared the Province would eliminate perceived redundancies by combining the Trust, Columbia Power and BC Hydro into a government-controlled power conglomerate.⁴⁷ The Trust worried the Province saw it only as a Crown corporation involved in power projects, rather than a multifaceted organization with a mandate to serve the people of the Basin.⁴⁸ If an amalgamation were to occur, the Trust would likely lose its funding and, with it, much of its ability to deliver benefits.

The Trust was not axed or absorbed, as many residents feared it would be; however, the core services review did lead to changes. The review recommended amendments to the Trust’s defining legislation, the *Columbia Basin Trust Act*, notably in the structure of the Board of Directors. An amendment to the Act was passed in 2003, which reduced the Board from 18 directors to 12 and mandated that all directors be appointed by the provincial government.⁴⁹

This change was not well-received. Although six Board members would still be nominated locally, Basin residents worried provincial control over the appointment of directors signalled a loss in regional influence over the Trust.⁵⁰ This was amplified by earlier fears that the Trust was growing too preoccupied with its power investments. Larry Brierley was involved in the Trust’s formation while serving as a director for the Regional District of Central Kootenay years earlier. He recognized the re-emergence of the “classic rural-urban conflict”—the fear the region was being run by Victoria—that made the Trust necessary in the first place. “Regardless of what the Liberals’ intentions are,” Brierley warned, “we will lose control of this thing that is ours.”⁵¹ Residents accused the Trust of being complicit in these changes. One Nakusp resident complained that promised consultation with Basin residents about the proposed changes had not occurred. He accused the Trust and the Province of making “backroom deals without public input.”⁵² In Nelson, a town hall meeting drew 150 unhappy citizens who accused the Trust of lacking transparency. “The Trust has been a huge success, and it feels like it’s being hijacked,” said one protester.⁵³

Even after the core services review concluded in 2002, the Trust’s anxieties remained. It began to investigate options to preserve its independence and avoid being absorbed by the provincial government in the future.

St. Eugene

Located in the community of ʔaᑭam, just outside Cranbrook, St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino is owned and operated by the Ktunaxa Nation. The resort lies at the end of Mission Road and is set against a backdrop of tall mountains and the blue waters of St. Mary River. Surrounded by manicured lawns and colourful gardens, the scene stands in stark contrast to the one First Nations children witnessed when St. Eugene was used as a residential school operated by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from 1912 to 1970.



The final bend along Mission Road was known to these children as Crying Corner, revealing not a holiday destination but an imposing, 55-foot-tall concrete structure where, far from their homes and families, over 5,000 children from the Ktunaxa, Okanagan, Shuswap and Blackfoot Nations had their culture and childhood deliberately and violently stolen from them.⁵⁴

One of these children was Sophie Pierre, who spent nine years at St. Eugene, beginning at age six. Pierre grew up to become a Nasuʔkin (Chief) of the Ktunaxa Nation and a major advocate of the St. Eugene project. The idea to transform St. Eugene into a resort arose gradually and with reluctance, Pierre recalled. After the school closed in 1970, an agreement between the Oblates and the federal government turned the building and the 327 acres of surrounding land over to the ʔaᑭam community, whose children had been forced to attend the school. The building sat vacant for over 20 years, falling into disrepair while the Ktunaxa struggled to reconcile conflicting opinions about what to do

with the site. Some wanted to tear it down and destroy this physical symbol of trauma and abuse, while others, like Pierre, saw the potential to turn St. Eugene into something that would benefit the community and help its people heal from the painful legacy of residential schools.⁵⁵

“Since it was within the St. Eugene Mission School that the culture of the Kootenay Indian was taken away, it should be within that building that it is returned,” Ktunaxa Elder Mary Paul stated.⁵⁶ Her words became the cornerstone of the St. Eugene project and are now displayed on the walls of the resort. But Sophie Pierre remembered it took some time before the community understood exactly what their Elder meant: that transforming St. Eugene could help restore the cultural, social and economic order that had crumbled under the residential school system. The halls where children had had their hair cut and gone to bed hungry, where they had been punished for speaking their own language, and where they had suffered constant physical, sexual and emotional abuse — these were the places where the Ktunaxa would



regain their culture and find healing. Empowered by Elder Mary Paul’s words, the Ktunaxa Nation began the slow process of creating St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino.

The golf course opened on schedule in 2000. The first year was a success, with *Golf Digest* rating it one of the top three Best New Canadian Courses in 2001. Behind the scenes, however, the project was falling into debt. The post-September 11, 2001, travel climate, inflated fuel prices, regional wildfires and outbreaks of SARS and the West Nile Virus all contributed to a downturn in visitors to the region.⁵⁷ Decreased tourism meant lower earnings for St. Eugene, and the project struggled to build the planned addition to the hotel and casino. St. Eugene filed for bankruptcy protection in December 2003 in an attempt to restructure its finances and operations.

But the Ktunaxa Nation persevered. In 2004, the St. Eugene project was saved from financial collapse through a partnership between the Ktunaxa, the Samson Cree Nation in Alberta and the Rama First Nation

in Ontario. It was the first time First Nations from across the country had partnered on such an initiative. It took several years, but the resort began to turn a profit. Helder Ponte of the Ktunaxa Nation Council agreed that, while there were significant obstacles, “as we went on, the will to finish the resort grew even stronger.”⁵⁸

St. Eugene is a point of pride for its creators. Sophie Pierre declared that, somehow, “without two nickels to rub together,” the Ktunaxa and their partners “managed to put together a \$40-million resort.”⁵⁹ An RV park was added in 2017 and, in 2018, St. Eugene was the host hotel for the BC Seniors Games. The resort hosts writers’ conferences and partners with nearby wineries for wine tastings and festivals. St. Eugene employs between 200 to 300 people year-round. Pierre believes St. Eugene helped foster relationships between the Ktunaxa Nation and non-Indigenous organizations in the Basin and cemented the fact that “the Indigenous community is going to be involved now.”⁶⁰

CBT Youth Forum Connects Youth from Across the Basin

Columbia Basin Trust hosted its sixth Basin Youth Action Forum, **CONNECT**, from April 5-5 in Kamloops. The forum brought together approximately 70 youth from across the Basin to create social networks and to create individual action plans on how to become more engaged through projects in their communities.

"This year was amazing because of the dedication of all participants," said Thera Wink, CBT Youth Liaison. "The various ways in which they will be able to implement their learning is so diverse and exciting. These ideas were coupled with amazing mentors that will really help make things happen."

Throughout the weekend, youth attended workshops to help build their skills in getting started on their community project. Workshops included writing grant applications, communicating messages, public engagement, fundraising meetings, promotion of a news story using traditional and non-traditional media, and a session on recognizing what is holding participants back from starting their project and initiating change in their communities.

The event was facilitated by a group called Agency in Being, a national non-partisan project that uses art, media and technology to encourage writers, editors, researchers to a broad demographic of youth about how to be more involved in their communities.

Watch the five-minute video of participants talking about their experience at the forum.

www.cbt.org/2009youthforum

CBT Launches Water Smart

CBT has been implementing a program that is offering a 10 per cent reduction in water consumption by 2015.

Working in partnership with local governments, CBT will develop community action plans to achieve this target.

"Water is the backbone of the rural, economic and environmental well-being of the Columbia Basin and working towards water conservation efforts is key to ensuring a healthy and sustainable water supply in its place for future generations," said David Cook, CBT Director of Water and Environment.

Despite the apparent wealth of fresh water in the Basin, increasing human activities, population growth and climate change are placing pressure on water systems.

In a 2008 survey, Basin residents acknowledged a need for better conservation measures.

Specifically, residents requested information and education on the quantity of water in the Basin, the state of public water, and information on the economic and environmental benefits of conserving water.

CBT plans to share water conservation resources, tips and provide support to Basin residents and communities interested in implementing water conservation measures.

www.cbt.org/water

Stories of Impact

In spite of the challenges the Trust faced surrounding its power projects, it completed many successful programs and initiatives. Its annual reports showcased the social, economic, and environmental work the Trust accomplished during this time.

KTUNAXA/KINBASKET TRIBAL COUNCIL

The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council has established that progress is actually made through Columbia Basin Trust's Community Initiatives. For more information on the programs listed below, contact Tribal Council at 1-250-485-2464.

Passing down Ktunaxa traditions, language

Project Progress: Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council
Project: Youth/Tribal Elderment Services
Funding: \$4,000

The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council (KTC) is helping to encourage youth who have shown an interest in traditional knowledge. The 2009-2010 winners of the

South Slave Museum Awards were winners "Windhead from the Ktunaxa Band who promotes traditional history and shares the land with others in the community and from Louie from the Lumix Kootenay Band, who was recognized for his story learning and teaching the Ktunaxa about sign language."

"I have a real shortage of young people who speak the Ktunaxa language, which is decreasing with numbers," says Louie Phillips, director of health for the KTC. "And the language is key to understanding traditional knowledge."

"The language is important because it gives us our identity. It's unique just as we are as a Nation. I don't realize this until I was almost an adult," says Louie. "Now, I think that the language should be a priority for all of us so that it will be here. It's often difficult for youth to learn it, but we already going through a lot and some of them have to get over their shyness around the language. We're now using English with English. It's not as bad for the kids. And like the story I work with, I share learning the

and then like the challenge but we need to find new ways to get the other young people involved."

Ktunaxa Basin Community Initiatives are used to add youth stories along with an effort to the Aboriginal Achievement Awards in Canada.

PRODUCTS FINISHED 2009-2010

Land Funding Over 10 Years (Basin Community Initiatives and Affiliated Areas combined: \$234,200)	improves the capacity to participate in various non-profit and non-profit projects.
The Community Support Committee (\$10,000)	The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Community Support Committee is a group of people who are interested in supporting traditional knowledge.
The Youth of Ktunaxa Committee (\$1,000)	The Youth of Ktunaxa Committee is a group of young people who are interested in supporting traditional knowledge.
Basin Community Initiatives (\$1,000)	Support local community groups in promoting traditional knowledge and culture.

REPORT TO RESIDENTS

Telecommunications gains momentum

The Columbia Mountain Open Network (CMON) initiative for telecommunications continues to gain momentum.

Efforts at raising matching funds to the Columbia Basin Trust's \$592,000 contribution have been successful. The Regional District of

Kootenays, District of Sparwood, Village of Sherran, Village of Monson and Kootenay Association for Science and Technology contributed a total of approximately \$100,000 as of Sept. 1. As the impact of School District #20 senior management, CMON developed a network plan for the Premier's

studies and surveys. The District of Sparwood completed its first-to-the-home study, which is in the review process. Meanwhile, the Village of Monson initiated a survey of demand for broadband access in that community.

