



Mackenzie Branding Initiative

BACKGROUND RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

DECEMBER 2016

PREPARED BY
BOLDFISH CREATIVE

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preamble

THE BIG PICTURE

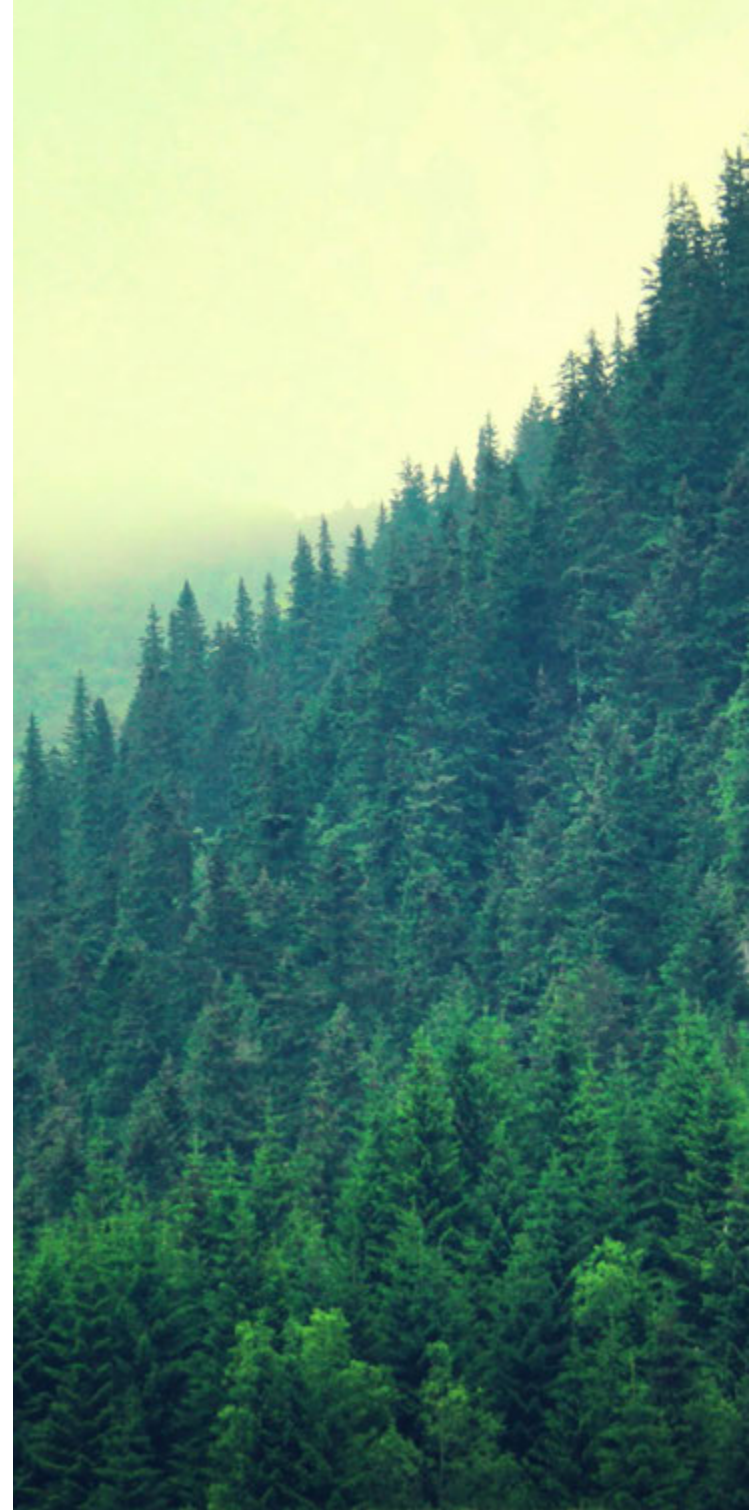
When you stand in front of a forest, one of two things happens. If you're up close, you focus on the individual trees. If you see it from afar, you see the collective trees as a single forest. When it comes to branding a community, we have to start by standing back and seeing the whole forest.

This background document attempts to give us the big picture of where Mackenzie stands today. It draws from history, statistics, previous studies and plans, and the perceptions and thoughts of the very residents of Mackenzie. We aim to get a 360° perspective of Mackenzie, and understand the nature of the community and the people within it.

THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

A large part of this background document includes the Community Branding Survey conducted in June 2016. It is mainly a perception study, and as such, it is not meant to be considered as scientific research. The intention is to learn the nature and personality of the community, and gain insight into how Mackenzie perceives itself.

Combined with the results of branding workshop (October 2016), we aim to find the common threads that resonate throughout the community.



section one

A Brief History of Mackenzie

section one / A Brief History of Mackenzie & Area

To understand the nature of a place, one has to start by looking at where it's been over time. For a community brand to be authentic, it must be built on the true character of that community. True character is built over time, and is a culmination of experiences and events that happened in the past. What follows is a brief overview of how Mackenzie, came to be.

1.1 TSEK'ENE (SEKANI) FIRST NATIONS: PEOPLE OF THE ROCKS

Long before European explorers discovered the region that is now Mackenzie, the Sekani First Nations inhabited the area. They were somewhat nomadic as most hunter-gatherers are, and mainly inhabited the Finlay and Parsnip river drainages.

Neighbouring tribes included the Babine, Dakelh (Carrier), Dane-zan (Beaver), Kaska, and Tahltan (Cree). Interactions with these other tribes included trading and sometimes inter-marrying (with the Dakelh). Occasionally they had conflicts, mainly with the Beaver and Cree.

The Sekani's preferred mode of travel was overland on foot (snowshoes in the winter). They occasionally traveled by river using spruce-bark canoes.

For food, they hunted game animals: moose, caribou, bears, mountain goats, beavers, and other game. They also harvested berries and plants. Unlike other first nations in BC, they generally stayed away from fish unless there were food shortages.

Their first interaction with people of European descent occurred in 1793, when explorer Alexander Mackenzie of the North West Company came through the area from the Peace River valley (east) in search of a route to the Pacific. From the early 1800s and onward, the Sekani traded with the North West Company at their posts at McLeod Lake (established in 1805), and later at Fort Grahame (from 1867 – 1948). They mainly traded furs in exchange for European goods. They also traded with coastal first nations groups, sometimes adopting elements of their culture.

As with many first nations tribes in Canada, they fell victim to disease and scarcity of their food sources (due to over-hunting by newcomers). There

are no population numbers on record for how many Sekani there were at their peak, but today, estimates are approximately 1,500 individuals.

Today, the Sekani are mostly divided into three nations or bands:

- › **Kwadacha First Nation** – 570 km north of Prince George at the confluence of the Fox, Kwadacha, and Finlay Rivers. Population 425
- › **McLeod Lake Band** – 150 km north of Prince George at the north end of McLeod Lake Population 618
- › **Tsay Keh Dene Band** (formerly Ingenika Indian Band) – in the area of Williston Lake at Ingenika and on the Parsnip River at Fort Grahame. Population 431

1.2 EXPLORATION, VOYAGEURS, THE FUR TRADE: 1793 – 1850s

Alexander Mackenzie – Blazing the trail in 1793

In June of 1793, Alexander Mackenzie became the first explorer of European descent to arrive in the Rocky Mountain Trench, west of the Rockies. In search of a route to the Pacific, his party travelled the Peace River to the confluence of the Finlay and Parsnip Rivers. Ultimately, he was searching for the Columbia River, as the mouth had already been discovered by British, Spanish, and American naval exploration. As such, Mackenzie continued south up the Parsnip in search of the Columbia, and a route to the Pacific Ocean. He eventually made it to the Pacific (near Bella Coola) by way of the Fraser, Blackwater, and Dean Rivers.

