

Beetle Bites



Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition



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The Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition (SIBAC) is committed to helping communities understand the probable effects of the mountain pine beetle (MPB) epidemic; and to develop and implement appropriate MPB mitigation measures in the southern interior. A membership based organization; SIBAC represents local and First Nations governments from across the southern interior.

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Organic Farming Expertise for Future Generations



Nestled in the Similkameen Valley next door to the Village of Keremeos, is Cawston the “Organic Farming Capital of Canada.” Amazingly 40% of the farms in Cawston are certified organic – comparatively across Canada 1.6%, and in BC, 2% of farms are certified organic. To increase the vitality of regions within BC through the act of organic farming, the Organic Farming Institute of BC initiated a training program.

SIBAC supported the development of an online learning platform and practical learning field excursions for prospective farmers. The project provides the knowledge and skill set for a person to take 2-3 acres of non-viable land that is currently devastated by the pine beetle (located anywhere in BC), and make it viable through ground crop production.

The Organic Vegetable Production Course was developed and is now available online. The theory is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed at: <http://www.ofibc.org>. The online course and platform design provides realistic time frames for course completion and the program is attractive to people who need to balance course studies with work, parenting, farming or other commitments. The course can be completed within 40-60 hours and worked on when convenient for the student. Students also have access to the expertise of an OFIBC online instructor.

The field training component is instructed by an OFIBC instructor and the classroom is on several successful farms in the Cawston area. Students receive a comprehensive field guide on Organic Vegetable Production and have the opportunity to experience first-hand common and innovative farming techniques.

The economic development outcome to the Similkameen Valley from the project has meant that money and jobs have stayed in the community. The project has provided four people with steady part-time work and has allowed the OFIBC to keep investing in the economic development of the local communities. Advertising, supplies and services have been purchased locally, and local contractors are chosen whenever possible. Greater awareness of the benefits and importance of purchasing local organically grown food and supporting local farmer has also been a benefit. Further economic development impacts are anticipated as the project plan continues and more strategic alliances and partnerships are developed.

The project was completed in September 2013 and the full report is posted on the SIBAC website: <http://www.sibacs.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Organic-Farming-Institute-Project-Report-Sept.2013.pdf> ▲▲▲



SIBAC MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

Regional Districts of:

- Thompson-Nicola
- Columbia-Shuswap
- Central Kootenay
- East Kootenay
- Kootenay Boundary
- North Okanagan
- Central Okanagan
- Okanagan-Similkameen
- Squamish-Lillooet

First Nations:

- Lillooet Tribal Council
- Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
- Ktunaxa Nation Council
- CFDC of Central Interior First Nations
- Okanagan Nation Alliance
- Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council
- Nicola Tribal Association



Gold Country GeoTourism Program

Search for buried treasure along the Gold Rush Trail of the South Cariboo — what tourist could resist?

That was the creative thought behind the Gold Country GeoTourism Program, which began in 2009 and completed in 2013. Developed and now managed by Gold Country Communities Society (GCCS), the program works with the municipalities of Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Clinton, Lillooet, Lytton, Logan Lake, Merritt, and Thompson Nicola Regional District Areas E, I, J, M & N.

The Gold Country mandate includes tourism promotion and economic development in an area encompassing over 9000 sq. miles. SIBAC supported GCCS in the creation of the GeoTourism Program as a means to attract tourism and economic development to the region which has been, in many ways, severely impacted by Mountain Pine Beetle devastation.

The region's fascinating combination of amazing geography, history and culture has been incorporated into the geocache sites, creating an appealing attraction for tourists. The field guide is available in English, French and German and can be downloaded at: <http://www.goldtrail.com/shop.cfm>. Education was a key component in teaching local stakeholders and officials about the economic benefits of this fun and entertaining activity. The workshops were designed to demonstrate navigation of the website, downloading the geocaches onto a GPS and how to search for a geocache. In total, the program established 144 geocache sites that attracted over 4,195 visitors within the first six months of the program's completion. The program is also listed as a GeoTour on www.geocaching.com, and expects to attract more visitors from out of province and out of country. There is so much to learn about this exciting activity. To read about the Gold Country GeoTourism Program, download the full report at: <http://www.sibacs.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Gold-Country-GeoTourism-Report.-Mar.-2013.pdf>. ▲▲▲

Mobilizing Local Investment Capital in Rural Communities

How do other rural jurisdictions in Canada do it? That is, how have they successfully reversed rural decline through a local investment capital program that's reinvested in the same community or region? To help create greater understanding of how rural BC can learn from the success in other parts of rural Canada, SIBAC hosted two regional conferences. Expert speakers from Nova Scotia and Alberta described how their respective programs have successfully raised and invested local capital in their communities to stimulate business development and job creation. Details of The Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIF) and the Alberta Unleashing Local Capital initiatives Program can be viewed at: <http://www.novascotia.ca/econ/cedif/background> and www.acca.coop/unleashing/

Approximately 70 people attended afternoon and evening sessions of the Christina Lake Conference on May 12, 2014. A smaller group attended the Revelstoke Conference on May 14, 2014. The conferences stimulated considerable community interest to learn the benefits of the two rural investment models with hopes of implementing a "made for BC" model. The Provincial Government's Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development, Donna Barnett MLA, attended the Revelstoke Conference and was interested in both models.

Conference speakers included: Mike Lewis, Director of the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal; Chris Payne, Director with the Nova Scotia Ministry of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism; Peter Cameron, Chief Financial Officer of New Dawn Enterprises; Paul Cabaj, Director of Cooperative Development for the Alberta Community and Co-operative Association; Dan Ohler, Co-founder and Chair of the Sangudo Opportunity Development Co-op and Paul Donald, CEO All Nations Trust.

A profile of each speaker can be found with the Conference Invitation at: <http://www.sibacs.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Conference-Agenda-Package-Mobilizing-Local-Investment-Capital-Conference.pdf>. A series of short YouTube videos of the Christina Lake evening session is posted on the SIBAC website at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfDgG9juHCmS6u5IPThurhQ>. ▲▲▲



Preparing to Go Mobile: Entering the Era of Online Tourism Marketing

Christina Lake boldly set out to do something different to catch the shifting current of economic drivers affecting the sustainability of their community.

The small town of Christina Lake is situated 21 kms east of Grand Forks along the Crowsnest Highway 3. This picturesque resort community with a permanent resident population of 1,500 — best known for sunny summers and reputedly the warmest tree-lined lake in Canada — has been hit by economic downturns in the past few years. Visitors are no longer travelling, and business owners are wishing to retire, all at the same time. To tackle the shifting landscape affecting their local economy, a new organization was formed. The Christina Gateway Community Development Association (Gateway) is aimed at strengthening community organizations, community businesses and community infrastructure to support business attraction and retention. Gateway is made up of representatives from the eight major organizations in the community who share the goal of creating a more sustainable community economy.

In 2013, SIBAC supported Gateway in a project aimed at increasing the capacity of community businesses and organizations to benefit from inbound marketing and from increased regional partnership development. To achieve the desired result, increasing the capacity of the community's ability to market effectively using the internet was necessary. Through the project youth were hired to work with 50 businesses to assess their current proficiencies in technology and provide upgrade instruction. As a result, Gateway is developing a new social enterprise. "Gateway Digital Services" will be providing clearly needed services and in the process creating good work for young people in the community. To learn more about the project; contact Sandy Mark, Project Manager at: coordinator.christinalake@gmail.com or call: 250-447-6165. ▲▲▲