For more information about the CMON, visit www.cmon.ca or contact Jeff Roberts at jroberts@cmont.ca.

Basin communities are also busy undertaking telecommunications

report to residents **COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST**

Improving Our Grasslands and Rangelands

Basin plant management, protection of riparian areas and improvement of the grassland ecosystem are just some of the types of projects that have been supported over the past two years through CBT's Grassland and Rangeland Enhancement Fund.

Designed for the Kootenay Livestock Association, this program focuses on helping improve riparian areas for addressing water issues, values that benefit all users, increasing and enhancing biodiversity and long-term fish and wildlife productivity across the Basin, and improving compatibility between livestock management and recreation use.

A recent project involved building 3.2 km of fence to fence riparian recreational areas and cattle and provide access to water for livestock.

"Columbia Basin Trust, Brian Galt and the Kootenay Livestock Association were a great help in making this project come together for us," said Lance Blanton, project participant. "The results of the fence was in conjunction with the livestock standards, and the end result was fantastic."

www.cbt.org/grf

Helping Provide Affordable Housing

One of CBT's goals is to assist communities in effectively dealing with affordable housing issues and to support new housing initiatives. In partnership with the governments of Canada and BC, CBT committed \$425,000 to the small capital costs of eight affordable housing units in the Basin for a total of 111 units under the British Rural Housing Initiative. Projects are complete in Kamloops, Vancouver and Burnaby, and are expected to be finished later in 2011 in Chilliwack, Coquitlam, Burnaby, Delta and Golden, and into a second site in Burnaby. These developments are designed to stimulate the local economy and increase affordable rental housing units for seniors and persons with disabilities to enable communities.

www.cbt.org/hai

"This is a unique opportunity for CBT to be involved in the creation of a significant number of housing units, particularly in rural locations within the Basin."

REPORT VIDEOS, CBT NEWS, CBT

BURTON GAZEBO READY TO ENJOY

Supported in part by CBT, the Burton Historical Park has a new covered gazebo where residents and visitors can gather, picnic and enjoy entertainment. "This gazebo is one step toward improving our infrastructure, which will help our economic situation and entice new residents to settle in the area," said Al Ralston, Burton Community Hall Association.

www.cbt.org/burtegazebos

"It instills us with a feeling of community pride and a sense of a positive future. It also reflects the success of the strong volunteerism in Burton."

AL RALSTON, BURTON COMMUNITY HALL ASSOCIATION

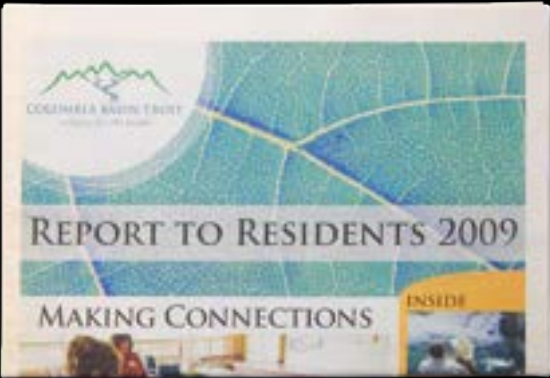
The option that came to the forefront was to sell its shares of power projects and abandon its hydropower investments entirely. The stress placed upon the Trust by the core services review and the tremendous effort required to run hydropower projects caused the Trust to grow increasingly wary of its involvement in hydropower operations. Greg Deck remembered the Board's frustration as members began to ask, "Why don't we just sell our hydroelectric assets and put our money into the market somewhere and quit bashing our heads?"⁶¹

In October 2004, the Trust and BC Hydro announced discussions about a proposal to sell the Trust's \$260 million of hydropower assets to BC Hydro. The Trust could use the money from the sale to continue its delivery of benefits and to invest in other opportunities. The Trust never intended to become a power corporation in the first place, Josh Smienk reminded the public. In a news release, he argued that, while these were valuable investments, an end to power operations would free up the Trust's resources to focus on the delivery of benefits.⁶²

Basin residents opposed the sale. The headlines that splashed across newspapers included "Selling Off Our Legacy," "Power Sale Divides Kootenays," and, echoing the Columbia River Treaty deal decades earlier, "Sold Down the River – Part 2?"⁶³ Letters poured in to newspapers and directly to the Trust. Although they supported the Trust's vision to gain greater independence from

the provincial government, residents did not agree that selling hydropower assets was the right solution.⁶⁴ Early Trust Board members Ed Conroy and Corky Evans were vehemently against the sale. "They're buying us off with our own money, and they're selling our heritage to do it," Conroy said. Evans agreed: "I'm not saying it's wrong for people to sell their heritage, I just think they should have a say." The Trust seemed to be rushing into the deal without consulting Basin residents. "It took five years to do this deal," Evans said of the Trust's original purchase of hydropower assets. "If you spent five years deciding to get married, why would you get divorced in a month?"⁶⁵

The Trust insisted it was doing its due diligence. It held eight public meetings across the region, at which upset residents expressed their disapproval. In Nelson, it was reported that, in a crowd of over 200 people, not one person supported the proposed sale.⁶⁶ In Trail, the reaction was described as "overwhelmingly negative."⁶⁷ For *Nelson Daily News* columnist Stephen Fowler, the sale of the assets was a betrayal of "those people who fought long and hard to get us those things, as well as our children who will depend on that profit and control if the Columbia Basin is going to remain a desirable place to work and live." He added, "At least as part owners, we have a say in how that profit [from the hydropower projects] is invested. We'll lose that control once BC Hydro takes over."⁶⁸



Outreach

People of the Basin can read about the Trust's work in the annual Report to Residents — now published as *Our Trust* magazine. *Our Trust* celebrates remarkable people, places, and stories from across the Basin, and connects residents with the Trust and with each other.

Residents' opposition could not be ignored. In December 2004, the Trust announced it would not proceed with the proposed sale.⁶⁹ In retrospect, Board member Greg Deck acknowledged, “the group intelligence was much wiser than ours. They weren’t living our frustration.”⁷⁰ Chair Josh Smienk reflected on the Trust’s change of heart:

Columbia Basin Trust, since its inception, has always been a grassroots organization that’s taken its direction from the public. It’s part of our Columbia Basin Management Plan that before we make decisions on items of our large investments such as this, we consult with the public and the public has come back and overwhelmingly said that they do not want to be out of the power business.⁷¹

Although the sale of power assets was off the table, the Trust still sought independence. Part of this desire was an increasingly strained relationship with its partner, Columbia Power. Although Columbia Power was meant to operate and provide expertise on their shared power projects, the Trust started to challenge many of its decisions. The Trust wanted Columbia Power to pay grants in lieu of taxes on Arrow Lakes Generating Station as early as 2004, a request Columbia Power refused on the grounds that BC Hydro already paid grants for Hugh Keenleyside Dam upstream. Nor was the generating station fully operational.⁷² Columbia Power also temporarily resisted pressure from the Trust to relocate its head office from Victoria to its regional office in Castlegar. As criticism and demands from the Trust piled up, Columbia Power executives were upset they were excluded from Trust meetings, where they might have had the opportunity to explain their decisions.⁷³ In what was meant to be equal ownership and a collaborative partnership, Columbia Power felt it had been treated unfairly.

A solution emerged that the Trust hoped would solve its relationship with Columbia Power and secure the independence it was looking for. This solution, known as the Option Agreement, proposed that the Trust purchase Columbia Power’s shares of their joint hydropower projects, becoming sole owner and giving the Trust full control over its hydropower assets.⁷⁴ The Trust hoped the agreement would give it independence

from outside partners and shield it from any political shifts that might affect those partnerships. However, the Board recognized the significant challenges and costs involved in striking such a deal. There was also pressure from the Province, which wanted to maintain influence over the regional hydropower industry. If Columbia Power was bought out, the Province (which was represented by Columbia Power) would lose that influence. Without Columbia Power operating on its behalf, the Province would also lose money in the long term.

In 2006, the Province offered the Trust \$10 million to shelve the Option Agreement.⁷⁵ The Trust accepted. In addition to the \$10 million, the deal acknowledged the Trust’s desire for regional control over hydropower assets, giving the Trust greater influence by granting it one-third of the seats on Columbia Power’s Board of Directors. It was agreed the CEO of Columbia Power should live in the Basin, not Victoria.⁷⁶ These measures meant the partners would work together more closely. Although Columbia Power was frustrated at the Trust for pursuing the Option Agreement without its input, this was a step forward in improving their relationship while protecting the region’s influence over hydropower projects and decisions.

While the Trust was absorbed with its investigations and negotiations about its hydropower assets and relationships with Columbia Power and the Province, Basin residents grew frustrated at the lack of communication from the Trust. In its scramble to address the many stresses of its first 10 years of operation — underperforming non-power investments like St. Eugene and HeatWave, revenue losses on Arrow Lakes Generating Station and increased external tension with its corporate and government partnerships — had the Trust inadvertently lost its way?

However, in the midst of disappointments, there were many positives on which the Trust could build: residents were pleased with the social and environmental programs introduced from 1999 to 2005 and wanted to see continued spending in Basin communities. But Basin residents wanted the Trust to return to its mandate and not succumb to further distractions. The Trust wanted the same. As its 10th anniversary approached, the Trust, and indeed the entire Basin, was once again ready for change.







FIVE

RESTORING THE TRUST

2005–2009

After 10 years, three of the Trust’s four hydropower projects were in operation or under way, revenues were rising and programs were being introduced. But rapid growth tested the Trust. Basin residents had grown frustrated at the Trust’s lack of transparency regarding hydropower projects, especially as it struggled to determine what the future of those projects would look like. They felt the Trust had neglected to involve them in important decisions. There were worries the Trust had grown preoccupied with its investments and strayed from its grassroots origins. Residents and the Trust had become disconnected from one another. The collaborative culture that had characterized the Trust’s early years was weakening. Further growth was inevitable, but the Trust needed to become stronger and more resilient to move forward. It needed, as well, to restore the trust of Basin residents.

What challenged the Trust also made it successful. Hydro projects continued to create jobs, boost the economy and generate wealth, even as the Trust debated ownership questions. Increasing revenues meant that, although it needed to introduce new measures to keep up with its financial growth, the Trust could deliver more benefits to the region. Expanding programs meant new solutions, new partnerships and new possibilities. Once it learned to better manage growth and relationships, the Trust would be poised more than ever to deliver on its vision.

