

HUMANS OF CED



EAST KOOTENAYS

We are highlighting the amazing humans that contribute to the community economic development within our region!

ROBYN PEEL



*Community Economic Development Coordinator
Community Futures East Kootenay*

WHAT ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THAT CONTRIBUTES TO CED?

As well as being the Community Economic Development Coordinator (CED) with Community Futures East Kootenay (CFEK), I also am on the Board of Wildsight Elk Valley, am a passionate contributor and supporter of the Local store in Fernie and I have helped run the Fernie Mountain Film Festival for five years. These are the ways I help to contribute to the amazing Fernie community that I'm proud to call home.

HOW DOES YOUR WORK ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNITY?

My role with CFEK supports regional capacity building by facilitating support and collaboration for CED projects happening within communities across the East Kootenays. This hopefully helps those communities be more livable, resilient, vibrant places for people to live. For my work with Wildsight Elk Valley and Local, it allows more people to access great local food year round, and supports food security work in the area. And the Film Festival brings locals and tourists together for two nights each year to celebrate local and global films that remind us why we love living in the mountains.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

Fernie has amazing outdoor adventures at my doorstep, an engaged and friendly community, great local businesses to support and non-profit organizations that both support people within the community and enhance my life (including great trails, swim training, and access to great local food). Fernie has all the things I love – good people, good food, and all the beautiful scenery and nature one could ask for.



SHANNON GREY DUNCAN



Healthy Kimberley Food Recovery Depot

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED?

I worked as a market farmer, then for the Cranbrook Food Action Committee coordinating local food sustainability projects. After having my 2nd child, I transitioned out of that position to focus on motherhood and my small tea making business. When the position of Food Recovery Coordinator came up with Healthy Kimberley, I couldn't resist applying. It aligns perfectly with my values and skill set - creative adaptability, resourcefulness, community building, and empowering people with access to food and building food literacy skills. I'm also drawn to projects in the seed form - forging new ground lights my fire :).

HOW DOES YOUR WORK ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNITY?

We reduce the burden on our local landfill by diverting food waste - now over 300,000 lbs since the Food Recovery opened 4 years ago. The majority of that food was deemed edible in our sorting process and directly addresses food security through distribution to vulnerable community members. The way that happens effectively is through developing strong relationships. That is at the heart of how I feel this initiative enhances our community - as these relationships develop, with partner agencies, within our volunteer community, with donors, and the greater public - we are part of building a stronger community. Food connects people and I come back to this time and time again as a valuable tool to create healthier, stronger communities. Ideally, recovered food becomes a vehicle for increasing food literacy skills and encouraging people to connect creatively with food, regardless of income or demographic. Since the development of our frozen meal program, we've been able to transform food that is close to end-of-life into a much more value-added and useful product for our vulnerable community members, taking away the pressure to use it quickly and helping to lessen the burden on making another meal.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

We are nestled in the mountains, surrounded by forest that is accessible in almost every direction. Mark Creek flows through the middle of town and is a living example of the power to heal. When I grew up, that creek was orange & you didn't even think of going near it. Through the dedication of community members working collaboratively to encourage and enhance corporate efforts, the fish have come back and there are swimming holes all through town. That kind of collaboration and working together, finding middle ground where different views can meet and work together - that's the kind of community Kimberley is. I've always known it to be a down-to-earth and unassuming mountain town. The kind of place that really shows itself jewels when you stop and take the time to listen.



THERESA WOOD



Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce

TELL US ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN CED IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

I work in CED through the Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce who currently holds the contract for Columbia Valley Economic Development.

HOW DOES THIS ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNITY?

The supports and initiatives offered through the Columbia Valley Economic Development help elevate the Columbia Valley as place to start and grow your business. Whether it is our workforce attraction, entrepreneurial immigration programs, or assisting businesses navigate government programs, we meet businesses where they are at help them reach their goals

WHY ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT CED?

I am passionate about CED because it helps form the future of our region. We play an active role in helping business owners build something they are passionate about; when they are successful the whole community wins. We are in a time of great change with expectations surrounding corporate responsibility, societal expectations, and climate adaptation. We can help businesses work through challenges and opportunities together to build an overall stronger community.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

You will never find a more amazing group of people than residents of the Columbia Valley. People who have done and are doing incredible things. Sometimes it is in their own humble way, and other times they are building a name for themselves nationally and internationally. We have people doing incredible things in construction, food production, manufacturing, the arts, and so much more. It is always amazing to see the creativity and innovation that comes out of such a small population in our rural region .



DANIELLE WEISS



Community Energy Association

WHAT INITIATIVE(S) ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THAT CONTRIBUTES TO CED?

This project is called 2.0 because it's the second phase of work; it builds on the initial Accelerate Kootenays project which installed 13 Fast Chargers and over 40 Level 2 EV chargers across the region. The original project actually won national attention and recognition! And it certainly made it easier for locals to go electric. In fact, EV adoption by residents in the region is on par with the provincial average. And we are now seeing how this acceleration is creating opportunities for supporting industries (Cleanline Automotive in Invermere, the first auto service mechanic in the region to service EVs) and local business (EV drivers are very strategic! They will go out of their way to find a charger near restaurants and will plan a whole trip around finding a hotel where they can charge overnight; an EV charger outside a local business is proven to bring more visitors to the business).

HOW DOES THIS ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNITY?