Simon Fraser – Establishing Trade and Outposts, 1805

Mackenzie's original route proved too difficult to be practicable as a trading route to the Pacific. It wasn't until 1805 that Simon Fraser was tasked with building trading posts with the intention of claiming possession of the country, as well as to explore travel routes. Within the span of a few years, Fraser and his assistants were responsible for setting up trading posts near present day Hudson's Hope, McLeod Lake, Fort St. James, Fort Fraser, and Fort George (now Prince George). Fort McLeod (McLeod Lake) is considered by many historians to be the first permanent European

settlement west of the Rockies in Canada. From Fort George, Simon Fraser would go on to descend the length of what is now called the Fraser River (in his name), reaching the Pacific on July 2, 1808. Sadly, he realized that he had not discovered the Columbia River as he had hoped. That feat belonged to David Thompson, who would navigate the full length of the Columbia in 1811.

While the early traders passed through what is now known as Mackenzie, the closest settlement until 1867 was Fort McLeod, about 45 kilometres to the south. Explorations up into the Finlay River system during the 1820s deemed the river too difficult to navigate, so settlement and extension of the fur trade was not considered feasible.

1.3 EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT: 1860S – 1940s

European settlement in the northern Rocky Mountain Trench was slow and spotty during these 80 years. The Fort Grahame trading outpost was established by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1867 on the Finlay River north of its confluence with the Peace River. This settlement came at a time where the fur trade monopoly enjoyed by the Hudson's Bay Company (having merged with the North West Company in 1821) was coming to an end. This rough settlement was a combination of Sekani First Nations, trappers, traders, prospectors, surveyors, squatters, and missionaries. It remained that way for much of its existence. Travel and transportation to the region always posed significant challenges, and kept the area remote except for a handful of hardy entrepreneurs that followed the trapping, trading, and mining industries. Over the years, transportation evolved from canoe-only access (with grueling portages), to a combination of river, pack horse, and dog sled travel. In later years, stern wheeler access (on the Fraser) brought goods from the coast up as far as Giscome Portage, and by the 1920s, small aircraft were found in the Prince George area. Whatever the combination, access to McLeod Lake, Finlay Forks, and further north was difficult up until the 1950s.

Gold Rushes: 1858 – 1870s

The gold rush in 1858 on the Fraser River (at Yale), as well as the Omineca Gold Rush (at Vital Creek) saw an influx of prospectors and surveyors move north up the Fraser River. Of course, this also brought support services and settlers that accompany any such mining boom. There were several routes to reach the Omineca River sites, one of which was up the

Fraser, to Summit Lake, to Fort McLeod, down the Parsnip River, up the Finlay River, and finally up the Omineca. Once the initial rush was over, large-scale hydraulic mining continued in the area (serviced mainly by routes from the west and south). The gold rush years served as a catalyst for bringing diverse settlement to BC's interior, with characters from all walks of life moving up from the California gold rush. People of Latin American, Caribbean, and Asian descent all made their way through the region.

Quiet Years: Trapping, Trading, Prospecting

For many years the main activities were trapping, trading, and prospecting in the Mackenzie area (as well as New Caledonia as a whole). Many settlers would trap in the winters and prospect in the summers. Difficult travel in the wild northern Rocky Mountain Trench was a barrier to most developments. This was eased somewhat by the discovery of Pine Pass in 1877, which made access to McLeod Lake easier from the east (Hudson's Hope). In 1897 there was a brief attempt to carve a route to the north via the northern Rocky Mountain Trench (to access the Klondike Goldrush), but it was quickly determined that the route was impractical, with easier routes being available to the east and west.

Stalled development in an unstable world: 1900 – 1948

In the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, there were surveying parties who identified no shortage of mining and transportation opportunities that would have seen the area around Mackenzie and to the north developed. Unfortunately, before many of these could be further explored, there were worldwide events that made progress difficult. World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II all happened in fairly quick succession. The early 1900s brought hope of the Grand Trunk Railway, but plans were put on hold first by WWI, and then by the onset of the Depression in the 1930s. It wouldn't be until the 1950s that Prince George finally had rail access.

1.4 TRANSPORTATION & RESOURCE BOOMS: POST WWII

The Peace River Valley to the east of Mackenzie saw settlement and development much earlier than the northern Rocky Mountain Trench, particularly during the early 1900s. There were many reasons for this, among them were ease of access and travel on the eastern side of the Rockies (to

Alberta), better climate and soil for homesteading, and plentiful resources in the form of oil and gas.

In post war 1940s, two things were clear. First, both Americans and Canadians realized that road access to the north, in particular the Yukon and Alaska was imperative. Second, the Province of BC recognized that the likely route to the north would pass through the already prosperous northeast corner of the Province - and that corner was not easily connected to the rest of BC.

With the war over, the province's workforce, capitol, and political will were focused on developing the untapped energy and natural resource potential in northern BC. This meant highway access needed to be built to the lucrative northeast corner of BC. Things moved quickly during the post-war highways boom, and by 1952, the new John Hart highway running from Prince George to Dawson Creek was open.

In the later 1950s, there was a plan to build a monorail north from Prince George up the Rocky Mountain Trench to the BC-Yukon border, and hopefully to Alaska. However, as the hydroelectric potential of the Peace River became known, that plan was abandoned in favour of what would become the W.A.C. Bennett dam and resulting Williston Reservoir. Instead of the monorail, a conventional railway to the north was built to the west of the trench.

From 1960 to 68, as the Bennett dam was being built, it was full steam ahead building access to the Finlay and Parsnip drainages to clear the timber for what would become a flooded reservoir. The BC Forest Service built the 170 km road from Hart Highway to Finlay Forks. Contracts were also being set up with the Wenner-Gren Group (Alexandra Forest Industries), and in turn with British Columbia Forest Products Ltd. (BCFP) and Cattermole, to log as much of the Williston Reservoir as possible before it was flooded.

1.5 MACKENZIE: THE INSTANT TOWN 1960s – EARLY 1990s

The Early Years – Growth & Boom

With new road access opening up the north Rocky Mountain Trench to logging, the BC Forest Service solicited proposals requiring the construction of pulp mills for timber guarantees. Timber licenses were awarded to BCFP and Cattermole, guaranteeing the harvest of huge swaths of forests

in the Finlay Timber Supply area for decades to come. The obvious challenge to this rapidly developing forest industry was that a sizable, long-term, labour force was needed immediately. In such a remote area with almost no population to draw from, the solution was to build an instant town. It had been done before in similar situations, mostly on Vancouver Island. In 1965, the Province of BC had adopted the "Instant Town" policy, with the intention of developing sustainable long-term communities, rather than unsustainable "company towns".

Mackenzie was designed, cleared, and built between October 1965 and May 1966. The first families moved into Mackenzie in May 1966, and the BCFP Pulp Mill opened that June. Of course, the community went through rapid growth, and continued to develop for several years after, with the official opening taking place on July 6, 1968.

In the early years of Mackenzie (as with many forestry-based towns in BC), the boom from the seemingly endless resource of timber was felt, and most enjoyed fairly lucrative salaries (compared to the Provincial average), as well as affordable housing. For some, the isolation of the community, particularly in the winter months, took its toll. Lack of career opportunities for woman and activities for youth were also stated as common complaints in Mackenzie. On the other hand, because of this isolation and necessary reliance on community for support and social interaction, many Mackenzie residents became very engaged in volunteerism. Service groups and other organizations were quite active as a means of achieving a vibrant and dynamic community. There was even a theater where plays and performances took place! The resulting satisfaction and close-knit feeling of the residents is something that keeps coming up in anecdotal research.

Volatility of a Single-Resource Community

Even throughout the boom years of the 1960s, 70s, and early 80s when the logging industry was still in its prime, Mackenzie had uncomfortable moments as it recognized how vulnerable it was to any disruption to its only economic driver: forestry. Below is a quick glance at a few of the disruptions that took place during these years.

- › **1967** - IWA strike. No logging for 24 days. Almost all single men left, and most new families. When the strike was over, new workers had to be found.