REFLECTING AND RECONNECTING

Seven years had passed since the Trust’s last symposium, so the 2005 event was a long-overdue opportunity for the Trust to reconnect with the people of the Basin. Over 240 delegates gathered in Cranbrook, anxious to voice their grievances. “Within the fabric of the CBT that we built together, it feels as though there is a thread unravelling,” said one delegate. Decisions over hydropower assets especially had been anything but transparent. The Trust had not shared sufficient details. “We no longer understand what’s going on,” one symposium-goer complained. “You need to figure out how to talk to us and keep us educated.” Residents wanted a continuous, Basin-wide dialogue. Symposium delegates agreed the Trust should promote that dialogue. One said, “If we spend funds learning to talk to each other, those pennies are worth as much as any other investment.”¹ The meeting was a reminder of the deep sense of ownership people felt over the organization.² Board members and staff left Cranbrook determined to honour that ownership and restore residents’ trust.

Changes were already in motion. In March 2005, the Trust announced a shift in leadership. CEO Don Johnston had navigated the Trust through a challenging period as it faced the core services review and grappled with its future in hydropower. Despite these challenges, the Trust had expanded its presence and programs across

Beginning in 2005, the Trust worked hard to restore the trust of Basin residents, who felt they had been left out of important conversations and decisions in recent years. By the 2010 symposium, pictured here, the Trust had successfully rebuilt its relationships with residents, ensuring their voices remained at the heart of all decisions.



“We, as a relatively young organization, are still growing. We are also growing together with our various partners and with residents of the Columbia Basin. Understanding this, and striving to continue with this objective in mind, will allow us all to contribute to the growth of our Basin.”

NEIL MUTH, PRESIDENT AND CEO, 2005–2016

the Basin. By the end of Johnston’s tenure, the Trust had evolved so significantly that different skills and experience were needed to ensure this growth continued. The time had come to introduce new expertise to guide the organization. When the 2005 symposium met in July, the Trust had selected, but not yet announced, a new leader. Rumour had it that the new CEO was at the symposium, and residents were eager to learn who it was. Nakusp resident Laurie Page was there and remembers people “looking at everybody’s shoes because they figured the new guy would wear fancy shoes.”³

The incoming CEO was there, but his shoes did not give him away. Laurie Page and other Basin residents had to wait until September 2005 before the Trust announced who had accepted the position. Neil Muth was born and raised in Trail and, after years working in Victoria, was happy to return to the region. “Neil had his heart in the Basin. He always knew he wanted to move back,” Josh Smienk said.⁴ Muth’s connection to the region made him well-suited to lead the Trust in rebuilding relationships with residents, while at the same time making the organization — now well-established in the region and working with steadily increasing funds and assets — even more professional. Muth had expertise in finance and policymaking and, mindful of the 2005 symposium, was committed to addressing the concerns raised. “It was exciting to see so

many members of the public committed to the well-being of the region and the future of CBT,” Muth said of the event. “It was also a great opportunity to learn firsthand some of the issues facing CBT and Basin residents. The challenge now lies in working together with the Board, staff and Basin residents to fulfill the goals voiced at the symposium, and as outlined in CBT’s mandate.”⁵ As the organization grew over the coming years, Muth and the Trust would strive to rediscover the Trust’s grassroots beginnings.

Following Neil Muth’s appointment as CEO, the Trust made immediate changes to communicate with residents. To better inform the public about its activities, the Trust hired its first communications director. It committed to publishing regular newsletters and continued to release an annual Report to Residents. Symposiums would take place every three years.

Not every solution was clear cut. The Trust made missteps on the path to balancing corporate needs with those of residents. One of these errors was the decision to close the Trust’s original headquarters in Nakusp. The Trust’s headquarters had already moved to Castlegar five years earlier. Closing the Nakusp office was a way to save on rental costs, since it was a small office with few staff members. The Board believed that condensing operations into three offices instead of four made sense. Muth travelled to Nakusp to make the announcement in



August 2006. The decision was met with a wave of public protest. Once again, residents felt their concerns had been ignored while the Trust prioritized its own interests. Complaints streamed in. Among the dissenters was Nakusp Mayor Karen Hamling, who accused the Trust of becoming “a huge multimillion-dollar corporation that’s only interested in making more and more money at the cost of our people.” She added that “their promise of presence in the community is a complete sham!”⁶

Laurie Page, who later became a Trust Board member, agreed that closing the Nakusp office was a mistake. It “was just too much... living the way we did on the reservoir and with all the damage there,” she said. “We felt like the Trust staff needed to be there and live it too.”⁷ Page was among the countless residents who wrote letters and emails to the Trust opposing the decision. She was surprised when Muth called her soon after, asking to sit down and talk. Board member Greg Deck recalled it was that willingness to listen that earned Muth the respect of Basin residents and helped rebuild their confidence in the organization. The whole Nakusp affair, he said, was a “crash course in how you operate in a group of small communities.”⁸ Hearing the public opposition to the closure of the Nakusp office, the Trust acknowledged its error. The decision was reversed a few weeks later and the office remained open.⁹

Further steps toward restoring the Basin’s trust

sought to honour residents’ ownership of the Trust and Columbia Power’s shared hydropower assets. The partners looked for ways to make these assets accessible to residents and visitors alike. On September 17, 2006, hundreds of people boarded school buses that carried them across Brilliant Dam to the site of the in-progress Brilliant Expansion project. Most were from Castlegar and the surrounding West Kootenay, invited by the Trust and Columbia Power to celebrate Community Day, which was a chance for people of the Basin to tour the project so many of them were helping to build. This was also their last chance to walk down into the tunnel that connected Brilliant Dam to the new generating station. Once the expansion was completed in 2007, the tunnel would be flooded with water flowing from the dam to the station.

The Community Day visitors were just a handful of the thousands who stopped by the Brilliant Expansion site after an information centre, staffed by two college students, opened there in 2005. People learned more about the project through displays at the interpretive centre and a look at the project through the windows at the construction site. Over 12,000 people visited the centre from May to September 2005 alone.¹⁰ “These projects are, of course, half owned by the people, so the people like to come out and see what’s happening with their assets,” said Wally Penner, Columbia

Community Day participants look out over the recently completed Brilliant Expansion Generating Station.

The Brilliant Dam People

Over 400 people were employed to construct the Brilliant Expansion between 2003 and 2007. The workforce included heavy-construction labourers, heavy-equipment operators, carpenters, ironworkers, cement masons, pipefitters, millwrights and boilermakers. More than 85 per cent of workers were locals who lived within 100 kilometres of the dam site.



Power’s Community and Regional Affairs Executive Director.¹¹ The sense of ownership people felt for the project was not just through their stake in the Trust. Eighty-five per cent of workers hired for Brilliant Expansion—about 400 people overall—lived within 100 kilometres of the site.¹²

In September 2006, long-time Chair Josh Smienk announced he would be retiring when his term expired the following year. Smienk had been with the organization since 1992, when it began as the Columbia River Treaty Committee. He had seen the Trust through its transformation from a tiny group of like-minded individuals into a Crown corporation with funds and resources the committee could have never imagined. After nearly 15 years, the time had come for someone else to lead. “When you build an organization from scratch, the founding chair at some time has to leave,” Smienk explained.¹³ Founding Vice-Chair Garry Merkel stepped into the role. Smienk’s departure was part of a wider shift in the organization as founding members and early directors began to retire. Within the next few years, the Board would comprise almost entirely of new voices.

Through these shifts, the Trust’s staff was relied on. With their extensive knowledge of the Trust’s goals and operations, they were its memory. Long-time employee Aimee Ambrosone described the staff’s responsibility “to keep the culture, the spirit of the Trust alive. It’s

also to indoctrinate the next generation in that spirit.”¹⁴ Many Trust employees across the Basin have enjoyed long careers with the Trust, sharing their skills and commitment across a variety of roles.

PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Achieving its mission has been a continuous process for the Trust. The organization must adapt to the Basin’s evolving needs and ideas. To make this happen, the Trust sought ways to grow through renewal and specialization. Part of this involved updating the Columbia Basin Management Plan (CBMP). Close to 10 years had passed since the Trust had created the original plan in 1997. In 2005, it began preparations for a renewed plan. As had been done when creating the original CBMP, the Trust invited residents to contribute. After working a year and a half with residents and advisory committees, the Trust prepared a draft plan and shared it at nine open houses across the region. Participants reviewed the plan to ensure it reflected their visions for the Basin. At the 2007 symposium, nearly 300 delegates gathered to share their ideas on the draft. “[We’re] not just going out there to say, ‘This is what we’re doing. Thank you very much,’” explained Neil Muth. “We really want a two-way discussion.”¹⁵ The final plan incorporated what was heard at the symposium and open houses. The consensus was positive. The Trust was on the right track.



The 2007 symposium drew nearly 300 participants who came to Castlegar to learn about the Trust’s work and provide input on the new Columbia Basin Management Plan, which was nearing completion. The event included breakout sessions on climate change, employment and community planning and sustainability, as well as a keynote address by former Premier Mike Harcourt. Participants also had the opportunity to tour Arrow Lakes Generating Station and Brilliant Dam and Expansion. On Friday evening, delegates and residents were invited to *A Celebration of Sound—Basin Culture in Song & Voice*, a free concert featuring musicians from across the region.

The updated CBMP was divided into two parts: a charter to establish the Trust’s long-term vision, and a strategic plan to guide short-term priorities. By separating the document in this way, the Trust was able to keep its mandate alive while becoming more responsive to the Basin’s specific needs. The Trust’s founding vision had not changed. It would continue to work toward the same long-term goals for the Basin that were outlined in the 1997 plan. The Trust was dedicated to collaborating with residents and communities to achieve a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being, and the updated charter recommitted the organization to values of respect, accountability and transparency in its operations.¹⁶ The vision and values communicated in the charter honoured the original plan and purpose for which the Trust was created and provided a launching pad for ongoing work.

Setting strategic priorities allowed the Trust to be adaptable in how it achieved its vision. While the original CBMP included a set of objectives, defining those objectives in a separate document gave the Trust flexibility in responding to shifting needs and ideas. The priorities continue to be updated about every five years based on public consultation. They focus on improving community engagement, ensuring the Trust’s resiliency as an organization, fostering quality of life and addressing critical issues in the Basin.