One of the awesome projects I get to work on with my Community Energy Association team, is Accelerate Kootenays 2.0; I am coordinating the funding program and am serving as the program administrator. This program is part of the Kootenay Clean Energy Transition initiative and contributes to economic development in 2 key ways. First, it makes buying and installing a Level 2 electric vehicle (EV) charger more affordable for local businesses and organizations. Second, it will diversify the places and spaces where EV drivers – tourists and locals alike – can charge their EVs. I've talked to EV owners in the East Kootenays – individuals and businesses – who save a lot of money by driving electric. And I've also heard from many tourists who plan their trips to shop, sleep, and eat while they charge. So as we make EV travel and EV ownership easier in our region by improving connectivity of charging stations, we have a real opportunity build benefits for the region and its residents, businesses and visitors. The Accelerate Kootenays 2.0 funding program is just one way that I, through my work at CEA, am focusing on how electric mobility and active transportation can build economic, social and environmental benefits for our region.

WHAT ASPECT OF THIS WORK MAKES YOU THE PROUDEST?

Climate change is the biggest challenge of my lifetime. I am proud to be able to help advance solutions that can both reduce emissions and help our communities thrive. Some of the new solutions and technology I am helping implement are the result of local governments from across a region working together and also collaboratively alongside industry and even other NGOs – it's really cool to be a part of, especially since we are doing work that will make life better now and in the future. There is more than enough room for everyone to contribute and also benefit from these solutions!

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

The natural spaces. I like to do a lot of 'nature bathing', 20 mins a day at least!



JASON MELDRUM



President of the Elkford Bike Club

I am currently the president of the Elkford Biking Club for the second year now, and an active volunteer with Elk Valley Minor Hockey on our son's hockey team.

I got involved with the Elkford Biking Club as my wife and I were the founding members. We had an idea one weekend, we became a nonprofit organization, grew to 7 board members, and completed a bike park in Elkford all in just over 2 years.

Our initiative enhances many aspects of Elkford. It is a great addition to the ongoing Boivin Corridor beautification process. It has greatly increased outdoor activity for people of all ages, our bike park has provided an outlet in town for youth to gather, make friends and be active outdoors. In the peak summer days, there was upwards of 40 kids at once all using the bike park and pump track, many new friendships were made this summer down at the bike park. I love being surrounded by such natural beauty in Elkford, how supportive people and businesses are of one another, and how big of a heart our small town has.



BILL KIRKPATRICK



*Housing Project Manager
Columbia Valley Housing Society*

WHAT INITIATIVE(S) ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THAT CONTRIBUTES TO CED?

I'm the Project Manager for the Columbia Valley Housing Society. We are striving to develop, own and manage attainable housing projects in the Columbia Valley for residents who work and want to call our region home. We were formed as a solution to the labour shortage issue many businesses in our region are struggling with. When surveyed earlier this year, over 75 local businesses indicated that lack of affordable housing is the biggest reason why they are chronically understaffed and as a result, must reduce their hours of operation. This leads to a loss of profitability, less business being done in the valley, which of course is not good for our economy.

HOW DOES THIS ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNITY?

By being able to offer long term rental housing at below market rates, we hope to assist our local businesses attract and retain new employees. This will allow our businesses to be able to do what they do best, namely provide top quality goods and services to our community and tourism sector. Our businesses will be more successful, and visitors will have a better overall experience, becoming advocates of the Columbia Valley. In turn, these new employees will be able to put down roots and start families of their own and add to the vibrancy and diversity of the Valley communities.

WHAT ASPECT OF THIS WORK MAKES YOU THE PROUDEST?

I'm proud to work side by side with my team and board of directors with the Columbia Valley Housing Society and I'm honoured that they hired me as their employee. Although we're quite new, I'm proud of the progress we've made and how we will make a positive impact on peoples' lives by giving them a chance to achieve their goals of employment and community. I'm also proud to work along side the Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce and their visitor center. These hard working folks do an amazing job of representing the valley and region.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

I like doing a wide variety of activities outdoors year round and we are spoiled here in the Columbia Valley. We have world class golf and skiing, summer and winter lake activities, endless hiking trails, beautiful mountain scenery, decent weather and many other advantages too numerous to mention. Our local food and beverage scene is outstanding with several charming cafes and restaurants. Residents here are friendly, courteous, and are willing to lend a helping hand.



DARREN BREWER



*Economic Development Officer
City of Cranbrook*

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED IN CED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Community economic development is best summarized by the following statement, which I have displayed prominently in my office as a reminder of our duty as Economic Development Professionals - "Every day is your chance to make this city a little bit better". This mantra encapsulates my belief that community economic development is a continuous and collective effort, requiring a steadfast commitment to incremental progress. It serves as a rallying cry for our team, emphasizing the transformative power of small, daily contributions toward the greater prosperity and well-being of Cranbrook.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CED PROJECT OR INITIATIVE THAT YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH?

I've been in my role for almost 5 years now and feel a great deal of pride and accomplishment winning 2 national awards for Economic Development. However, the project that truly ignites my passion lies currently in the implementation phase – the Tourism Master Plan, a venture that propels Cranbrook into a promising era. Unveiling Cranbrook's hidden gems, the plan is a strategic roadmap designed to unlock the city's full potential and reap the economic rewards of a thriving tourism sector. This endeavor isn't merely about attracting visitors; it's a commitment to fostering a symbiotic relationship with our community. With a focus on respect and meaningful collaboration, we're forging partnerships with the Ktunaxa Nation and key stakeholders, ensuring that the benefits of tourism reverberate authentically and sustainably throughout our vibrant locale.

WHAT ASPECT OF THIS WORK MAKES YOU THE PROUDEST?

That's a simple one! Our role as Economic Developers is unique in that the projects and initiatives we undertake make an impact in our people's lives. It inspires me everyday to wake up and give 100% effort.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

I've lived a few places in my travels, small cities and big cities, all across the country and one thing that stands out here is the quality of life. We live in the world renowned Canadian Rockies. I could think of no better place to raise my son. Cranbrook is the last of the unplucked gems, a truly great place to call home!