- › **October 1972** – PPWC strike, lasting 3 weeks.
- › **July 1975** – CPU strike, lasting 3 months. It devastated the community, particularly those who weren't directly employed by the mills. Many people moved away. Some consider this a turning point in the community of Mackenzie: many who stuck it out, who previously would have been considered transient, became committed to the community, deciding to put down roots.
- › **July 1979** – PPWC strike, lasting 2 weeks
- › **July/August 1981** – PPWC strike, lasting 6 weeks

Build-out & the Bumpy Plateau: 1981 – 1996

At the end of 1981, on the heels of the PPWC strike, the lumber market plummeted, causing multiple mill shutdowns of several weeks at a time. This continued through 1982, with the industry recovering slightly in 1983 (with only 2 shut-downs that year).

This signalled what can be considered the end of the forestry boom. Growth levelled off, and plateaued until 1996. There were a few minor ups and downs during this time (notably the BC Pulp & Paper industry's lock out from February to April 1984), but for the most part, Mackenzie kept trucking along. What is clear is that the excitement and community engagement that characterized the booming growth years, was not as prolific.

The peak of Mackenzie's economy could be pegged at 1996. The forestry industry was relatively stable, the unemployment rate was low, and population and school enrollment was at its highest.

1.6 MACKENZIE: A MATURE COMMUNITY

Decline & Bust – 1996 – 2009

Mackenzie's highest population was recorded in 1996, when the community had nearly 6,000 residents. Over the next ten years, there was a steady decline of 26%, resulting in a population of just over 4,500 by 2006. Over these same years, Mackenzie was not alone – most smaller forestry-reliant towns in BC were seeing the same declines. Many towns sought to diversify their local economies by shifting their focus to developing tourism, as it was a growth sector for domestic and international travelers.

If things seemed bleak in 2006, it was about to get much worse with the global economic meltdown in 2007 and 2008. The downturn in the US and dramatic loss of demand for wood products delivered a devastating blow to the already fragile Mackenzie economy. Between 2007 and 2009, population plummeted (27% drop in school enrollment)¹, with 8 mills closing resulting in an estimated loss of approximately 1400 jobs.^{2,3} These job loss estimates did not include the vast service sector that supports the forestry and manufacturing industry, which also suffered significant losses.

Recovery & Diversification – 2010 – Present Day

From its peak in 1996 to 2011, Mackenzie's population dropped approximately 41%⁴ to 3507 people. Mackenzie's decline quickly began to turn around with several announcements in the spring of 2010. First, Conifex announced it would be purchasing AbitibiBowater's closed mills. In the same month, the Canfor's saw mill restarted operations and in April 2010, it was announced that Paper Excellence purchased a dormant pulp and paper mill.

Around the same time, another development was in the works – the construction of nearby Mt. Milligan Mine. It employed approximately 1,000 people during its construction, and by 2013 it was operational. At the end of 2015, it employed 463 people⁵, although it is unknown exactly how many of those reside in the Mackenzie area. With an expected lifespan of 22 years, this mine is expected to be a relatively stable economic contributor to the region's economy for the next couple decades.

Not surprisingly, between 2008 and 2010, there was a flurry of activity as District of Mackenzie started to evaluate and adjust its strategic direction. It was clear that economic diversification was necessary if Mackenzie was to remain a stable self-sustaining community over the long term. In 2010, a Community Transition Plan Study was conducted, which was followed by the Mackenzie in Motion, Strategic Priorities planning document. A

¹ 2010 Community transition study, Pg. 3-11

² Globe & Mail, Mackenzie B.C.'s Revival Continues, April 16, 2010

³ 2010 Community Transition Study, Pg. 3-4

⁴ Mackenzie Official Community Plan 2014, pg. 13

⁵ 2015 Corporate Responsibility Report, Thompson Creek Metals company, pg. 23

Tourism Plan (2008) was also created as a means of diversifying the local economy.

Today, Mackenzie has enjoyed modest recovery and has its sights set on developing a stable, diversified economy, while updating the attractiveness of its downtown core. Attracting new visitors, businesses, and residents remains a high priority, using the high quality of life, outdoor recreational opportunities, and healthy environment as attractants. Over the next 20 years, Mackenzie's population is projected to grow only slightly at 0.2% annually⁶ – "Projections of Populations, Housing, and Employment" (2012) Urban Futures Inc.).

⁶ Projections of Populations, Housing, and Employment" (2012) Urban Futures Inc.

section two

Mackenzie Today: A Snapshot

section two / Mackenzie Today: A Snapshot

This section will provide an overview of industry and economic drivers, community demographic composition, current SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), recent community “visioning” efforts, as well as branding trends from the past couple decades. This section will finish with a look at how Mackenzie is presented in current media, as well as physical consumer touch points and community assets. Much of the information contained in this section has been gleaned from previous reports and studies done by the District of Mackenzie. This includes the current Official Community Plan (2014), Mackenzie in Motion (2012), Community Transition Plan Study (2010, Lochaven Management Consultants, CTQ Consultants Ltd.), Tourism Plan (2008) – Community Tourism Foundations, Tourism BC, and the Economic Development Strategy (2008) – Synergy Management Group.

2.1 INDUSTRY & ECONOMIC DRIVERS

As Section One highlights, the previous pillars of economic growth have been forestry, and to a lesser extent, mining. As of 2011 (the last Canadian Census), the top industries in Mackenzie are as follows (in descending order, shown as a percentage of Mackenzie’s labour force):

- › Forestry (harvest) and Manufacturing (including sawmills) 26%
- › Other Services (excluding Public Administration) 11%
- › Retail Trade 10%
- › Transportation & Warehousing 9%
- › Public Administration 7%
- › Construction 6%
- › Educational Services 6%

When compared to Stats Canada’s previous census years of 2001 and 2006, there were some distinct trends in labour force composition that reflect Mackenzie’s changing economy.

- › Forestry (harvest) and Manufacturing (including sawmills) combined,

went from being 56% of the direct labour force in 2001, to making up only 26% by 2011.

- › Transportation & Warehousing went up from 2% to 9%.
- › Other services increased dramatically from 3% to 11%. This includes many small service businesses such as trades, tourism-based services, and home-based businesses.
- › Mining, oil, and gas went from having less than 1% of the labour force in 2001, to occupying 3%
- › Construction jumped from 3% to 6%. This may reflect the construction of the Mt. Milligan mine, which in 2011 would have employed previously laid-off forestry and manufacturing workers.

At the time of this report the results of the 2016 Census were not yet available. While the above trends are five years old, it can be expected that forestry and manufacturing remain (in 2016) the strongest economic drivers, with a continuation of the growth in mining, other services, and transportation and warehousing sectors.

2.2 COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS: OBSERVATIONS AND TRENDS

There have been several economic development reports and other studies conducted over the past decade that go into great detail as to the community demographic profile. The most recent ones rely on information from the voluntary 2011 National Household Survey. That year, Mackenzie had a relatively high non-response rate at 49%. This means the data from the 2011 National Household Survey can be considered as somewhat inaccurate. In addition, much has changed since 2011, when Mackenzie was just beginning to recover from impacts of the major recession in 2008-09. As such, this section will be focused on drawing broad observations that are pertinent to the changes over the last 5 years. Key observations include:

- › The estimated population of Mackenzie is approximately 4,500 in 2016. The results from the 2016 census have not been released at the time of writing.
 - › As with the rest of British Columbia (and Canada), the Baby Boom generation is aging, resulting in a community with a significantly higher proportion of the population in the senior categories. It's expected that the share of those in the 65+ age category will go from 7% in 2011 to 18% in 2021.⁷
 - › Mackenzie's population is directly tied to the volatile forestry and forest products manufacturing industry. When jobs disappear, so does the population. This does not happen as much in the other communities in the Fraser-Fort George region. The more diverse the economy becomes in the future, the less the population will fluctuate.
 - › Since 2006, there has been a change in Education Levels of the Mackenzie workforce. Specifically, there is a higher percentage of the workforce with a College-level diploma. Also, up until 2011, it appeared that there was a net outflow of those with a University degree and apprenticeships. It's unclear if that trend persists past 2011.
- › Until last year, there was a trend in workforce mobility away from Mackenzie (and BC in general). That trend has reversed for many smaller BC towns as Alberta's oil and gas sector has plummeted. Many of these mobile workers are trades people who are moving back to BC, looking to put down roots in a more stable and affordable place – even if it means less lucrative work.⁸
 - › There are a greater number of people commuting to Mackenzie for work compared to the rest of the Fraser-Fort George Regional District. This presents an opportunity to convert the mobile work force into long-term residents.
 - › Mackenzie has had, and continues to have, a low rate of unemployment compared to the rest of the province. This could be that most will simply leave if there is no work.