The Trust introduced formal strategic plans in 2009 to implement the priorities. The first strategic plans grouped priorities into three categories: social, environmental and economic. Like the strategic priorities, these plans are updated periodically based on public input. They underline goals and desired outcomes within each priority and identify what steps are needed to meet them. Often, this has meant creating new programs and partnerships. The Enterprising Non-Profits Program, for example, grew out of the Social Strategic Plan, with the goal of building the capacity of non-profit organizations in the Basin. The program provided guidance and grant money to help non-profits plan or operate a social enterprise. “Creating a social enterprise can give an organization the flexibility and revenue to be able to respond

to a broader range of community needs,” said Rona Park, executive director for the Nelson CARES Society.¹⁷ Nelson CARES took advantage of the Enterprising Non-Profits Program to expand its Earth Matters Recycling initiative, which provides recycling services to local apartments and businesses. The initiative provided employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and the organization used profits to fund its emergency shelter, legal advocacy centre, seniors’ transportation service and other programming.

Strategic plans also expanded existing programs, like the Land Conservation Initiative. Started in 2002, the Land Conservation Initiative received renewed support through the 2009–2012 Environmental Strategic Plan. The plan outlined land conservation and stewardship as a way to support communities, build partnerships and strengthen the Basin’s ability to meet environmental challenges.¹⁸ The Trust took action by supporting community efforts to conserve places like Valhalla Mile and Slocan Island, building relationships with organizations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada to protect Lot 48 on Columbia Lake and Darkwoods Conservation Area.

Just as the Trust had consulted with people in the Basin to update its CBMP, resident input helped to refine the Trust’s investment policies. By 2005, the organization’s investment portfolio had just surpassed \$43 million and continued to grow. The organization hired Johnny Strilaeff to oversee this portfolio as manager of investments. In this newly created position, Strilaeff guided the development of official investment policies and procedures. The Trust consulted with both residents and experts to prepare the final policy. “We didn’t just lock ourselves in a room one day and say, ‘Here’s what we’re going to do,’” Strilaeff explained.¹⁹ It took 64 drafts before the policy was approved in 2007. The final Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures maintained the Trust’s enduring commitment to keeping investments within the Basin. The statement underlined that the best-performing and most profitable investments should adhere to high ethical and environmental standards.²⁰ The portfolio would stick to three categories: hydropower investments, market securities

Darkwoods Conservation Area



Above left: Forester Roland Meyer worked in Darkwoods for nearly 40 years. Now retired, the Nature Conservancy of Canada considers him an ambassador to the area.

For thousands of years, grizzly bears, mountain caribou, wolves and countless other wildlife species shared this land with First Nations. In 1897, they were joined by settlers when Nelson & Sheppard Railway acquired the land, and later by multiple forestry corporations. It was not until 1967—when it was purchased by German Duke Carl Herzog von Württemberg—that Darkwoods got its name, in reference to Germany’s Black Forest.

Darkwoods became the annual vacation spot of Duke von Württemberg and his family, and a potential escape should Germany be overtaken by the Soviet Union.²¹ He also ran a small forestry operation on the land. But after decades spent exploring the expansive 136,000-acre property, both financial strain and the increased difficulty of overseas travel for the aging Duke von Württemberg led his family to sell Darkwoods. The Duke hoped to see the land go to someone who would conserve and protect his beloved landscape. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) purchased the property in July 2008 in what was (and remains) the largest single private land acquisition for conservation purposes ever undertaken in Canada.²² The Trust’s involvement was also historic: it committed \$500,000 to NCC’s efforts to protect Darkwoods. This was the Trust’s largest funding contribution to a single land conservation initiative.²³ The Trust has continued to support NCC. In 2018, it contributed \$650,000 toward the purchase of the Next Creek watershed, which expanded Darkwoods by another 19,500 acres. “Conserving the Next Creek watershed and expanding Darkwoods represents the fulfillment of a conservation vision that started over a decade ago,” said NCC BC Regional Vice President Nancy Newhouse, who added that the Trust’s “clear commitment to conservation has helped to make a real, on-the-ground difference to the people, wildlife and ecosystems of the Columbia Basin region.”²⁴



Students and businesses across the Basin have benefitted from the Summer Works and School Works programs. In recent years, students have completed summer jobs at places like Purcell Timber Frame Homes in Nelson, Happy Cow Ice Cream in Fernie, The Pickle Patch in Creston and Derailed Sports in Golden.



(such as bonds and stocks) and private placements. Private placements involved a direct investment in Basin businesses, either through loans or equity partnerships.²⁵ The revenue from all investments would be used to fund delivery-of-benefits activities, cover operating costs or be further invested.

The strength of the Trust's investment portfolio shielded the organization from the impacts of the global economic downturn of 2008. Because most of its investments were based on fixed, long-term agreements, the Trust's revenues remained steady. For example, 85 per cent of revenues came from hydropower investments based on prearranged power sales agreements with BC Hydro and FortisBC.²⁶ In fact, the Trust's revenue was increasing. In 2009, a reported \$9 million was delivered in benefits to the region, up 70 per cent from the previous year.²⁷

The organization's steady revenue, in spite of the 2008 recession, meant it could assist Basin communities that were not so fortunate. In the Basin, employment rates in 2008 declined by just over seven per cent and approximately 5,600 jobs were lost.²⁸ The housing market was also down, and the forestry industry was in crisis. Forestry exports, already suffering because of continuing softwood lumber disputes between Canada and the United States, were reduced further when the demand for lumber plummeted in the wake of the

American housing crisis.²⁹ There were shutdowns across British Columbia, including Tembec's East Kootenay operations, where 1,100 workers were affected by the temporary closures of the Elko and Canal Flats sawmills, the Cranbrook lumber plant and the Skookumchuk pulp mill in 2009.³⁰ Shutdowns had a domino effect, impacting contractors who provided transportation and other services and eliminating wages that otherwise would have been pumped back into local businesses.

The Trust could not fix the recession or forestry crisis, but it could support the economy by providing training and employment programs, creating job opportunities and investing in services such as affordable housing. The Trust and Columbia Power hired over 400 local labourers to work on the Waneta Expansion project when construction began in 2010.³¹ It launched Summer Works and School Works in the early 2010s to provide small businesses with wage subsidies to hire high school and post-secondary students. The early success of these programs led to co-op placements and apprenticeships to assist individuals interested in the trades. As affordable housing became a growing concern, the Trust invested in new developments and continued its support for seniors' housing. The organization found a balance between responding to present economic and social challenges and securing protections against future issues.

The Trust supports workers and businesses through a variety of grant and investment programs. Through the Co-Op Wage Subsidy program, university student Harshit Kandpal gained valuable work experience with the City of Nelson. In 2019, the Apprentice Wage Subsidy Program helped Cranbrook's Freightliner hire an apprentice mechanic. The year before, the Training Fee Support Program helped Alfred Moore of Winlaw gain the training he needed to become a logging truck driver.



THE FINAL PIECE

The final piece of the Trust's investment puzzle was Waneta Expansion. With construction beginning in 2010, Waneta Expansion added a second powerhouse that shares the existing hydraulic head, generating clean, renewable, cost-effective power from water that would otherwise be spilled. An ambitious project, valued at over \$900 million, it was the Trust and Columbia Power's biggest and most expensive undertaking, requiring nearly 10 years of planning and preparation before construction moved forward.

Equally ambitious was the partnership model. Extensive feasibility studies and lengthy power sales negotiations revealed that the Trust and Columbia Power needed a third partner to make the project viable. Not only was the project expensive, but it would need a buyer for the surplus capacity: the excess energy not required by the primary customer, BC Hydro. That third partner — and buyer — was Fortis Inc., Canada's largest private utility company. Fortis signed an agreement with the Trust and Columbia Power in October 2010. The deal gave Fortis 51 per cent ownership over the project, with the remaining shares going to Columbia Power (32.5 per cent) and the Trust (16.5 per cent). Waneta Expansion became the first power project in British Columbia to be developed through a public-private partnership.³² Fortis would purchase any surplus capacity, an agreement that made the project economically viable, ensuring that sufficient revenue would be generated to make the project worthwhile.

Any reluctance about the decision to bring in an external partner was eased by the many benefits it produced. The project created job opportunities for women and people with disabilities. A First Nations liaison was brought on to maximize opportunities for First Nations workers. The Ktunaxa-owned contracting company Nupqu Development Corporation cleared the land to make way for the transmission line.³³ Columbia Power also upheld its commitment to social and economic growth by ensuring that at least 70 per cent of the workforce was local. Waneta Expansion created over 1,400 jobs, which went a long way toward boosting employment in the Basin as the region continued its recovery from the 2008 recession.³⁴ It also helped strengthen residents' confidence in the Trust and signalled that the organization was back on track.

The Trust had put residents first and restored the trust that had been eroding. It was working to manage its growth without losing sight of its original vision. Nor did the organization waver in the delivery of benefits, as it repaired relationships, fixed mistakes and readied itself for the future. Continued growth meant finding a balance between planning and action. The Trust had a clear charter and strong strategic priorities, an investment plan, refined policies and procedures and ways to measure and maximize success. It was a solid foundation upon which to continue. The Trust could move forward with a renewed sense of purpose and vision.

Opposite, and above, left: The Trust and Columbia Power's most ambitious project, Waneta Expansion, was completed between 2010 and 2015. Grand-opening celebrations were held in 2015 to mark the occasion and recognize the workers that made it happen. Waneta initially required a third partner, Fortis Inc., to make the project viable. By 2019, the Trust and Columbia Power bought back Fortis' shares and obtained full joint ownership over the project.

Above, right: The Ktunaxa-owned Nupqu Development Corporation was contracted to clear land to make way for the 10-kilometre transmission line for Waneta Expansion. This involved felling trees, clearing debris and salvaging timber. Nupqu also surveyed and cleared land for access roads.







SIX

CHARTING A PATH

2010–2020

The Trust’s 15th anniversary in 2010 was an occasion for celebration. It was also a time for thinking back and looking ahead. Garry Merkel remembered “a lot of growing. It’s hard to believe it has been 15 years since myself and other founding Board members were present in the British Columbia legislature signing the CBT Act.”¹ From the first moment of its establishment in 1995, the Trust has sought opportunities to collaborate, educate, facilitate and create. Supporting the efforts of Basin people and communities means much more than financial help, said Johnny Strilaeff. “It’s about expertise; it’s about knowledge; it’s about shared visioning. It’s about bringing folks together.”² The Trust stood on solid footing. It had overcome the challenges of earlier years and was balancing internal operations with external responsibilities. The Basin’s faith in the organization was renewed as the Trust listened and responded to residents’ concerns. The Trust’s revenues, resources and reach had expanded and, along with them, the organization’s capacity to make a difference. The evolution and growth continued. Entering its next chapter, the Trust strengthened relationships, supported new ideas and led the Basin toward enduring and transformative change.

