

**Donna Redpath, Executive Director
North Peace Historical Society (NPHS)
June 25, 2003**

Ms. Redpath has been with the NP Historical Society for the past 14 years. Her principal duties are to manage the FSJ museum. - Peter Vanderguten who is on both the FSJ city council and the PRRD Board also serves as a director on the Peace River Heritage Society. The Society's principal function is operation of the museum, and due to very limited resources is not able to work on heritage site/property protection in the rural areas. Generally, around the north Peace, there is a lack of structures, buildings, and sites left with potential to restore but community organizations have made efforts with volunteer resources.

Unfortunately, the trend in the past has been a lack of heritage site protection. This is due in part to public apathy, more interest in research and other types of tourist attractions. The organization lacked involvement in the FSJ Land & Resource Management Planning process, and does not even recall being invited to participate. For the purposes of this new plan, the Society does recognize the importance of providing input and she was able to share some information about various aspects of heritage she feels is important for the PRRD to consider:

Old Fort St. John Heritage Site

This is a site of national historic importance. There is need to have work done on protection of Old Fort St. John, and a lease obtained for that purpose; there is Roman Catholic Mission property also in that location, and agricultural development has occurred in the area over the years; archaeological test digs found building beams were still visible; the property, however, has been developed; efforts to appeal for help from the provincial government and MLA did not result in any further archaeology being done – it appears there is not sufficient interest to see this heritage site restored; the Old Cemetery is responsibility of the PRRD and this needs restoration as well.

Rural Churches

Some significant sites are the churches built in the 1930's including:

- St. Matthews (Cecil Lk.)
- St. Peter (Shared Anglican/United)
- Chapel of Holy Cross
- Church of Good Shepherd

Heritage Awareness

There is a need for heritage signage, information brochures, resources for research. The Society recognizes there are issues of importance, but lack finances to work on heritage protection; there is a need to channel resources in this area and for all stakeholders to become more flexible in dealing with this objective. e.g. in 1995, a "Heritage Site Registry" was completed and identified "Nabesche River" as the oldest white settlement, but there was lack of political interest to get protection for this site. The Peace River Chronicles (Calverly Collection) is one important resource that is available on-line.

Heritage Tourism

In recent years, the “Cities in Bloom” has stimulated interest in heritage, including a historic walking tour component, and project to complete an Inventory of Heritage Buildings around the region. The current BC Museum initiative “Living Landscapes” is providing further impetus.

First Nations History

Proposals have been put forward for signage at Charlie Lake Caves; the Tribal Association maintains Archives and holds much history” but is not yet willing to collaborate on heritage initiatives, e.g. they have approached the Treaty 8 Tribal Association but lacked interest because First Nations “claim living history” and are involved in various land claims, etc.

Important Heritage Sites

Heritage Societies need to have presence in rural plan development; there are various projects that merit attention and support, including:

- North Pine School – has received Heritage Trust funding
- Roly Cuthbert homestead – Cecil Lake
- Grandhaven Dance Hall
- Old BC Police Barracks - have been moved; RCMP assisted are cooperating but lacked financing and it wasn't clear whose responsibilities it was to look after this
- Inspector Moody Trail, “Pat Brady”; visible markers of the trail are still present; logging companies were sent letters, and they've shown willingness to protect;
- Dinosaur Lake - walking trail to steam vents is a natural heritage site of value;
- Dunlevy Rd. – was referenced by A. Mackenzie in his journals;
- Coal mines - once thought of opening an active site for demonstration; these mines were active in the 1930's/40's in advance of the railway being built;
- Gold Mines at Taylor (Peace River) – hosts the World Invitational Gold Panning competition;
- North Peace Fall Fair - 53rd anniversary this year)
- Mackenzie's Bicentennial (1793-1993) was celebrated as was the Alaska Highway Completion (60 years anniversary)
- Various communities have historic sites which should be identified (e.g. in Buick,
- Sunrise Two Rivers (east of Taylor/Baldonnel), Cecil Lake, Taylor, Collata Ck./Flatrock

**Gerry Claire, Member
South Peace Historical Society (SPHS)
July 14, 2003**

Gerry Claire has served on the SP Historical Society for several years. He was invited to share his insight and suggestions for identifying and protecting heritage sites throughout the South Peace. Pioneer History has also been documented by SPHS member and manager of the Pioneer Village Rick Sequens; through the Museum Network, a book "Spirit of the Peace" documented 16/17 museums; main focus of the SPHS is on the Pioneer Village and working with volunteers to maintain facilities; and preserve artifacts.