⁷ Mackenzie Official Community Plan 2014, pg. 15

⁸ August 4, 2016; Out of Alberta: Signs of Change, Canada's New Economic Reality; Globe & Mail Online, Kelly Cryderman and Brett Jang; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/alberta-migration-oil-economy/article30939883/>

2.3 TAKING STOCK

This section provides an overview as to community's assets and strengths; constraints; opportunities; threats; and previous community vision statements.

Community Assets & Strengths

- › High quality of life
- › Safe community
- › Affordable (cost of housing, low tax rates)
- › College of New Caledonia – post secondary
- › Williston Lake + Boat Launch
- › Morfee Lake and beaches, Gantahaz Lake
- › Wilderness recreation areas, Morfee Mountain
- › Provincial Parks (Pine Le Moray and Bijoux Falls, Heather-Dina Lakes, Carp Lakes, Tudyah Lake)
- › Trail systems
- › Clean air/water
- › Mugaha Marsh + bird banding centre (MNO)
- › Natural resources (for industry)
- › Excellent snow quality and reliability (for winter sports)
- › Ski areas (Little Mac and Snow King)
- › Excellent Recreation Complex (rink, pool, library, etc)
- › Skate park for youth
- › Golf Course
- › Museum
- › Relationship with First Nations – McLeod Lake Band

Constraints

- › Location – isolated, out-of-the way, end of the road
- › Reliant on forestry and manufacturing – exposed to volatility of global market demand for wood products
- › Unstable community population (although better than before)
- › Aging labour market
- › Lack of employment opportunities for working couples
- › Outflow of youth to pursue education and employment
- › Out-dated appearance of downtown
- › Lack of variety/quality accommodations
- › Lack of variety/quality restaurants
- › Lack of variety/quality retail
- › Lack of rural acreages or recreational properties
- › Unsightly cutblocks on Hwy. 39
- › Not as strong of a volunteer base as before
- › Lack of medical infrastructure and support for seniors
- › Shortage of physicians and medical services
- › Not yet “tourism-ready” – lack of infrastructure and activity suppliers (i.e. tour companies)
- › Lack of transportation from Prince George

Opportunities

- › Regional mining reserves
- › LNG pipelines
- › Remaining timber supply
- › Tourism industry growth potential (incremental development)
- › Mobile workforce moving back to BC
- › Internet and Digital Technology (opportunities for working remotely)
- › Economies of scale: Support services to multiple industries
- › Downtown revitalization potential: from out-dated to charming
- › Leverage other regional connections to draw visitors, industry
- › Industries that require space and/or cool climates (i.e. data centers, new energy technologies)

Threats

- › Volatility of resource sectors (forestry, mining, oil & gas)
- › Perpetually weak North American economy
- › Aging population
- › Climate change impacts:
 - Williston Reservoir water levels
 - Wildfires (to Timber supply and community itself)

Community Vision – Mackenzie in Motion and 2014 Official Community Plan

"From its roots as a new town for forestry workers, Mackenzie has grown into a strong and supportive community that residents are proud to call home. Supported by a healthy environment, Mackenzie's economic base is now diverse and robust, providing consistent employment for residents. Recreation is key to our high quality of life and healthy lifestyle, with exceptional natural features that draw residents outdoors. Great community services and facilities complement the outdoors with opportunities to meet and engage with neighbours, and the town takes great pride in how attractive it is for both residents and visitors."

2.4 PREVIOUS BRAND POSITIONING

As far as the research for this project is concerned, it appears that a comprehensive and dedicated branding exercise has never been undertaken in the community of Mackenzie. Over the years, there have been some fragmented branding efforts, the most recent occurring in 2008 with the economic development plan (by Synergy Management Group). While their intentions were well placed, it is clear that the community branding process needed to be a more focused (and completely distinct) initiative. Below is a brief look at some of the logos and messaging that the District of Mackenzie and the Chamber of Commerce have used.

Early Brandmark (1980 and earlier): The stylized M



Brandmarks have been around since the beginning of time. Flags, banners, and clan crests, were all used to identify people and places throughout history. If you wore certain colours, crests, or seals, you were associated with whatever (or whoever) those brandmarks represented.

Up until the late 1980s, most communities simply had a crest or a coat of arms to identify it and distinguish it from the town down the road. Mackenzie didn't have a coat of arms, rather, it developed the stylized 'M' that can still be seen today. It was used alone, or in a variety of word arrangements.

The Sky is the Limit – Explore Mackenzie

Place branding is a relatively new practice that emerged as the need for communities to become competitive increased. Sometime in the 1980s and 90s, taglines started becoming popular as a means for towns to differentiate themselves from competing places, and attract new residents, investments, and visitors.

Mackenzie started using "The Sky is the Limit" in conjunction with "Explore Mackenzie". It's unclear as to when this tagline was established, but it still persists today in marketing materials such as billboards and online (Chamber Website, tourism-related sites, etc).

Current Logo – Wordmark with mountains and trees

The current Mackenzie logo can be traced back to around 2007 or 2008.



Recent branding (From Snoriders West Magazine 2015)

At that time, a Mackenzie pin was designed, and that design was transferred into a digital format that is now the logo. The mountain graphics in the logo can be seen in some of the branding efforts from the 2008 Economic Development planning process. The logo incorporates the mountain and forest wilderness that surrounds Mackenzie, as well as the forest resource that brought the town into existence.

Today, bits of all three brands are still in use, resulting in an inconsistent or fractured message going out into the world.

Positioning & Messaging

In terms of positioning, the anecdotal messaging that Mackenzie has been putting out to the world (through online mediums, signage, publications, and advertising) over the past decade center around the



Current Logo (2016)

following themes:

- › An outdoor recreationalists paradise (particularly winter sports and lake-related activities),
- › Strong sense of community, safe and resilient, family-oriented
- › The town that logging built (tree crusher)

For examples of recent Mackenzie marketing and information publications, see Appendix A or refer to the **District of Mackenzie's website**, where you can view and download the current **Community Profile**, the **Active Living Guide**, and the **Experience Mackenzie Guide**.

2.5 CURRENT BRAND IMAGE (WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK)

The previous section looked at the brand positioning that District of Mackenzie and the Chamber of Commerce have promoted over the years. This section looks at Mackenzie from another perspective... the outside world looking in. Below are some anecdotal trends based on information from previous reports, as well as from the community survey.

- › It's estimated that only 18% of people (residing outside of Mackenzie) view it in a negative light. Common negative perceptions include:
 - Mill, camp, or resource town
 - Temporary, struggling, changeable, unstable
 - Isolated, remote, end-of-the-road
 - Backwater, redneck, out-dated
- › About 25% of people view Mackenzie in a positive light. Common

positive perceptions include:

- Small friendly town with a sense of community,
 - A great place for outdoor recreation (particularly winter), beautiful peaceful setting
 - A good temporary place to bring your young family to get a start in a trades career
- › 57% have either never heard of Mackenzie, or they don't know enough about it to hold a positive or negative opinion of it. This presents an incredible opportunity where branding is concerned. Mackenzie has a large blank slate when it comes to crafting and communicating its future brand.

2.6 MACKENZIE IN THE MEDIA

In addition to the above perceptions that people likely hold about Mackenzie, the media also plays an important role in shaping the views of those outside the community. When these stories break, they influence how people view Mackenzie, as well as reinforcing pre-existing perceptions (for better or for worse). Stories that have been published through various regional, provincial, and national media outlets since 2010 centre around the topics below:

Mackenzie: Small Town BC profile⁹

Global TV hosts a regular morning news segment called Small Town BC where they profile various BC communities. In February 2016, Mackenzie was featured and messaging focused on the same points as previously discussed in Section 2.4 (page 15). Generally, this was a positive reflection

of Mackenzie, although the commentators may have inadvertently reinforced the common negative perceptions of Mackenzie as an isolated, cold, out-dated place. For example, when they showed an image of a snowmobiler in a snowy setting with nothing else in the frame but a small snow-plastered shed, the host Mark Madryga said, "I'm not sure whether that's right through town or not..."; to which the other commentator said, "It's not the hinterland, Mark, it's Mackenzie!". They then continued to muse about how old the sled was, saying, "wow, gee, going back in time there". This kind of inadvertent mis-step can be avoided in the future by having a more deliberate and cohesive community brand.