MORE THAN A FUNDER

Founded on the idea that Basin residents and communities should have control over their own future, the Trust

strives to involve them in many ways. In addition to holding symposiums and workshops, building partnerships and working with advisory committees, the Trust works to promote grassroots funding decisions. In 2011 and 2012, the Trust introduced three programs that prioritized community input. Community Directed Funds and Community Directed Youth Funds placed decision-making in the hands of community steering committees. Community Directed Funds gave funds to linked communities (sub-regions) and groups across the Basin bound by similar interests, which then made their own decisions on how to allocate those funds.³ Community Directed Youth Funds emphasized youth voices by collecting and incorporating their feedback and giving them a place in making decisions. Engaging youth ensured they would benefit from activities and services that addressed their unique needs. The fund supported youth centres and groups like the Outlet Youth Centre in New Denver and Beaver Valley Youth Club in Montrose.⁴ Similarly, in 2012 the Trust started the Social Grants Program, which continues to fund community-initiated and community-supported projects. Decisions are made by a committee of volunteers with experience in the social sector and community development.

In 2016, the Trust founded the Basin Youth Network as an extension of the Community Directed Youth Funds. The network provides youth and communities

Col. Chris Hadfield captivated delegates at the 2017 symposium where he encouraged them to dream big as they imagined and planned for the future of the Basin.

“You can start with a vision, but you should be willing to change your vision over time. You need to learn from what you’re doing, listen to what people are saying.”

LAURIE PAGE, BOARD MEMBER

with the opportunity to collaborate and learn from one another when it comes to youth programs and services. People were pleased to see the grassroots model used to direct the youth fund continue. “I know that others joining the network will see success because of this approach too,” said Revelstoke Youth Liaison Megan Shandro. “It allows us to identify local priorities and act on them.”⁵

As the Trust matured, so too did its capacity to act creatively and flexibly. Senior staff member Aimee Ambrosone said the Trust’s role had grown to “give a grant, to develop a partnership, to launch a program, to address a gap, to be an information resource, to be a facilitator of discussion, to own an asset, [and] to make sure that asset creates benefits back to the region.”⁶ In 2013, the Trust established a new branch called Special Initiatives, dedicated to research and development. Executive Director of Special Initiatives Kindy Gosal explained that the Trust’s work in the Basin had increased, and it was being called on to play different roles, sometimes in areas in which the Trust had no experience or expertise. Special Initiatives remains dedicated to understanding problems, finding solutions and determining how to best offer support.⁷

The Trust’s breadth of experience and resources allows it to adapt and meet challenges. One of these was poor internet connectivity, an issue residents began to battle in the early 2000s. As technology evolved,

2010 Symposium

Nearly 300 delegates gathered at the 2010 symposium in Revelstoke. Participants explored the theme of “Shaping Our Future Together” and were challenged to consider future goals and obstacles facing the Basin through a scenario-based planning exercise. Delegates and residents were treated to a night of cultural entertainment at venues across Revelstoke. The event also celebrated the Trust’s 15th anniversary with birthday cake and candles.





“I’m very confident that the foundation we’ve laid together will continue to serve the Basin well. I hesitate to predict exactly what our many diverse communities will aspire to, but I am confident—I have no doubt at all—that the Trust will find clever and innovative ways to get there.”

GREG DECK, CHAIR, 2013–2015

rural internet infrastructure was either outdated or non-existent. This placed the Basin at a disadvantage. Businesses could not compete in the global economy, freelance workers were forced to commute or move to larger centres and students struggled to access educational material. Local governments fell behind in how they managed and shared information. The high-speed connection required to connect to the digital world of social media, online marketplaces and the entertainment landscape was absent or inaccessible.

The undeniable gap in internet services was not easily filled. Communities struggled to attract telecommunications providers because of the immense expense involved in laying new infrastructure, while efforts by community organizations to construct a broadband network fell short. The Trust helped fund some of those efforts: in 2001, it was involved in establishing the Columbia Mountain Open Network (CMON), a non-profit organization that aimed to create a Basin-wide open-access network. After successfully building network infrastructure in the Castlegar and Trail area, CMON’s work was stalled by financial difficulties. Basin residents’ need for connectivity persisted. The Trust answered the call in 2011 when it acquired CMON’s assets and announced plans to take up where CMON had left off.⁸

The Trust established a new subsidiary to manage the

task: Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation (CBBC). Laurie Page described this as a good lesson for all the Trust’s programs. “You can start with a vision, but you should be willing to change your vision over time,” said Page. “You need to learn from what you’re doing, listen to what people are saying, look at what’s needed, evaluate the opportunities and then, you know, try something else or try something new or try something the same.”⁹

As it had done years earlier when acquiring hydro-power assets, the Trust suddenly had to learn the ins and outs of an unfamiliar industry. CBBC would not only develop and operate a broadband network, it would own that network and be responsible for attracting and selling to internet service providers. In some instances, CBBC itself took on the work of internet service provider to deliver connections straight to customers.

CBBC and the Trust continue to fund broadband initiatives and to collaborate with regional committees and governments. Since 2013, CBBC has activated a network of over 900 kilometres. Its success demonstrates the Trust’s commitment to invest in people and communities.¹⁰

The Trust also encouraged residents’ involvement in the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty. In 2014, both British Columbia and the United States gave notice of their wish to renegotiate the Treaty. When British Columbia began to investigate options for an updated



Creating a Basin-wide broadband internet network has been an enduring priority for the Trust. The network, operated by Trust subsidiary Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation, is made up of over 975 kilometres of fibre-optic cable, and continues to be expanded. Wireless towers and antennas have been built or upgraded across the region to strengthen the signal and reach many rural communities that are not served by wired connection.



Enhancing Internet Connectivity

Connecting Communities

High-speed internet connects citizens, enables businesses to remain competitive in a global economy, supports education, helps attract and retain youth, and augments the delivery of health and government services. It can improve the quality of life, well-being and prosperity of Columbia Basin residents, as well as the sustainability of smaller and rural/remote communities.

The Trust recognizes that to be successful, this region needs better high-speed connectivity. Yet in many areas, there isn't adequate telecommunications infrastructure or services available.

To meet the needs of residents and communities, the Trust created a wholly owned subsidiary, the Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation, to work toward providing connectivity to a broadband network across the region and fostering the development of services over that network. The map shows the Trust's fibre-optic network of over 975 kilometres and its projects currently under construction.

How Broadband Works

Broadband is a form of high-speed internet connection. It relies on a network of fibre-optic cables that transmit data in the form of light. The central part of this network is called the backbone. The backbone is a large bundle of cables that can stretch hundreds of kilometres across a region, under or above ground. Data travels along the backbone until it is diverted along a second path, or middle mile, where it reaches a point of presence. Points of presence allow internet service providers to access the internet and deliver it to homes and businesses. Points of presence either broadcast a wireless signal to rural areas or reroute data through a third path called the last mile, which sends data straight to a community through additional fibre-optic cables.



“Twenty-five years ago, no one could have painted a picture as to what the Trust would be like today... To paint a picture of what the Trust is going to look like 25 years from now? I think we’ll all be amazed.”

RICK JENSEN, CHAIR, 2015–2019



agreement, the Trust helped ensure that the Province consulted Basin residents and other stakeholders. It provided input to the government on the consultation process and helped draft a Memorandum of Understanding to guide that process.¹¹

The Trust itself was not engaged in negotiations but helped educate and inform residents on issues surrounding the future of the Columbia River. It provided resources to Basin residents, governments and First Nations and advocated for these groups to be involved in the process. The Trust encouraged people to attend community meetings on the subject, and they co-hosted a regular Columbia Basin Transboundary Conference to facilitate exploration, discussion and collaborative action on issues facing the Basin and the river. When negotiations officially began in May 2018, the Trust worked to ensure residents had the information they needed to meaningfully participate in this process.

OUR TRUST, OUR FUTURE

The Trust's responsibilities remain driven by its strategic priorities. The first, set in 2007, helped guide the Trust's three-year plan. Since then, the organization has updated its strategic priorities every five years.

The update slated for 2016 coincided with an unprecedented revenue increase because of a new power sales agreement at Arrow Lakes Generating Station and the completion of Waneta Expansion. With more revenue, the Trust could deliver more benefits back to the Basin. According to Kindy Gosal, the organization would “be going from approximately \$22 million, the expenditures for delivery of benefits [in 2014], to about \$55 million in a three to five-year time period. That is a significant jump in resources.”¹²

True to all its big decisions, the Trust made sure residents had a say in how the money would be spent. As it prepared to set its strategic priorities, the Trust recognized it could support them with better funding than ever before. The money, however, was not what was most important. In September 2014, the Trust launched a year-long public engagement process called Our Trust, Our Future. The goal was to reach people in their communities, hear their concerns and ideas and determine how the Trust could help. Johnny Strilaeff remembered those days. “We were literally talking with people at their kitchen tables,” said Strilaeff. “We were in community halls, alongside roads, and we were in gymnasiums.”¹³

At the centre of Our Trust, Our Future were 21



“This organization was an audacious idea, as audacious of an idea that I’ve ever been part of on either a personal or professional level. The individuals, the creators, the visionaries, the entire region that came together... they weren’t focused on a corporation. They were focused on an idea and an accomplishment.”

JOHNNY STRILAEFF, PRESIDENT AND CEO, 2016–PRESENT

community workshops that invited participants to explore and collaborate on their visions for the Basin. People crowded into halls filled with displays and banners that provided information on the Trust’s activities, accomplishments and possibilities. They gathered at tables to listen and share ideas with their neighbours. They answered questions like “What’s most important?” and “What makes your community great?” They discussed what the Trust was doing well, and what it could do to improve. Blank pages and whiteboards overflowed with colourful notes at the close of each workshop, a visual symbol of the excitement residents felt for the future of the Basin and their belief in the Trust’s capacity to help them achieve their goals.

In addition to the workshops, the Trust set up information booths, created an interactive website, distributed workbooks and met with partners and collaborators. By the end of Our Trust, Our Future, the Trust had connected with over 3,000 residents and received more than 17,000 suggestions for the social, economic and environmental future of the Basin. Trust staff, advisory groups and Board members studied the intelligence they gathered to determine key ideas and translate them into strategic priorities.¹⁴

Our Trust, Our Future produced 13 strategic priorities to focus the Trust from 2016 to 2020. Several priorities were familiar: ongoing support for the environment, economic development and helping communities identify and address their own challenges. New strategic priorities included recreation and physical activity, early childhood and childhood development, and renewable and alternative energy.