The organization has also undertaken considerable oral history research, that led to creation of a local Web site on more contemporary modern heritage, includes over 130 articles, reporting of heritage stories.

There is no public inventory of heritage sites around the south Peace but some work by Knut Fladmark identified 200 sites for further research; various heritage sites exist which are significant at a local, regional and/or national scale:

1. St. Emile Cemetery (1915) located on Rd. 109 (S. Hwy. #49); this cemetery is no longer used and approximately 15 yrs. ago, the city of Dawson Ck. inherited the site (Peace Country Genealogical Committee, which is part of the SPHS has documented information about the cemetery; a neighboring site is Chapel hill (St. Emile)
2. Tom's Lake Cemetery: - dumpsters (located 30 ft. beside cemetery), smell is an issue as well as discarded garbage; people from Sudenten still use this cemetery since road access has improved
3. Rocky Mountain Fort; Finola Finlay (archaeologist) completed doctoral studies on this important fur trading post which dates back to late 1700's; a lot of research done during assessment work for the Site 'C' dam proposal.
4. Fort D'EpINETTE, situated on the north side of the Peace near Alces River (located on A. Hadland farms; needs formal protection, and further archaeological excavation.
5. Columbia Hotel, Pouce Coupe; Rolla (1923); Gloria Coons (Rolla) has edited a Book of local history which resulted from small focus group sessions; the community also has plans to develop a museum.
6. Sheardale cemetery (located with Kiskatinaw River Protected Area); situated near Rolla landing where steam/paddle wheelers used to dock; this form of travel was significant until train arrival in 1916 to Grande Prairie, to Hythe in 1924, and Dawson Creek in 1931.
7. Spirit River Trail and Tressels used from Spirit River to Rolla); local resident Lyle Braden knows about this history; the right-of-way exists, but no rail is left; it was historically used for hauling freight, grain, food; associated sites include Braden's Crossing, Hacket's Crossing, Reilly's Crossing, Landry Crossing;
8. Pouce Coupe & Dawson Creek railway station; critical importance to region; needs regional recognition;

9. Old Rural Schools; built in the 20's – '30's (approximate 70 schools both public and separate once existed around the region); local contact Ed Carlson (Dawson Creek) is knowledgeable about these; archives/official documentation & legal descriptions are available; e.g. Kelly Lake School; first teacher was Gerry Andrews in the 1920's, flagpole of old school still exists;
10. N. Alta. Railway tressels built originally in the 1930's – rebuilt in 1951); paved over crossing in one location; an engineering assessment found that tressels were not safe for 100 + car trains; there is considerable potential for use of these tressels as hiking trails (e.g. Kettle Valley) over bridge;
11. Sundance Lake (recreation area) near Chetwynd has some significant aboriginal history attached to it, but this needs further research;
12. Old Wagon route from Dawson Ck. to FSJ (used from 1930's); mapping of wagon trail was done; there were several stopping places including Kilkaren co-op, garage, and gas station; Sweetwater, Tower Lk. Rd., Taylor Flats;
13. Raspberry Island; traditional use site for picking berries, community recreation, camping;

Recommend that the PRRD supports the protection of heritage in the South Peace through:

- heritage site zoning of known sites
- developing a regional bibliography of heritage publications;
- supporting public access to public archive (regional depository) e.g., Calverly Collection at the public library
- supporting heritage research
- lobbying provincial government for completion of a Heritage Inventory/ BC Site Inventory

Other resource people & references:

- Nawacan Friendship Centre
- Senior citizens to conduct oral history and raise awareness
- Dawson Creek & District Horticultural Society (Bev Dahlen)
- Rural residents involved in heritage projects (Sunset Prairie/Progress)

Paul Solmes, Manager, Parks & Recreation
George Kunz, Manager, Public Works
Peace River Regional District
July 30, 2003

Paul Solmes serves as Manager of Parks & Recreational, and George Kunz, is Manager of Public Works. The PRRD also receives guidance from a recently established Recreation Committee.