Mackenzie's revival and growth¹⁰

This major news story was published in the Globe & Mail and received national attention (although it was in the BC Section). Though it was published in 2010, it remains one of the first news stories that appears when searching Mackenzie online today (in 2016). This is a generally positive and hopeful article, reflecting well on the future outlook for Mackenzie. However, it also highlights the notion that Mackenzie can be a volatile and unstable community (economically speaking).

Murders and/or Shootings¹¹

There have been two incidents in Mackenzie in the past two years involving a shooting or suspicious death that have made national and provincial headlines. The first notable incident occurred in 2014, and involved a teen suspected of killing a man. The second incident was a non-fatal shooting involving 3 suspects. While these incidents reflect poorly on the community, similar headlines are seen on a regular basis in other communities throughout the province. Both of these stories were short-lived, and

⁹ Global News – Morning News Show (TV & online video): Small Town BC: Mackenzie; February 20, 2016; <http://globalnews.ca/video/2530420/small-town-bc-mackenzie-4> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

¹⁰ Mackenzie, B.C.'s Revival Continues; Globe & Mail (online), News Section, British Columbia; By Justine Hunter; April 16, 2010 (updated August 23, 2012); <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/mackenzie-bcs-revival-continues/article4324680/> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

^{11a} Three in Custody after Mackenzie Shooting, Prince George Citizen (online); July 7, 2016; <http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/three-in-custody-after-mackenzie-shooting-1.2297191> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

^{11b} Teen taken into custody after suspicious death in Mackenzie, CTV News (online); The Canadian Press; August 17, 2014; <http://bc.ctvnews.ca/teen-taken-into-custody-after-suspicious-death-in-mackenzie-1.1963941> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

^{11c} 17-year-old arrested after body found in Mackenzie, Global News (online); The Canadian Press; August 17, 2014; <http://bc.ctvnews.ca/17-year-old-arrested-after-body-found-in-mackenzie/> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

were not prominently featured news stories. The impact they would have on the overall perceptions of Mackenzie is probably minimal.

Wilderness & Wildlife¹²

Several stories and news segments have been published that would hint at the wilderness setting that surrounds Mackenzie. In particular, there was an incident in May 2015 where a man was attacked and killed by a grizzly bear while camping with his fiancé. This story received prominent attention in the mainstream media on a national and provincial level. Although there were too many reports on this story to list, the story made headline news across all media including TV, newsprint, and online news sites.

Another story the same month focuses on missing grizzly hunters that were found alive. This story coming on the heels of the bear attack, reinforces the idea of Mackenzie's wilderness setting. Although wildlife and wilderness can be seen as positive natural assets to be promoted, in these cases unfortunately, these stories would leave a negative impression with the general public.

Snowmobiling Mecca¹³

The quality of snow and plethora of trails for snowmobiling has certainly been highlighted in the media. Over the past five years, there have been several feature stories written about snowmobiling in Mackenzie in Snoriders Magazine (two are foot-noted below). Snowmobiling is also commonly mentioned in general tourism stories on Mackenzie.

2.7 WEB RESOURCES AND TOURISM SITES

In today's digital age, anyone who wants to learn something about Mackenzie will likely start by "Googling it". For those who don't already have

an idea or existing perception about Mackenzie, what comes up on the first couple pages of the Google (or Yahoo, Bing, etc) search will form the sole impression of the community. To see it from an outsider's view, this exercise is revealing.

General Google Search – Top 10 Results*

While people may search using all kinds of secondary descriptors when searching for Mackenzie (i.e. snowmobiling in, birding in, accommodations, etc.), we should first review the sites that come up with the general "Mackenzie, BC" search. Here are the top 10 (*according to the author's search).

1. Wikipedia: Mackenzie, British Columbia (general information site) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mackenzie,_British_Columbia
2. Destination BC: Mackenzie (tourism site) <http://www.hellobc.com/mackenzie.aspx>
3. The District of Mackenzie Website (general info & tourism site) <http://www.district.mackenzie.bc.ca/>
4. The Weather Network: Mackenzie (weather site) <https://www.the-weathernetwork.com/ca/weather/british-columbia/Mackenzie>
5. British Columbia Adventure Network: Mackenzie listing (tourism site) <http://bcadventure.com/adventure/explore/peace/cities/mackenzie.htm>
6. Government of BC Service Listing: Mackenzie (general information site) <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/technology-innovation-and-citizens-services/servicebc/service-bc-location-mackenzie>

^{12a} One man dead after bear attack near Mackenzie, BC, Global News (online); News Section: British Columbia; By Yulia Talmazan; May 11, 2015; <http://globalnews.ca/news/1990850/one-man-dead-after-bear-attack-near-mackenzie-b-c/> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

^{12b} Missing grizzly hunters located alive near Mackenzie, BC, CBC News (online); News Section: British Columbia; May 26, 2015; <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/missing-grizzly-hunters-located-alive-near-mackenzie-b-c-1.3087849> (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

^{13a} Porch to Powder in Mackenzie, BC, SnoRiders West Magazine; By Trish Drinkle, Undated; http://snoriderswest.com/article/mackenzie/porch_to_powder_in_mackenzie_bc (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

^{13b} Mackenzie is the real deal when it comes to sledding, SnoRiders West Magazine; By Jessica Kirby; Winter 2012/13; http://snoriderswest.com/article/mackenzie/mackenzie_is_the_real_deal_when_it_comes_to_sledding_destinations (last accessed Nov. 24, 16)

7. Indeed.com: Mackenzie, BC (job posting site) <http://ca.indeed.com/jobs-in-Mackenzie,-BC>
8. Work BC Employment Services: Mackenzie (job posting site) <http://www.workbcmackenzie.ca/Home.htm>
9. Environment Canada Weather: Mackenzie (weather site) https://weather.gc.ca/city/pages/bc-90_metric_e.html
10. SnoRiders West Magazine: Mackenzie (tourism, snowmobiling site) <http://snoriderswest.com/Mackenzie>

Page two results include the Mackenzie Chamber of Commerce, real estate listings, Yellow Pages listings, and a couple general interest articles already listed in this report.

To understand what perceptions are out there in the marketplace (at any given time), the best exercise one can do is to perform this kind of search and click on each link to see the general information people are viewing. Remember that the internet keeps evolving, and today's search may be very different from tomorrow's search. This is another case where consistent and cohesive branding efforts can really have an impact in shaping the perceptions people hold about Mackenzie.

While some sites are beyond the control of the District (i.e. weather, job listings, government services sites) most general information and tourism sites rely on editorial and visual media supplied by the District (or other marketing agency such as the Chamber of Commerce, or specific clubs, like snowmobiling). At the very least, most of these sites are open to editing upon request.

In the list above, four out of the top five search results aim to provide general interest or tourism information. We'll look at these in the next section.

Top Web Resources – Information and Tourism

Let's take a look at a few of the main sites people would visit to gain information about Mackenzie.

Wikipedia

At the time of this writing, the entire overview for Mackenzie focuses solely on the Forestry, Mills, Pulp & Paper plants, and mining activities in Mackenzie. Only upon reading further does one read about the other aspects of the town (such as recreation, facilities, tourism attractions, etc.).

Under recreation, Mackenzie is noted as a destination for outdoor sports enthusiasts. Dogsled racing, cross-country and downhill skiing, and snowmobiling are highlighted winter sports, while hiking, off-road vehicles, swimming at Morfee Lake beach, boating, and fishing are mentioned for summer activities.

The only tourist attractions mentioned are the Williston Reservoir and the tree crusher.