The Trust implemented fresh measures to address these priorities. It updated existing strategic plans that guided its social, economic and environmental goals and created more specific plans. Each priority had customized plans with details on how the Trust would approach and evaluate the success of particular objectives. For example, the Housing Initiatives Strategic Framework outlined three objectives: to support local and regional efforts to address housing priorities; to support Indigenous housing; and to strengthen the Basin’s social and economic well-being by funding, constructing and investing in multiple housing options.¹⁵ The plan identified two primary roles for the Trust in meeting these objectives: a funding partner and a project development advocate. Through its First Nations Housing Sustainability Initiative, for example,



Our Trust, Our Future
From 2014 to 2015, the Trust launched an engagement process called Our Trust, Our Future. It connected with over 3,000 residents through 21 community workshops across the Basin, as well as an interactive website, information booths and workbooks. Participants shared their ideas for the future of the Basin, helping decide the Trust’s future programs and priorities.



Angry Hen Brewing Co.'s mission to brew up local jobs and breathe new life into a historic Kaslo building made it a solid candidate for an Impact Investment loan.

the Trust assists First Nations communities in planning new projects. At the same time, it provides grants to help finance on-reserve builds; increase the capacity of communities to develop and manage housing assets; and support building repairs, energy retrofits and health-and-safety enhancements.¹⁶

The Trust further met strategic commitments by integrating aspects of its investments and delivery of benefits. The organization began to explore how it could deliver benefits—traditionally delivered through grants, partnerships and programs—through its investment portfolio. Investments could generate income to finance the Trust's grants and programs, but they could also directly help the Basin. This was the principle behind the Impact Investment Fund, established in 2015. "Sometimes an opportunity doesn't generate high financial returns, but it does generate other benefits," explained CEO Neil Muth. "For example, it may create jobs, or support the well-being of people in the community, or help the environment. If so, we may now consider investing in it."¹⁷ Through the Impact Investment Fund, the Trust and its delivery partners have supported a range of business endeavours that create local jobs and give back to the community. Aaron Davidson, founder

of nutrition and fitness app Cronometer, was able to turn his part-time gig into a business with eight employees based in Revelstoke. "We're offering a place for these people who have high potential," said Davidson. "At least a couple of those people would have left Revelstoke if this work opportunity had not come about."¹⁸

THRIVING IN CHANGE

The Trust's internal resilience was tested in late 2016 with the sudden death of long-time CEO Neil Muth. For 11 years, Muth had guided the Trust as it grew and expanded services and investments across the Basin. He had led the Trust as it strengthened its relationships with people and communities. Members of the Trust relied on each other as they confronted operational and personal challenges after Muth's death. "The [Trust] family kind of stuck together and weathered it, and services to residents were not impacted," Board member Laurie Page remembered.¹⁹ The relatively smooth transition to a new CEO after Muth's passing was a testament to his leadership.²⁰ He had already begun discussions about a succession plan for his eventual retirement.

Johnny Strilaeff became the new CEO. Formerly the Trust's Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer,

Early Childhood and Child Development



The Trust made early childhood and child development one of its strategic priorities in 2016. Parents and caregivers had reported major challenges across the region about child care availability, affordability, funding and staffing.

High costs were a particular concern. It was a crisis, said Cranbrook resident Patricia Whalen. "Parents are feeling, 'I'm basically going to have to work to pay for child care.'" As manager of Cranbrook's Children First program, Whalen was part of a 2014 task force formed to assess problems and find solutions for the situation. She explained the task force's findings: "There are two scenarios in many of our communities: they either have the space for child care but not staff, or some communities have staff but no space."²¹ By 2015, there were as many as 18 vacant positions for child-care providers across the region.²²

Well aware of the child-care issue faced by Basin families, the Trust joined the task force and, through it, contributed funding to a variety of initiatives—and not for the first time. Several years earlier, the Trust had expanded its Community Development Program to include specific guidelines for child-care funding. The community of Sparwood was one of the first to take advantage of this funding, and in 2011 received \$50,000 toward a new facility and staff training.²³

By 2017, the demand for child care in the Basin had

increased enough for the Trust to create a dedicated Child Care Support Program. This provided \$3.6 million over three years to help providers obtain training and staff support, create and improve facilities, or access advisory services. Rossland's Golden Bear Children's Centre Manager Ketna Makwana was pleased to see the Trust respond to community needs. "It's something that educators have been striving towards for a number of years now," she said. "We've been requesting it, we've been arguing about it, that we need more funding to open up more child care spaces."²⁴

By 2018, the program had helped create 238 new licensed child-care spaces and improve another 1,729 existing spaces; this included spending nearly \$100,000 on new equipment. The program helped Early Childhood Educators become certified, complete practicum placements and find employment, which improved the quality of staff. All in all, the Trust assisted 84 licensed facilities across the Basin.²⁵



2017 Symposium
Four hundred and fifty participants gathered in Kimberley for the Trust's 2017 symposium, with hundreds more joining online.



“Ever since I moved here in the mid-1990s, I’ve been struck by the commitment to community development and regional self-determination that characterizes so many Basin communities.”

JOCELYN CARVER, CHAIR, 2020–PRESENT



Strilaeff had worked closely alongside Muth for many years. In fact, they had started with the Trust the same week in 2005. Strilaeff was a crucial force for the Trust’s ongoing growth, guiding the establishment of investment policies and procedures while serving as head of the investment portfolio. Like his predecessors, Strilaeff had a personal connection to the Basin, having been born and raised in Castlegar. He understood the uniqueness of the region and its importance. With firm policies and procedures in place at the Trust, his leadership style could prosper. “I recognize the importance of planning,” he said, “but I really embrace and excel at action and achievement.”²⁶ A forward-thinker, Strilaeff was excited to see what the Trust and the Basin could achieve.

The Trust’s resilience under pressure demonstrated the strength of the organization and its staff. The Trust had easily adapted to change and had guided Basin communities to do the same. “Thriving in Change” was the theme of the 2017 symposium. Recognizing the inevitability of change in the Basin and around the world, the event encouraged participants to think creatively and collaboratively, and to anticipate challenges and find solutions.

With 450 delegates, the 2017 symposium was the

Trust’s biggest one yet, and it had a guest to match. In his keynote address, astronaut Chris Hadfield encouraged residents to dream big and set “audacious” goals. Hadfield’s words echoed through the Kimberley conference centre. “The things we accomplish in life,” he said, “are a reflection of the edges of our expectations.”²⁷ This rang true for the Trust and the communities and people it served. What could be accomplished together was unlimited.

This sense of limitlessness would spill over into the coming years as the Trust, together with people and communities, continued to improve the Basin’s society, economy and environment in ways large and small. In January 2019, the Trust reached a long-anticipated milestone: after several years of sharing ownership of Waneta Expansion with Fortis, the Trust and Columbia Power bought out the private utility company to gain full ownership over the powerhouse. Buying back Fortis’s 51 per cent share had a hefty price tag of \$991 million. It was made possible through a loan from the provincial government.

The purchase was a critical milestone for the Trust and Columbia Power, which now had equal ownership over all of their hydropower assets. “That’s one of the



Basin Stories

The Trust is involved with hundreds of projects and initiatives every year. Stories like these are celebrated in the annual *Our Trust* magazine, an update of the previous Report to Residents.

mandates that we successfully concluded,” said Board Chair Rick Jensen.²⁸ The Trust and Columbia Power had achieved their goal of owning, developing and operating all four hydropower assets for the benefit of the Basin. The next generations will reap the rewards of the Waneta Expansion deal, along with the revenue from Arrow Lakes Generating Station, Brilliant Dam and Brilliant Expansion. The spirit of the *Columbia Basin Trust Act* was being fulfilled.

TRUSTED FOUNDATIONS

Through the Trust, the people of the Basin have created legacies of social, economic and environmental well-being and a foundation for future success. Together, they transformed the devastating impacts of the Columbia River Treaty into an opportunity for growth and improvement. Using the money endowed to them through the Treaty’s downstream benefits, the Trust has invested in the Basin in a thousand ways and grown into an organization that facilitates change, generates thought, empowers residents and forges solutions alongside its communities. Whether to improve literacy, ease homelessness, connect residents to the internet or transform a residential school from a place of hurt into



a place of healing, the Trust partners with residents and gives them the tools, resources, funds and support necessary to achieve their goals. The Trust co-operates with environmental groups seeking to conserve land and wildlife; organizations building affordable and accessible housing for families, seniors and First Nations; and those advancing arts and culture in the Basin. The Trust works and shares information with local and regional governments. Programs and networking opportunities for youth engage the Basin's young people, who will inherit the Trust and its legacy. As of 2020, the Trust has over 70 active programs and initiatives, each making a special and unique contribution.

Reflecting on astronaut Chris Hadfield's words at the 2017 symposium about audacious ideas, CEO Johnny Strilaeff described the Trust as "an audacious idea, as audacious of an idea that I've ever been part of on either a personal or professional level. The individuals, the creators, the visionaries, the entire region that came together...they weren't focused on a corporation. They were focused on an idea and an accomplishment."²⁹

What had begun as the dream of a handful of individuals seeking to overcome the damage caused by the Columbia River Treaty dams has exceeded the

expectations of thousands of Basin residents: those who gathered at Castlegar's ballpark in 1992 to discuss the Treaty and its impacts; the members of the Columbia River Treaty Committee; the Trust's first Board of Directors who stood on the steps of the provincial legislature the day the *Columbia Basin Trust Act* was passed; those who shared their thoughts, both positive and critical, at community meetings and symposia; and everyone who contributed, partnered or worked with the Trust along the way. "I'm very confident that the foundation we've laid together will continue to serve the Basin well," said Board member Greg Deck. "I hesitate to predict exactly what our many diverse communities will aspire to, but I am confident—I have no doubt at all—that the Trust will find clever and innovative ways to get there."³⁰

As it looks toward the future, Columbia Basin Trust is steadfast in its commitment to inspire and empower the people of the Basin to thrive and dream about the unlimited possibilities they can accomplish together.



*An idea. For community. For people.
The Columbia Basin Trust began
with an idea. Twenty-five years
ago, no one could have imagined all
that might be possible. Thank you
to the people of the Basin for your
remarkable efforts. Together, we are
strengthening the places we love.*





AFTERWORD

Many of the visionaries who formed the Trust had experienced firsthand the adverse impacts to the Basin region resulting from the Columbia River Treaty. Rather than dwelling on those negatives, they chose instead to look forward, and in doing so they empowered residents to create a better region, one that would be influenced by the dreams and aspirations of all Basin residents.