Trends Affecting Demand for Rural Facilities

- Schools; school kids are aging, and not being replaced (now average 1.4 children/family) so this has long-term implications on existing facilities;
- Fewer P.O. boxes; people leaving some rural communities (needs confirmation)
- More new community halls, but increasingly difficult to finance and manage
- Senior population and volunteer capacity is declining
- Increasing demand for off-road riding trails; e.g. on Hydro right of ways for winter sports, quads, cross-country, snowmobiles, (co-sharing width makes it possible for these uses to use same corridor if wide enough; i.e. 3 metre min.)
- Other interest is for ball diamonds, outdoor rinks, hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation sports
- church/cemeteries
- artisan facilities
- archery

Facility Maintenance

There are several factors affecting the management of existing facilities, and how rural communities can plan and design new facilities like community halls:

- capital costs for infrastructure maintenance due to aging of facilities; some over 50 years old;
- need to encourage multiple use, and recognize demographic trends;
- value in promoting the community school concept e.g. in South Peace; like McLeod Community School & Hall, due to less capital available; and given that it includes School District responsibility (managers hired to replace volunteer maintenance by umbrella groups or community use group who may lack volunteers;
- costs of providing gym, utilities, water supply require monthly revenue sources
- liability insurance costs are increasing
- people are recognizing that the “Cradle to Grave” approach has value e.g. Community Church, for christening, funerals, preschools, daycare;
- schools boards are also looking to meet physical education needs e.g. Progress/Groundbirch/Sunset (McLeod School Hall) – enabled expansion to full gymnasium; Kilakarren, Bessborough, Tom’s Lake, Farmington have activity rooms; Wonowon School has multiple-use room; cost for improvements are being handled through a 5 year surcharge to residents;
- communities need to consider general external trends and economic impacts; e.g. one trend for rural communities is a growing shift away from dependence on grants-in-aid and greater role for financial partnerships.

- mobility factor has had a significant impact on rural facilities as people are willing to travel to urban centers for many recreational needs;
- rural peoples' reliance of off. farm vs. farm income is a big issue that reduces time available for volunteers, cost level must be kept to a minimum;
- financing new facilities, community associations have to recognize importance of earned revenues vs. real cost; there are examples of independence (Cutbank that have been successful);
- level of community participation is a function of programming; as facilities improve delivery they can generate revenues, through charge-out to public and private events, users

Rural Economic Development

Community planning will affect the type of facilities; e.g. whether private land ownership or public-owned land for various facilities; needs to be community driven; the changing nature of rural areas with more home-based business/footloose industries are enabling more economic diversification and potential opportunities to support new facilities;

Other challenges include problem of trespass, access to road right-of-ways as interest in off-road vehicles expands; there is some need for designated wilderness corridors which depends on Crown land agencies, which may not integrated private-land/regional planning, or community watershed planning.

Social and Cultural Factors

Communities have change to more of a “driving-based” culture; facilities are a function of old habitats so there is difference between the older and new generations with respect to social functions; so, it may be more affordable to have centralized recreational facilities with access to maintenance contract to support them; can be a tool for the community to maintain some “social control” – in any case, there is an emerging shift of onus back onto community for responsibility to solve its needs for rural facilities, so it is important for there to be flexibility in leadership to find appropriate, and feasible solutions.

Parks

Regional parks are an important part of rural communities; all of them have “watchdogs” to ensure they are looked after properly, including a role for environmental and community groups; e.g. like the Swan Lake Enhancement Society, Moberly Lake Community Association, Charlie Lake Conservation Society; it is essential to have effective partnerships to pursue environmental stewardship goals like lake quality protection;

BC Hydro also plays a roll with its water use and management plan that affect recreational sites along the river; including the boat launch on Peace River; Blackfoot-Peace (Clayhurst), Taylor, and Beaton River; other sites the PRRD maintains at Centennial/Montney and Minaker River at Trutch .