Destination BC (HelloBC)

Destination BC is the go-to site for tourism visitors in British Columbia. This tourism resource site is a provincially run destination marketing initiative. It will almost always come in the top 5 search rankings. The opening section generally highlights outdoor recreation, with a focus on:

- › “Impressive winter snow conditions” for snowmobiling, cross-country and downhill skiing, skating, snowshoeing, and ice fishing
- › Summer outdoor activities of hiking, birding, mountain biking, camping, boating, and fishing
- › Morfee Lake for hiking, boating, and fishing (they do not mention the beach or swimming),
- › Morfee Mountain for the view, 4x4ing, and snowmobiling,
- › Mackenzie Nature Observatory (MNO) and the bird banding station
- › Tree crusher
- › Golf course

There are more details listed on the site, but most will stop reading at this point unless they are looking for something specific.

The District of Mackenzie

As the third-highest ranking web result, when you land on the District of Mackenzie's website, it does not immediately convey a great deal about Mackenzie's positive features (apart from a photo of a biker on a dock at Morfee Lake). Instead, it has a distinctly utilitarian feel, much like other institutional websites. From the homepage, one can click on a “Visitors” link, where one would have to click again to find downloadable visitor guides. There is some great information about Mackenzie, but it is not quickly accessible, nor is there a general sense of what Mackenzie is like.

Moving forward, and in light of the fact that the District also serves as the de facto site for tourism, it would be recommended that the District of Mackenzie's landing page have more of a focus on what makes it attractive as a community. It can still have all of the municipal information on it, but it needs to have more "draw power" than it currently has. Sparwood, BC has balanced this nicely on their municipal site <http://sparwood.ca/>.

British Columbia Adventure Network (bcadventure.com)

BCAdventure.com is another tourism listing site that has been around for a long time, and is usually highly ranked in web searches. The old "sky's the limit" tagline can be seen on this site. Highlights include:

- › Williston Reservoir
- › Natural unspoiled wilderness
- › Hiking, mountain biking, camping, wildlife viewing
- › Lakes, rivers, streams
- › Fisherman's paradise
- › Morfee Lake for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming, beach-going
- › Golf Course
- › Snowmobiling
- › Downhill and cross-country skiing
- › Mackenzie Museum, Arts Centre, Rec Centre
- › Tree crusher

Web Resources – YouTube and Video sites

YouTube is quickly becoming one of the top search engines on the internet. With most mobile phones having video capabilities, and video editing apps becoming more accessible, online videos are one of the leading influences on brand perceptions.

Based on YouTube search results (see below), one can get a sense of the main impressions of Mackenzie that people might see. The top YouTube videos that come up when searching for Mackenzie, BC include:

- › I Love Mackenzie, BC (Promo by Canfor); General promo (2,756 views)
- › Mackenzie, B.C. (Promo by Northern Development); General promo

(6,709 views)

- › #90: Mackenzie, British Columbia (personal, Landon Gendur); Morfee Lake, beauty, scenery (162 views)
- › Welcome to Mackenzie! (personal, Moosestash Films); Leah Callahan wrestling (1,384 views)
- › Mackenzie BC wind and snow (personal, H Beursk); winter blizzard (226 views)
- › Kraft Hockeyville 2011 (local promo, aborenheim); community spirit (4,129 views)
- › Quading (personal, PlayBox); quadding in the snow (57 views)
- › Mt. Morfee Snowmobiling (personal, spooner4561); snowmobiling (2,853 views)
- › Sno West Magazine; Snowmobiling stunts in water (233 views)
- › Slamming trees in Mackenzie (personal, Otis Elzinga); "killing trees in BC with a tired old buncher" (231 views)
- › Bull Trout Mackenzie BC (personal); fishing video (1,165 views)
- › Wind storm in Mackenzie (personal, Drewlius M); wind and winter (2,605 views)
- › Tree Crusher (personal, Scott Simmons); tree crusher in action in 1965 (9,111 views)
- › Powder King (personal, Angeline Elizabeth); downhill skiing, snowboarding (133 views)
- › World's Largest Tree Crusher (Buyni the Best); tree crusher footage (22,696 views)

Other video results (non-YouTube):

- › Global News: Small Town BC feature on Mackenzie (5, 2-min videos)
- › Global News: Fatal Bear attack near Mackenzie, BC

Web Resources – Google Images

Every time Mackenzie, BC is "googled", a variety of images come up. Below is a list of the most common subjects that the top images portray (in descending order).

- › Lakes (9)

- › Small rural town - with charm (7)
- › Small rural town - without charm (6)
- › Facilities and buildings (6)
- › Biking (3)
- › Winter (3)
- › Snowmobiling (3)
- › Map or location (3)
- › Tree Crusher (2)
- › Fishing (2)
- › Others (1): Beach, wedding, wildlife, Bennett Dam

Interestingly, if one looks at the images from a broader perspective, the impression of “wilderness” is distinctly communicated.

Summary – Mackenzie’s Online Presence

In today’s digital society, a community’s online presence is one of the first impressions that non-residents will experience. Whether it’s a potential visitor, a new business start-up, or a potentially new resident, they will almost all start with an online search of Mackenzie. The importance of having an attractive, consistent, and deliberate online presence cannot be overstated!

Currently, the most obvious impressions of Mackenzie that are being communicated to the outside world revolve around the following themes:

- › Outdoor recreation and wilderness, particularly:
 - Summer - lakes (paddling, swimming, fishing), hiking, camping
 - Winter - snowmobiling, cross-country and downhill skiing
- › Small, rural town – equally split on whether this is charming/quaint or uninteresting/backwater (blah)
- › Forestry – tree crusher
- › Winter – when it’s winter, it’s really winter
- › Mechanized adventure - focus on snowmobiling and 4 x 4ing
- › Nature and scenery – birds, wildlife, quiet enjoyment of

It’s also worth noting that we have left social media out of the analysis.

This is mainly because, at the moment, there isn’t much on social media that would reach the outside world.

More and more we are living in a “real time” society. Viral stories (images and videos) can change the perception people hold of a place overnight – and they can come from out of the blue. The best thing a community can do to prepare and manage its online image is to do the following:

1. **Be aware of your online presence** – Not just at one point in time - this means always staying current by constant monitoring.
2. **Build a consistent brand story** – and tell it consistently through all web media you can control. Use similar phrasing, tone, imagery across all mediums. That way, when you are searched, people will find what you want them to find.
3. **Develop a pro-active online media strategy** – control your own story. Reach specific target audiences across different online mediums. YouTube videos, Facebook and Google profiles populated with images, Twitter, media campaigns, and even online ads.

2.8 THE LOOK & FEEL OF MACKENZIE: COMMUNITY ASSETS

In terms of amenities, the town has everything it needs all in close range making it very walk-able. Its facilities are more modern (compared to other rural towns), and much more developed than other BC communities of similar size. There is little way-finding signage, and not much of a “town centre” (compelling focal point to draw in residents and visitors).

When it comes to the general look and feel, if ever there was a “neutral” look, Mackenzie has it. It is not what most people would consider “charming”, but nor is it an ugly eyesore. The feel of the town tends toward utilitarian, uninteresting, and out-dated.

Having said that, it’s actually a positive thing for Mackenzie, as it has a relatively blank slate to work with. Town revitalization or beautification efforts would pay dividends. For current residents, it would reinforce a sense of pride, as well as potentially creating a hub for community gatherings and events. For visitors (even those staying temporarily for work contracts) it would make the town a more endearing place.