Twenty-five years later, as we conclude this book, the people of the Basin are again facing extraordinary challenges. As the coronavirus pandemic disrupts all of society, people of the Basin are banding together, unified in their focus to persevere and be more resilient.

In partnership with the Trust, Basin residents have made tremendous strides in improving social, economic and environmental well-being in the Basin. Even as the world throws curve balls, residents continue to develop bold, innovative ideas for the future of the region, and we continue to provide the resources needed to transform those ideas into reality.

The possibilities for our next 25 years are vast. In 2019/20, we offered over 70 programs, including some tailor-made for the pandemic, which supported more than 2,160 projects. If our past is any indication, these numbers will only continue to rise. With this support, there's no limit to what the people of the Basin can achieve.

Residents old and new often speak with conviction that their children and grandchildren will inherit and benefit from the Trust. As we set out on the next leg of our journey together, we hope to make the next generation proud.

Jocelyn Carver

Jocelyn Carver
Board Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1995–2020

CURRENT DIRECTORS

Andrews, Carol	Castlegar	2018–2021
Binks, Larry	Creston	2015–2020
Carver, Jocelyn	Nelson	2017–2018, 2019 (Vice-Chair), 2020 (Chair)
Evans, Corky	Winlaw	1995–1996, 2017–2020
McConnachie, Murray	Trail	2017–2021
McCormick, Don	Kimberley	2018–2021
Oszust, Ron	Golden	2000–04, 2006, 2007 (Vice-Chair), 2008, 2010–12, 2018–20
Raven, David	Revelstoke	2012–2014, 2017–2019, 2020 (Vice-Chair)
Thomas, Vickie	Cranbrook	2014–2020
Torgerson, Owen	Valemount	2019–2020
Turcasso, Krista	Fernie	2018–2020
van Yzerloo, Bill	Castlegar	2019–2021

FORMER DIRECTORS

Arcuri, Ben	Nelson	2003–2004
Berg, Mike	Nelson	2005–2011
Bergenske, John	Skookumchuk	1997–2002
Birdstone, Denise	Grasmere	2006–2014
Booth, Wendy	Fairmont	2001–2017, 2018 (Vice-Chair)
Brien, David	Castlegar	2003–2005
Cowan, Bill	Nakusp	2002–2004
Cutts, Evelyn	Fernie	2003–2010
Deane, Kim	Rossland	2009–2015
Delich, Mike	Fernie	2015–2017
DeRosa, Gord	Trail	2012–2017
Dooley, John	Nelson	2014–2017
Drysdale, Jackie	Rossland	2003–2006
Edwards, Anne	Moyie	1997–2002
Gallinger, Cindy	Elkford	2010–2014
Hardie, Rick	Fruitvale	1998–2002
Jensen, Rick	Cranbrook	2012–2014, 2015 (Vice-Chair), 2016–2019 (Chair)
Kartasheff, Mike	Fort Steele	2000–2003
Korman, Sandy	Castlegar	1999–2001
Kruisselbrink, Bill	Valemount	1998–2004
Lim, Stan	Golden	1998–2000
McCracken, Andru	Valemount	2012–2014
McKee, Mark	Revelstoke	2004–2006
McLean, Keith	Cranbrook	1997–2000
Miles, Ron	Cranbrook	2003–2011
Miller, Jim	Creston	2005–2011
Naqvi, Am	Nelson	2011–2018
Page, Laurie	Nakusp	2011–12, 2013–14 (Vice-Chair), 2015, 2016–18 (Vice-Chair)
Parker, Fred	Castlegar	1997–2003
Parker, Loni	Revelstoke	1998–2004, 2008–2010, 2015–2018
Partridge, Joanne	Castlegar	1996–1999
Peterson, Paul	Burton	2007–2014
Rouse, Mike	Wycliffe	2003–2009
Ruston, Rhonda	Kaslo	2015–2017
Smith, Bob	Valemount	2010–2012
Titsworth, Gordon	Trail	2002–2004
Trewhella, Bill	Trail	2007–2012
Voykin, John	Castlegar	2000–2002
Walsh, Erda	Cranbrook	1996–1997
White, Derryl	Cranbrook	2001–2003

FOUNDING BOARD OF DIRECTORS, JULY 1995



FOUNDING DIRECTORS

17	Battersby, Geoff	Revelstoke	1995–1998
9	Bjarnason, Dave	Elkford	1995–2001
16	Bogs, Dieter	Trail	1995–2007
	Brown, Jo	Winlaw	1995–2001
15	Conroy, Ed	Castlegar	1995–1996
13	Deck, Greg	Radium	1995–07, 2008–12 (Vice-Chair), 2013–15 (Chair)
10	Demmon, Fred	Parksville	1995–1998
2	Doyle, Jim	Golden	1995–1997
11	Evans, Corky	Winlaw	1995–1996, 2017–2020
3	Grasdal, Mona	Dunster	1995–1998
8	Harvey, Shelby	Revelstoke	1995–1996
5	Johnson, Rosemarie	Kelowna	1995–2000
14	Merkel, Garry	Kimberley	1995–2006 (Vice-Chair), 2007–2012 (Chair)
7	Millar, Roy	Invermere	1995–1997
12	Pierre, Joe Sr.	Creston	1995–2002
4	Smienk, Josh	Balfour	1995–2006 (Chair)
1	Tatangelo, Joe	Christina Lake	1995–1998
6	Townsend, Jeannette	Valemount	1995–2010, 2015–2018

TRUST PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Johnny Strilaeff 2016–present	Neil Muth 2005–2016	Don Johnston 1999–2005	Ivan Robinson 1996–1998

CHAIRS

Jocelyn Carver 2020–present	Rick Jensen 2016–2019	Greg Deck 2013–2015	Garry Merkel 2007–2012	Josh Smienk 1995–2006

OUR LOGO

In September 1996, the Trust held a competition to determine its first logo. It received 109 submissions. The successful logo, featuring a river running through three mountains, first appeared in the Trust’s 1997 Annual Report. The logo was updated in 2001, retaining its focus on the natural landscape. In 2014, the Trust introduced a new visual identity. The new logo features a mosaic of vibrant greens and brilliant blues to highlight the collective value of “trust” that the organization shares with Basin residents and partners.



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1

2–3

4–5

6–7

8–9

10–11

12–13
- Lucas Jmieff.

Pat Morrow.

Pat Morrow.

Ryan Creary.

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- CHAPTER 1

16

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CHAPTER 2

42

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46

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CHAPTER 3

76

78

79

80

81

82

84

85

86

87

88

89

91

92

94–95

96–97

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CHAPTER 4

98

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106

107

108

110

111

112

114

116–117

118–119

120

122

123

124

125

127

129

130

131

132

133

134–135

136–137

138

140–141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

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CHAPTER 5

120

122

123

124

125

127

129

130

131

132

133

134–135

136–137

138

140–141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

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CHAPTER 6

138

140–141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

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151

152

153

155

157

158

160–161

170–171

172–173

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BACK MATTER

160–161

170–171

172–173

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166

167

INDEX

A

Affected Areas Program, 101
Ambrosone, Aimee, 126, 140
Apprentice Wage Subsidy Program, 131
Arrow Lakes (BC), 24, 27, 28, 37, 48, 53, 56; Upper Arrow Lake, 17; Lower Arrow Lake, 34
Arrow Lakes Generating Station, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 99, 103, 108–109, 115, 127,145, 152
Arrow Lakes Reservoir, 17, 24, 27, 28, 31, 34, 37, 45, 48, 53, 56, 77, 78, 87
Association of Kootenay Boundary Municipalities, 46–47

B

Balfour (BC), 35
Basin Voice Youth Action Forum, 105
Basin Youth Network, 139–140
BC Hydro, 23, 27, 28, 29, 31, 35, 37, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52, 54, 55, 59, 89, 93, 109, 113, 115, 131, 133
BC Seniors Games, 103, 111
BC Utilities Commission, 109
Beaver Valley Youth Club, 139
Bennett, Don, 83
Bennett, W.A.C., 22, 24, 43
Bergenske, John, 83
Blackfoot Nation, 110
Blaine (WA), 24
Blue Lake Camp, 105
Bogs, Dieter, 43, 47, 49, 54, 60
Bonnevile Dam, 19
Brierley, Larry, 43, 47, 49, 78, 109
Brilliant Dam, 57, 59, 78, 84–85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 99, 123, 127, 152
Brilliant Dam Expansion, 57, 59, 78, 84–85, 88, 89, 90, 93, 108, 123, 124–125, 126, 127, 152
Broadband, 142–143, 144; Columbia Mountain Open Network, 142; Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation, 142–143, 144
Buerge, Oliver and Helen, 29, 31
Burton (BC), 27, 28, 29, 31, 53

C

Campbell, Gordon, 109
Canada, 19, 22, 24, 27, 50, 128, 131, 133
Canadian Pacific Railway, 17
Canal Flats (BC), 78, 105, 131
Canoe Hot Springs, 35
Carlson, Kirsten, 83
Carver, Jocelyn, 151
Castlegar (BC), 43, 49, 50, 53, 54, 59, 60, 77, 87, 89, 99, 100, 106, 107, 109, 115, 122, 123, 127, 142, 151, 154

CBC Radio, 45
Child Care Support Program, 149
Churches: St. John the Divine, 17; St. Mark’s Anglican, 17
Clark, Glen, 57, 59, 60
Columbia Basin Accord, 59, 60, 77, 78, 85
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, 101, 103
Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation, *see* Broadband
Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, 93
Columbia Basin Management Plan, 80, 82, 83, 84, 90, 93, 126, 127, 128
Columbia Basin Symposium: **1993**, *see* Columbia-Kootenay Symposium; **1994**, *see* Columbia-Kootenay Symposium; **1995**, 78–80; **1997**, 82, 83; **2005**, 121, 122; **2007**, 126, 127; **2010**, 140; **2017**, 150, 151, 154
Columbia Basin Trust Act, 15, 58, 59, 60, 77, 80, 84, 109, 139, 152, 154
Columbia-Kootenay Symposium: **1993**, 50, 51, 53–54; **1994**, 51, 55, 57, 58; *see also* Columbia Basin Symposium
Columbia Lake, 17, 128; Lot **48**, 128
Columbia Power Corporation, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 99, 100, 108, 109, 115, 123, 126, 131, 133, 151, 152
Columbia River, 17, 19, 22, 37, 43, 89, 106, 145
Columbia River Treaty, 19, 22, 23, 24, 27, 29, 32, 37, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 59, 78, 79, 87, 93, 99, 100, 101, 103, 105, 106, 113, 142, 152, 154, 159
Columbia River Treaty Committee, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 77, 80, 126, 154
Cominco, 84–85, 87, 89, 90, 103
Comishin, Kelly, 102
Community Directed Funds, 139
Community Directed Youth Funds, 139
Community Initiatives Program, 101
Conroy, Ed, 43, 47, 49, 60, 113
Cottonwood Creek, 17, 19
Cranbrook (BC), 53, 55, 77, 100, 106, 107, 110, 121, 131, 149
Creston (BC), 47, 77, 107, 129, 130
Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, 92, 93
Cronometer, 148