Issues for management of the these parks include shoreline erosion; need for good information base to determine level of use by local groups versus other transient or seasonal users; Parks are not promoted to extent they could be; and it expected that regional parks will increase in usage, due to user fees at Provincial Parks and loss of BC. Forestry recreation

sites; increased usage can result in a conflict for “environmentally sensitive areas” and certain activities like bird watching.

Rural Water Facilities

Alot of communities have rural water systems that rely on natural recharging area for spring sources; these are classified as Sec. 16 reserves, and the new Groundwater Protection should go some way in managing risk of impact to those sources

District Recreational Needs

There are various needs for recreational activity that should be considered in a Rural Plan. These include sites for nature and outdoor pursuits; needs for training/education to enable access for community and build capacity for self-management.

At planning and policy level, we need more information sharing about tax base, assessments to determine what scope of recreational facilities; considering use of municipal (e.g. private use) facilities by rural people, and use of municipal populations of rural recreational (e.g. public use) facilities; depending on local economies to support these facilities and level of capacity building to manage them, there can be degradation of facilities, and environmental quality particularly if incomes are not adequate; access to public land base is going to be a growing issue regarding the amount of use; protection of farming areas versus subdivision will also be an important factor.

Old railways (Trans Canada Rail) e.g. spur lines and tressels at Techita Crossing; Tumbler Ridge (Blue Lake-Wolverine Tunnels – 2 mi.); Parsnip River, Tabletop – 5 mi.; safety considerations are an obstacle given problem with fumes, and engineering integrity of the lines/tressels; another important heritage railway feature are the Pouce Coupe tressels; these are recorded in the Regional Rural Heritage Registry and has been red flagged for referral.

**April Moi, Executive Director,
Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Assoc. (NRAHTA)
Michael Potter, Ft.St.John Chamber of Commerce
June 23, 2003**

NRAHTA is the principal organization for promoting tourism business development in the north. April Moi and Michael Potter offered their comments regarding various tourism issues, opportunities and support needs for the tourism industry.

Municipal-Regional Business Taxation

Municipalities and Chamber of Commerce have local roles in promoting their tourism businesses; the relationship between the PRRD and businesses is relevant regarding location and who taxes who; and why not others; an industry based outside of the municipality requires no business license; PRRD cannot tax within municipal boundaries; this creates competing situations

The central issue to draw into municipality, and develop the services within the community; this is important for the rubber tire market which at present has consistent numbers of visitors, and no large increases have been seen; There is a need for higher quality services e.g. water (Charlie Lk. Store) business development (require permit to use water); paving of Alaska Hwy bypass & access roads for recreation vehicles; question about complementary or competing zoning; light industrial vs. visual aesthetics must be considered in development plans.

Other general issues and market opportunities that should be recognized in development of the Rural Plan are the following:

Tourism strategy development

Key issue for tourism business development is to draw visitors and keep more people staying longer in region; general economic environment needs to be stimulated; need regional strategy which possibly the PRRD could support; operators also need assistance in acquiring tenure (private/Crown) e.g. "Torwood" Reena & Sara Moss; and R. Hopkins (river boat access tenure has made application);

NRAHTA is taking onus in promoting sector development, and has need for info sharing with other agencies to develop tourism strategy; there is a role for a tourism advisory committee to create and pursue an agenda, identify issues e.g. Park privatization); must be able to track and communicate.

It has also been operating the "Stay Another Day" program, designating funding to develop 'rubber tire market', promoting educational tourism with seniors, and cultural/eco-tourism products.

Signage

This is Highways responsibility; better signage needed north on Alaska Hwy.; and this being worked on by Tammy Dashin, (NE Economic Development Commission)

Decommission of Forest Sites

There is a problem with cleanup, advertising locations, and cost-effective operations to serve tourists e.g. maintaining the rest areas, washrooms; Moose Lake, Bullmoose Mtn., Hart Lake (W.Pine) and other sites have potential.