From a branding perspective, tangible community assets are as follows:

- › Lakes and rivers for recreation (paddling, swimming, beach-going, fishing)
- › Trails and camping areas (hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, ATViing)
- › Accessible wilderness
- › Morfee Lakes & beach
- › Morfee Mountain (accessible alpine summit)
- › Williston Reservoir
- › Excellent recreation facility and library
- › Great, reliable winter conditions for winter recreation
- › Ski areas – Little Mac and Power King
- › Mugaha Marsh, Bird banding station
- › Mackenzie Museum and Arts Centre
- › Golf course
- › Airport (no regular service)
- › Rail access to Mackenzie (industrial only)

Through community workshops and one-on-one interviews during the branding process, community assets will be further explored, along with other benefits and positive attributes.

section three

Brand Context: National, Provincial, and Regional Brands

section three / Brand Contexts

Mackenzie's brand does not exist on its own. It is viewed in the context of other brands that an audience may come in contact with. For example, a potential visitor from overseas has probably seen advertising or heard stories from people they know about Canada, and perhaps BC. They may not have heard of Mackenzie yet, but just knowing that it is in BC, Canada, there will already be a stage set for their expectations. Thus, Mackenzie has an opportunity to leverage these over-arching brands by aligning with them where possible. Outlined below is an overview of Canada's brand, British Columbia's brand, as well as regional (and possibly competing) brands.

3.1 CANADA - KEEP EXPLORING

This is Canada's tourism brand. As such, it is the main brand that people come into contact with – be it a business investor, a potentially new immigrant, or a visitor.

The brand image that most people have (outside of Canada) is that it is a vast place with big nature and friendly people. This is only the surface of Canada, and most Canadians know it to have more depth. The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) decided that the main drive behind what makes Canada compelling is that it is a place for explorers. This nods to the short history of the country, as well as make it an interesting destination for those that find exploring an intriguing proposition. Further, they have identified five “unique selling propositions” (USPs) as outlined below:

- › Vibrant cities on the edge of nature
- › Personal journeys by land, water, air
- › Active adventure among awe-inspiring natural wonders
- › Award-winning Canadian local cuisine
- › Connecting with Canadians

Sound familiar? Canadians and international visitors may already view Mackenzie in this light, simply because of its location in Canada. To look deeper into the Canada Brand, view their brand book at:

http://en.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/pdf/brandToolkit/ctc_brand_guidelines_3.0_en_lowres.pdf

3.2 SUPER, NATURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

The British Columbia brand takes the third point from the Canada brand, and puts it centre stage as one of their main brand pillars (active adventure among awe-inspiring natural wonders).

It is natural adventure that British Columbia's brand essence, iconic experiences, and personality and spirit revolves around.

BC's unique selling proposition is summed up by the statement:

Nature is the Magnet.

Their brand essence is simply: **Wild at heart.**

The descriptors that define the personality and spirit of the BC Brand are:

Strong | Free-spirited | Adventurous | Open | Generous.

The **iconic experiences** that the BC brand showcases, are:

- › Canadian Rockies
- › Rainforests
- › Skiing
- › Ocean coast
- › Cities in wilderness

They also define a “creative platform” – a feeling they hope to convey through all of their visual materials (fonts, colours, photography, tone-of-voice, etc). Their creative platform is **cultured & raw**.

To read more about British Columbia's brand, view the document at:

<http://www.destinationbc.ca/getattachment/resources/british-columbia-tourism-brand/our-brand.pdf.aspx>

3.3 REGIONAL BRANDS – MACKENZIE’S CHANCE TO DIFFERENTIATE

The Canada and BC brands offer Mackenzie a chance to leverage its own brand by drawing on common threads, thereby aligning with the brand messages and target audiences.

By contrast, communities within the same region as Mackenzie can be seen as competing brands. This presents an opportunity for Mackenzie to differentiate itself. Indeed, it **must** differentiate in order to stand out and be competitive in attracting investment, new residents and visitors.

Below is a brief summary of regional brands and the statements they have chosen to identify themselves by.

Fraser-Fort George

Prince George: Where urban sophistication and spectacular wilderness live distinctively side by side.

Valemont: Let the Mountains Move You!

McBride: Explore with us!

Bulkley-Nechako

Smithers: No brand statement (alpenhorn graphic, mountains trees, paddling on lake)

Telkwa: Where rivers meet and friends gather (river/waves, wood)

Hazeltons: No brand statement or positioning to speak of (mountains, history, 1st nations)

Burns Lake: It’s only natural! (river, tree, 1st nations)

Fort Saint James: Historic & Resourceful! (water, wilderness, trees/green)

Fraser Lake: The white swan capital of the world (lakes, fishing, wood, mining)

Vanderhoof: The heart of it all (birds, water, hills, river)

Northeast BC

Tumbler Ridge: no tagline (dinosaurs, alpine peaks, wilderness, mountain biking, ice climbing, waterfalls)

Chetwynd: Community carved by success (chainsaw carvings, lakes and rivers, trails)

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section four

Community Survey: Insights & Perceptions

section four / Community Survey: Insights & Perceptions

There have been several community surveys over the past decade to gauge residents' opinions, views, and attitudes. Mainly, these surveys have focused on community planning or economic development. As such, they have gathered vital information about community vision, thoughts for future direction, SWOT analyses, and insights into "what should be fixed" in the community. Prior surveys have not, however, solicited the "touchy feely" kind of information that is crucial to identifying values, personality, and emotional attributes that locals readily associate with Mackenzie.

The branding survey was available online and in hard copy formats from June 20 to July 7, 2016. Please refer to **Appendix B – Community Survey** for a copy of the questionnaire. The surveys were intentionally anonymous so as to solicit truthful, raw, and uncensored feedback. The raw survey results can be found in **Appendix C – Community Survey Results**.

Please note that this survey was anecdotal in nature, and not scientific. It was intended to highlight trends in how people perceive their community, as well as the thoughts and associations they hold about Mackenzie.

For a full statistical report on the answers to each question, please refer to the survey results in the Appendices. Below is a summary of highlights and relative insights that can be drawn from the survey results. Not every question will be discussed.

4.1 RESPONDENT OBSERVATIONS

Respondent Profile

There were a few interesting trends when it came to respondent demographics.

- › The majority of respondents were women (approx. 70%). This trend has been seen in similar exercises in other communities.
- › When looking at how long residents had lived in Mackenzie, there were significantly more survey respondents in the 20+ years category than any other (42% versus only 30% in the 5 years or less category).
- › While there were respondents from across every age group, the

majority of residents fell into either the 0 - 5 year category (Newcomers - 30%), or the 21+ year category (Long-term - 42%). This is very significant. ***Perceptions among those who have lived in Mackenzie (or any place for that matter) tend to be much more favourable and positive than those of newcomers.*** People who have been settled in a place over the long-term simply tend to not notice many of the negative detractors in their community... they've just become used to them, and have accepted them as normal. This is human nature. This skewed perception is something to keep in mind as you read the survey results and observations.

4.2 ABOUT MACKENZIE

Positive Rational Attributes

Rational attributes are things that are tangible, and can generally be seen and/or touched. In this section, the trends were clear. The numbers below reflect a combination of responses "It matters a lot" and "It matters somewhat".

When considering the biases that the long-term residents have (20+ years), it is important to note that long-term residents placed much more importance on natural landscape, scenery, and the outdoors as a positive attribute. In addition, most long-term residents perceive Mackenzie to have "small town charm" and view the town centre as a positive attractant. They also placed more importance on Arts & Culture as an attractant. Newcomers were much less likely to call Mackenzie charming, and saw the downtown core as run-down, out-dated, and more of a detriment than an attractant.

- › (Ranked #1) Outdoor activities – Lakes & rivers
- › (Ranked #2) Outdoor activities – Leisure (hiking, camping, birding, golfing)
- › (Ranked #3) Natural landscape, scenery
- › (Ranked #4) Outdoor activities – Hunting & fishing

- › (Ranked #5) Outdoor activities – Mountain sports (non-mechanized)
- › (Ranked #6) Outdoor activities – Mountain sports (mechanized)
- › (Ranked #7) A base for outdoor activities
- › Other mentions – Small town friendly feel, community recreation facilities

Negative Attributes and Detractors

Negative attributes are those that contribute to a negative reputation of Mackenzie, and serve to drive away potential visitors, residents, or future business development. The top negative attributes are described below.

