

March 26, 2012

I'm writing this letter in response to the ongoing RAMP process that the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board has undertaken. I've read the literature, been to the public meeting, and read the 2 fluff pieces that the Interior News has run about recent RAMP goings on and the ski area in the Hankin/Evelyn community. What i've come away with is a real sense of how divisive this whole RAMP process is and will continue to be to our communities. One only has to look at what has happened in the Evelyn scenario to see how land use decisions that exclude people in our valley can cause distrust and animosity. The people of that community were not properly consulted, and this was admitted to by a government employee at the recent RAMP meeting. And the effect is that the long time residents of this community are now effectively shut out from accessing their backyards the way they have been for generations. There has been a lot of talk about how this RAMP is a public process with input from all aspects of the community and following the wishes of the people of the Valley. If the recent meeting was any indication there is a LOT of people who feel they are not represented, are against it and want it shut down. It seems, however, that the proponents of the process, even when asked directly if they would shut it down if it was shown to have a majority of people against it, have no intention of doing so. They seem bent on forcing this through no matter what, critics be damned. The reasons they have stated as needing this is to avoid conflicts in the backcountry. I argue that there are no conflicts in our woods, i spend a lot of time hiking skiing and quadding in the backcountry and have never seen any conflict in my time. But this process will surely create them. At this public meeting some key questions were asked of the RAMP board:

Who gave the BVCRB a mandate to pursue this?

How is Government linked to it?

Why do we need this process/ where is the conflict?

If it is truly a publicly driven process would they shut it down if it was deemed unworkable?

None of these simple questions were answered. Now a lot has been made in the editorial comments of this paper, and at the meeting, about the long term residents having a problem with new-comers who are driving this initiative. I think what people who haven't been here a long time, need to understand is why there is this view. There's a reason why we live in such a beautiful place. There's a reason why people choose to live here long term. There's a reason why new people are attracted to our Valley. There were some notable long term residents who stated this more eloquently than I at the public meeting, but here's my take on it. For over 100 years we've managed to build a pretty nice place with out having screwed things up. We've had arenas, ski hill, snowmobile cabins, and dozens of other recreational places built by people in our valley coming TOGETHER as a community to ensure that this valley was a great place to live. It's always been that way and i hope it remains so. That's how we're built in the North. If people see a problem they talk as neighbours and try to sort them out. Not leave it up to someone with a badge and a ticket book. Things may not happen this way in Victoria or Calgary, but its been a way of life here for a very long time. I'd hate to see this divisive RAMP process change any of that.

Sincerely,

Rick Fuerst