



Photo courtesy of the District of Tumbler Ridge.

A CASE IN ENTREPRENEURIAL GOVERNMENT: THE DISTRICT OF TUMBLER RIDGE

In 2014 Tumbler Ridge lost its major industry, and faced being shut down by British Columbia. In 2017, they had grown tourism by 700% and had completely shifted their economic dependence from coal.

OVERVIEW

The District of Tumbler Ridge has historically been a mining community in northern British Columbia. In more recent years, however, the mining industry struggled and in 2000 the operations were shut down. The Province of British Columbia considered closing the District, however, Tumbler Ridge lived through this tough time. But, in 2014 coal operations shut down once again, and the District of Tumbler Ridge faced another showdown on survival.

THE CHALLENGE

How can the District of Tumbler Ridge diversify from its traditional coal-based revenue stream to thrive as a municipality?

THE SOLUTION

In 2014 the District of Tumbler Ridge faced an extremely difficult circumstance, but also saw opportunity: they had just become Canada's 2nd UNESCO Global Geopark, and they had just hired their first Economic Development Officer in 10 years.

Traditionally, municipal governments seek to be a "service provider" that aims to bring a basic level of service to its ratepayers. The District of Tumbler Ridge could not survive with this mindset and decided to shift to the mindset of an entrepreneur asking the questions: "Who are our consumers and how can we best reach and serve them?", "Thinking value-per-dollar, who are the best consumers to spend our advertising money?", and "If we are a product, how can we market ourselves?".

Tumbler Ridge consulted with various stakeholders in the District and created a joint marketing brand with the Geopark. Two primary target markets were identified: tourists from Asian countries, and young single men who enjoy outdoor sports. Families on vacation were identified as a secondary target. The goal of this joint brand effort was to become a rising tourist destination, and completely change the way that people perceive Tumbler Ridge.

THE RESULTS

This brand partnership allowed a strong unified brand image, large cost savings, and, most importantly; tourists started flocking to the region. Tourism from Asian markets increased, regional tourism from Alberta also increased, and overall, the increase in tourism from 2014 to 2017 went from approximately 2,000 visitors to approximately 16,000. The costs savings from joint-marketing opportunities has reached nearly \$100,000 dollars since the campaign began. The economic development also expands to local business who can choose to partner with the brand to become “Geopark Operators” giving them access to beneficial co-branding opportunities. All in all, the resulting impacts to the District of Tumbler Ridge have been staggering.

The Numbers



Initial market budget: \$30,000



Tourism in 2014 – 2,000 Visitors



Tourism in 2017 – 16,000 Visitors



\$\$ Saved by Joint-Brand : nearly \$100k

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

The recipe for success? Tumbler Ridge CAO Jordan Wall says it is all about **Strategic Vision**. Wall breaks this down this as 1) Determining your unique resources, 2) Determining your unique capabilities, 3) Organizing those capabilities to showcase your unique features, 4) Ensuring buy-in from local stakeholder groups, and 5) Offering these with a business-mindset.

Strategic Vision

Unique Resources + Unique Capabilities	Recent Global Geopark status, newly-hired EDO, and the ability for the District and local businesses to leverage the Geopark brand.
+ Organize Capabilities + Ensure Buy-in	Creation of joint-brand in consultation with the local chamber, museum, and businesses.
+ Offer with a Business Mindset	“If we are a product, how can we market ourselves?”

Learn More.

For more on the District of Tumbler Ridge:

www.tumbleridgegeopark.ca/

www.tumbleridge.ca/

More about us:

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