- › (Ranked #1) Lack of variety and/or quality of restaurants
- › (Ranked #2) Lack of variety and/or quality of retail stores
- › (Ranked #3) The look & feel of town (dated)
- › (Ranked #4) Lack of marketing – people are unaware of the positive aspects of Mackenzie
- › (Ranked #5) Lack of upper-end or modern accommodations
- › (Ranked #6) Image of a struggling resource town
- › (Ranked #7 – tie) Not enough tourism attractions
- › (Ranked #7 – tie) Too remote, too far away from other places of interest

Personality and Spirit of Mackenzie

This part asked respondents to describe Mackenzie as if it were a person. It explores human traits associated with the community. The answers below (grouped) paint a picture of the nature of Mackenzie (in descending order). This is the vibe that newcomers can expect when they visit Mackenzie and interact with the community.

- › Friendly, warm-hearted, agreeable
- › Easy-going, adaptable, approachable, unassuming
- › Hard-working, resourceful, practical
- › Tough, determined, enduring
- › Sincere, authentic, reliable, honest, straight-shooter
- › Quiet, calm, reserved, serene

Perceived Differentiators

Survey question #6 asks respondents to look at Mackenzie vis-à-vis other small towns in British Columbia. This revealing and open-ended question challenges respondents to choose positive attributes that Mackenzie has, that most other BC towns do not (or not as much of). The outcomes from this fell overwhelmingly into a few categories.

- › Lakes, streams, beaches (23%)
- › Snow and winter activities (17%)
- › Camping and hiking trails (12%)
- › Outdoors and recreation (10%)
- › Clean water and air (8%)
- › Hunting, quadding, fishing (8%)
- › Other answers included the small town friendly vibe and sense of community, affordability, walkability, wilderness and wildlife, natural beauty, interesting heritage/history (tree crusher).

A key observation here, is that while natural landscape and beautiful scenery ranked high (#3) as a positive attribute for Mackenzie, most people understand that this is not something Mackenzie can compete on when it comes to marketing itself.

Favourite thing about Mackenzie (why people stay)

- › Outdoor activities (specifically skiing and fishing were mentioned)
- › Community, people, friendliness
- › Scenery, peaceful nature
- › Mountains and wilderness
- › Family-oriented, safe
- › Recreation facilities
- › Other answers included quality of life (good lifestyle), fresh air/water, affordable, work opportunities, uncrowded

4.3 HOW MACKENZIE IS PERCEIVED FROM THE OUTSIDE

One of the more interesting observations that can be made about how people may perceive Mackenzie, is that most respondents thought the outside world was either neutral or had never heard of Mackenzie (a whopping 57%). The remaining perceptions were either positive (25%) or negative (only 18%).

When it came to the open-ended question, however, the overwhelming majority of responses were negative. Respondents were asked to put themselves in outsiders' shoes to understand how others may think of their town. It is important that these results be taken with a grain of salt, as many people may mix in some of their own perceptions. Consider also that people can be their own harshest critic. Below were some of the results from the open-ended question, in descending order of importance.

- › Sleepy town where nothing happens, boring, nothing going on (14%)
- › Unknown, no perception, no idea where it is (12%)
- › Small friendly town with a strong sense of community, "nice place" (11%)
- › Mill town, camp town, resource town (10%)
- › Temporary, struggling, changeable, unstable (10%)
- › Isolated, in the middle of nowhere (10%)
- › Backwater, redneck, out-dated (9%)
- › Great place for outdoor recreation (particularly winter) (9%)
- › Beautiful place, setting (4%)
- › Other responses included (1% or less): outsiders feel pity for those who "have to live there"; Hard to find work; A temporary place to have a small family to get a start in your career (mainly trades); Cold and snowy; Has potential

4.4 MACKENZIE'S TARGET AUDIENCE

This section reveals what kind of people the residents of Mackenzie think would appreciate the community. The first part is demographic in nature, and is pretty straightforward.

The second part is where it gets interesting. The last two audience questions uncover the personality and values that the ideal target audience ought to have (according to the respondents). It can be seen as a direct reflection of the spirit, personality, and values that the people of Mackenzie hold themselves. These traits are projected onto the target audience.

Audience Demographics

Generally speaking, the ideal target audience are in the 20 – 50 age range, are mainly from the Western Provinces, and are in a committed relationship, likely with children. They have a high school diploma, as well as either a trade certificate or college diploma.

Audience Personality

The audience has the following personality traits (in descending order of prominence):

- › Outdoorsy and adventurous (26%)
- › Appreciation for the simple life (13%)
- › Engaged "doer", community-minded, volunteer (12%)
- › Hard-working, blue-collar (9%)
- › Social and outgoing (8%)
- › Health-conscious (6%)
- › Easy-going and laid back (6%)
- › Energetic (5%)
- › Other personality traits include a positive outlook, warm and friendly, open-minded, and motivated.

Values of the Ideal Audience

The values of the target audience are truly a reflection of the engaged people who already live in Mackenzie. The target audience values, in descending order of prominence:

- › A healthy and active lifestyle that includes outdoor recreation and an appreciation for nature and the environment; 22%
- › A safe environment to live and raise a family; 22%
- › The freedom and peace of mind that comes by having a reliable good-paying job, coupled with affordable cost of living; 17%

- › Having time – usually to play and connect with family and friends; 15%
- › A clean and healthy environment (particularly clean air and water) to live in; 13%
- › “Slow living” – defined by a relaxed pace-of-life where you have the time and freedom to enjoy the simple things, like peace and quiet. 11%

4.5 OTHER INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SURVEY

There are a few other interesting observations worth mentioning.

Local's thoughts on the Community Branding Initiative

Local's thoughts on the community branding initiative are worth noting. Most people are supportive of it, with about half being excited about it, and the other half guardedly optimistic that it will have an impact. Only two people (about 2%) thought it was a wasted effort and use of resources.

Quality of Responses

Generally speaking, there was an excellent quality of responses in the open-ended questions. People were quite thoughtful and thorough when answering, with very few skipping the written parts. This lends validity to the observations resulting from the open-ended questions – words and themes were repeated by many, giving the results a solid base.

Respondent Biases

Respondent biases are worth mentioning again. This refers to the tendency for people who have lived in Mackenzie for 20+ years to look more favourably on the town, and give less weight to negative attributes. They also place more importance on nature, outdoor adventure, and “slow-pace-of life” than those who have lived in Mackenzie for 5 or less years. The reason this is important to keep in mind, is that the perceptions of the outside world, and newcomers in general, will be most in-line with the 0 – 5 year residents than any other group. That means that the responses from these respondents are arguably more relevant to understanding the true nature of Mackenzie.

For example, someone with fresh eyes driving to Mackenzie on Highway 39 will not notice anything but the plethora of forestry cut blocks in various stages of devastation and regrowth. Someone who has driven that highway many times won't even notice. It is important to recognize these kinds of biases when thinking about the brand positioning.

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section five

Final Words

section five / Final Words

5.1 ON THE COMMUNITY BRANDING INITIATIVE

A common finding from many of the community and economic development exercises over the last decade is that most residents are clearly ready for a positive change in the community. There is a desire in most residents to restore vibrancy back to the community, and to grow Mackenzie in a sustainable, diverse, and authentic way.

For most, it's difficult to visualize where to start in reversing the slow decline of Mackenzie. Many realize that it's a cycle that feeds back upon itself... less jobs, less young working people, less vibrant community - but how do you attract new investment, people, and visitors to make it a thriving place again? Chicken or egg?

For Mackenzie, this branding initiative is the beginning. It, in itself, is not the answer. It's simply a start to understanding where it has come from, who it is as a community, and how it would like to evolve. Only then can Mackenzie put its best face forward to the world - in a consistent and deliberate way. And that's where the change begins.

5.2 ON THE NEXT STEPS

This background research sets the stage for the rest of the branding process. It gives us a clear picture of where Mackenzie has come from, and where it stands today.

From here, this information will be combined with the outcomes of the community workshops and interviews, resulting in a branding platform that will define Mackenzie's personality, spirit, values, and best attributes.

The final Brand Book will be a working tool that the District of Mackenzie can use to help tell its story, and it will serve as a guiding document for marketing communications and community development over the years. It is a living document that should be reviewed and updated as Mackenzie evolves.

references

references

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