Regional Access

Promoting access to city (airports) is critical as this is the link to support rural/regional areas with outside world; important to maintain flight schedules, and have regional connections to FSJ/Dawson Creek

Viewscapes

NAHRTA recognizes it is important for them to input into resource (forest, oil & gas) industry development plans (e.g. Tumbler Ridge); can get input from Wilderness Tour Assoc.; could provide inventory of sites to input into plan)

Tourism Hubs

Key to regional tourism expansion is creating tourism hubs with attractive green space, event area, accommodations/food, entertainment, activities i.e. complete showcase with various thematic/conceptual programs

Tourism Industry Marketing

This is now being pursued through “Branding the Peace”; the Western Rockies partnership, and SuperNatural BC; there is potential for linking to agri/tourism but need to better understand: who benefits and who pays for this service? how will it be supported on an ongoing basis by the general tourism industry? Identifying specific tourism operator producers needs? which businesses will be featured? BC Agri/Tourism has professional criteria for rating these businesses; key is capacity building and having “strategic” focus.

Film Industry

This industry has looked at the region, and suggests there is potential but several issues need to be considered for that industry including zoning/road closure, and access procedures; it is possible to pursue designated funding to support specialized productions like documentaries, commercial advertising; need to consider regulatory procedures to facilitate.

Tourism Opportunities

Agri/tourism potential is being developed in Alberta and Lower Mainland; BC Agri/Tourism Assoc. can support new businesses and can be very competitive; local opportunities include developing fairgrounds, light horse assoc. (Charlie Lk.; e.g., Bear Flats) however they need to have parking, water, sewer facilities; there is an issue about zoning tourism in Agricultural Land Reserve (e.g. questions about liability insurance) and implications for some operators e.g. guest ranches; farm stay; game farm, mini zoo (needs to be supported by PRRD in rural plan; other related issues are compatibility of agri/tourism with other adjacent land-uses; expansion for accommodation support facilities, and signage/entrance. Other opportunities:

- Hwy. 29 Travel Corridor; issue about road quality with washouts and inadequate pull-outs for R.V.'s; there is some agri-tourism potential through this area, and other forms or river-based activities, however access to river for boats & vehicles must be improved;
- Walking trails around FSJ are good for exploring - at present there are only parks; along bypass road in FSJ, there is no shoulder for walking, mountain bikers/cyclists; the FSJ lookout over the Peace River and along the nearby ridge could be developed as a site and trail, question of who is responsible for managing this site; there are potential interpretive sites with First Nations in this locale;
- Northern Alaska Hwy businesses; e.g. - Buckinghorse (Hwy. Lodge); need access to power, must deal with problems of road kills (animal carcass)
- Winter Recreation; Hudson's Hope snow-mobiling and other winter recreation has potential if more trails develop; other snowmobile routes like Taylor to Stuart Lake are popular
- Summer hiking trails e.g. Johnson Ck to Dinosaur Lake; Cameron Lake to Battleship Mtn are not well defined.
- Old Alaska Hwy crossing at Kiskatinaw River; has tourism value and development potential but needs support of both B.C. Parks and Hwys; there is an issue about RV safety at Kiskatinaw Bridge;
- Heritage sites e.g. along the Peace River need to be inventoried and designation for protection needs to be articulated; Thematic Programming (e.g. cultural tourism, First Nations Heritage Sites is also being pursued by Doig River and West Moberly First Nations; for sites along Hwy there is need for consultations with BC government to improve pull-out access, distance, speed zones, safety perceptions);

Palaentology/Dino-Tours; has potential for circle tours from Grande Cache; Tumbler Ridge, Grande Prairie, Hudson's Hope, Chetwynd (Hasler and other interested), Pink Mtn., Muncho Lake; sites need to be inventoried, product clubs established to share common theme for merchandising;

Sport/Tourism; there are good facilities in communities and regional district; could be expanded to include training facilities e.g. hockey, curling; mountain bike trail riding; complementary of land-uses has to be considered between urban, fringe, regional district due to problem of trespass; rodeo grounds/fairground facilities are also attractions and partnerships would need to be development to build infrastructure (sewer, water, power, signage);

Tourism opportunities in Dawson Creek Forest District – an inventory was prepared of Crown land tourism potential and is available on CD for economic development organizations