D

Darkwoods Conservation Area, 128, 129
Davidson, Aaron, 148
Deck, Greg, 78, 93, 109, 113, 115, 123, 142, 154
Derailed Sports, 130
Diefenbaker, John, 19, 22, 24
Donald (BC), 78
Douglas, Laurel, 83
Doyle, Jim, 47, 60
Duncan Dam, 24, 27, 32, 37

E

Edwards, Anne, 47, 49, 60
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 19, 22
Elk Valley (BC), 101
Elko (BC), 131
Enterprising Non-Profits, 128
Environmental Strategic Plan, 128
Evans, Corky, 43, 47, 49, 53, 54, 60, 61, 77, 84, 100, 113

F

Fernie (BC), 103, 107, 130
First Nations, 17, 31, 35, 55, 80, 87, 90, 103, 110–111, 129, 133, 145, 146, 148, 154
First Nations Housing Sustainability Initiative, 146, 148
Fishing industry: damage to, 19, 46, 49, 54
Forestry industry, 17, 35, 37, 45, 108, 129, 131; damage to, 37, 45, 49; logging, 37, 45, 48, 131
Fort Steele Heritage Town, 90, 91, 93
Fortis, 89, 131, 133, 151
Fowler, Stephen, 113
Freightliner Cranbrook, 131
Fruitvale (BC), 107

G

Gabana, Norm, 109
Gadbois, Brian, 27, 29
Gadsby, Leona, 101
Gold rush, 17
Golden (BC), 37, 53, 77, 78, 79, 83, 100, 130
Golden Bear Children’s Centre, 149
Golden Life Management, 106, 107; Joseph Creek Village, 107; Castle Wood Village, 106, 107
Gosal, Kindy, 105, 106, 140, 145
Grand Coulee Dam, 19, 46, 49
Green, Bill, 83

H

Hadfield, Chris, 139, 151, 154
Hamber Provincial Park, 35
Hambruch, Paul, 83
Hamling, Karen, 53, 57, 101, 123
Happy Cow Ice Cream, 130
Harcourt, Mike, 47, 59, 60, 127
HeatWave Drying Systems Ltd., 106, 108, 115
Henderson, Reid, 58
High Arrow Dam, *see* Hugh Keenleyside Dam
Hood, Brittney, 103
Housing Initiatives Strategic Framework, 146
Hugh Keenleyside Dam, 23, 27, 29, 32, 37, 48, 57, 59, 87, 89, 103, 115
Hydropower, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 27, 43, 47, 54, 57, 59, 88–89; Columbia Basin Trust’s investment in, 57–59, 78, 84–85, 87, 88–89, 90, 93, 99, 106, 108–109, 113, 115, 121, 123, 131, 133, 151

I

Impact Investment Fund, 148
International Joint Commission, 19
Invermere (BC), 77, 103, 107

J

Jaffray (BC), 77
Jensen, Rick, 145, 152
Johnson, Lyndon B., 24
Johnson, Rosemarie, 53, 54, 60
Johnston, Don, 93, 99, 103, 108, 121, 122

K

Kandpal, Harshit, 131
Kaslo (BC), 53, 77, 148
Keenleyside Dam, *see* Hugh Keenleyside Dam
Kimberley (BC), 47, 57, 83, 84, 107, 150, 151
Kinbasket Reservoir, 24, 35, 37
Kokanee Creek, 103
Kootenay Lake, 46
Kootenay Lake Fisheries Advisory Committee, 46
Kootenay River, 17, 19, 52, 89
Ktunaxa Nation, 17, 31, 50, 106, 110–111, 133; Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council, 49, 50, 80, 81; Ktunaxa Nation Council, 31, 111
Kyoto Protocol, 105

L

Lake Koocanusa reservoir, 31, 83
Land Conservation Initiative, 128
Lheidli T’enneh Nation, 17
Libby (MT), 24, 27
Libby Dam, 24, 27, 31, 52
Liberal Party (BC), 109, 113
Liberal Party (federal), 24
Lidstone, Don, 55, 58
Lillejord, Endre, 106, 107
Lillejord, Ivy, 107
Living Landscapes, 90, 91–93
Lynn, Charles, 52

M

McKay, Stu, 83
Marcolli, Herb, 48
Merkel, Garry, 50, 80, 84, 126, 139
Mica Creek, 24, 27
Mica Dam, 24, 32, 35, 37, 45, 48
Millar, Roy, 53
Montana, 17, 22, 24
Montrose (BC), 139
Moore, Alfred, 131
Moore, Audrey, 54
Mullin, Celeste, 107
Muth, Neil, 122, 123, 128, 148

N

Nakusp (BC), 17, 27, 28, 29, 31, 45, 53, 54, 57, 77, 78, 83, 93, 99, 100, 101, 109, 122, 123

Nature Conservancy of Canada, 128
Nelson (BC), 17, 46, 47, 77, 83, 99, 103, 104, 107, 109, 113, 130, 131
Nelson CARES Society, 128
Nelson Electric Light Company, 17
Nelson Rod and Gun Club, 46
New Democratic Party (BC), 47, 109
New Denver (BC), 92, 139
Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, 91, 92
Nupqu Development Corporation, 133

O

O’Connor, Mike, 100
Ogilvie, Jim, 47, 57
Okanagan Nation, *see* Syilx
Option Agreement, 115
Oregon, 17, 19, 22
see also Vanport (OR)
Our Trust magazine, 114, 122, 152
Our Trust, Our Future, 145–147

P

Page, Laurie, 122, 123, 140, 142, 148
Park, Rona, 128
Paul, Elder Mary, 110, 111
Peace Arch, 24
Peace River, 22, 43, 46
Pearson, Lester B., 24
Pend d’Oreille River, 89
Pend d’Oreille Valley, 91
Penner, Wally, 31, 87, 123
Peters, Pete and Maria, 29, 31
Pickle Patch, 130
Pierre, Sophie, 49, 50, 110, 111
Progressive Conservative Party (federal), 24
Proulx, Mikhel, 103
Purcell Timber Frame Homes, 130

R

Rama First Nation, 111
Regional District of Central Kootenay, 43, 46, 49, 78, 109
Regional District of Columbia-Shuswap, 45, 49
Regional District of East Kootenay, 45, 49, 53
Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, 49
Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, 45, 49, 53
Renata (BC), 29, 31, 34, 53, 56
Report to Residents, *see* *Our Trust* magazine
Resources for Family Literacy, 101
Revelstoke (BC), 27, 29, 37, 47, 48, 53, 77, 82, 83, 101, 103, 127, 140, 148
Ridge, Jess, 46
Robertson, Jim, 53
Robinson, Ivan, 77, 84, 93
Robson (BC), 29
Rocky Mountains
 Rocky Mountain Trench, 17
Rogers Pass, 103

Rohn, Rose, 34
Rossland (BC), 43, 47, 149
Royal BC Museum, 90, 91

S

Salanski, Lita, 52
Samson Cree Nation, 111
Sandon (BC), 17, 19
School Works, 130, 131
Scratch magazine, 104, 105
Second World War, 87, 92, 93
Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation, 17, 110
Selkirk Mountains, 103
Shandro, Megan, 140
Sharpe, Lloyd, 27, 83
Silversmith Mines, 17
Silverton (BC), 103
Sinixt Nation, 17, 103
Sivertson, Lorne, 87, 100
Skookumchuk (BC), 83, 131
Slocan Forest Products Ltd., 45
Slocan Island, 128
Slocan Valley, 43
Smienk, Josh, 35, 43, 46, 47, 49, 54, 60, 80, 83, 87, 90, 100, 113, 115, 122, 126
Social Credit Party (BC), 47
Social Grants Program, 139
Social Strategic Plan, 128
Special Initiatives, 140
Spicer, Christopher, 27, 31
Spicer, Janet, 31
Spicer, Jean, 27, 29, 31
Squakin, Hazel, 31
St. Eugene: St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino, 106, 108, 111, 115; St. Eugene Residential School, 106, 110
St. Mary River, 110
Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures, 128, 131
Streetfest (Nelson), 103
Strilaeff, Johnny, 128, 139, 145, 146, 148, 151, 154
Summer Works, 130, 131
Surrey (BC), 24
Syilx Nation, 17, 31, 110

T

Tatangelo, Joe, 53
Teck Cominco, 103, *see also* Cominco
Tembec, 131
Teneese, Kathryn, 31
Timko, Mark, 104
Townsend, Jeannette, 45, 50
Trail (BC), 19, 20–21, 43, 47, 77, 83, 84, 87, 90, 103, 109, 113, 122, 133, 142; **1948** flood, 19, 20–21
Training Fee Support Program, 131

U

United Nations International Panel on Climate Change, 105
United States of America, 19, 22, 24, 27, 47, 54, 87, 131, 142

V

Valemount (BC), 35, 37, 45, 50, 53, 77, 83
Valhalla Mile, 128
Vancouver Island, 78
Vanderpol, Martin, 43
Vanport (OR), 19; **1948** flood, 19
Victoria (BC), 60, 77, 91, 100, 109, 115, 122

W

Wage Subsidy Program, 131
Walsh, Erda, 91
Waneta Dam, 57, 59, 84, 85, 89, 133
Waneta Expansion, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 93, 131, 133, 145, 151, 152
Wasa (BC), 103
Washington state, 17, 19, 24
Washington, D.C., 22, 24
Water Initiatives Program, 106
Waterfield, Donald, 31
Welsh, Daisy, 27, 29
West Kootenay Power Ltd., 90, 109
Whalen, Patricia, 149
Wild Horse Creek, 17
Williston Lake, 46
Wilson, J.W., 37
Winlaw (BC), 83, 131
Wolf Creek, 103

Y

Youth Links, 102, 103, 105









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