Live. Work. Play.

RidgeLife MAGAZINE

Summer 2026



Monkman Park by air

Also:

New History book launching

Kinuseo Falls (platform) still closed



It seems like such a small thing, but telling stories about the place we live, about the people who live here? Makes a big difference to the people who live here. It helps separate truth from rumour and fact from fiction. Our job at Tumbler RidgeLines is to share stories and celebrate the people who make this such a great place to call home.

Tumbler
RidgeLines















RidgeLife MAGAZINE

Tumbler RidgeLife is a magazine for and about Tumbler Ridge. This is our 2026 summer edition, dedicated to the people and places that make Tumbler Ridge such a great place to live and visit.

This magazine exists because of a grant from the Canadian Government and the BC Chamber of Commerce, which was found and administered by the Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce. While this issue is not funded by that grant, we like to remember our roots.

Thanks to all the local businesses and organizations for making this publication possible, and you, for picking it up and reading it.

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On the cover: A Ridge Rotors helicopter sets down in the alpine of Monkman Provincial Park.

Thanks to Anne, Ryan and Lisa for the stories and photos.



In the news...

If you are just visiting town for the summer, welcome to Tumbler Ridge.

We are a quiet little community, but have had more than our fair share of media attention over the 45-years.

When the town was being built, for instance, the *Vancouver Sun* sent a reporter up to Tumbler Ridge to document the province's newest instant town.

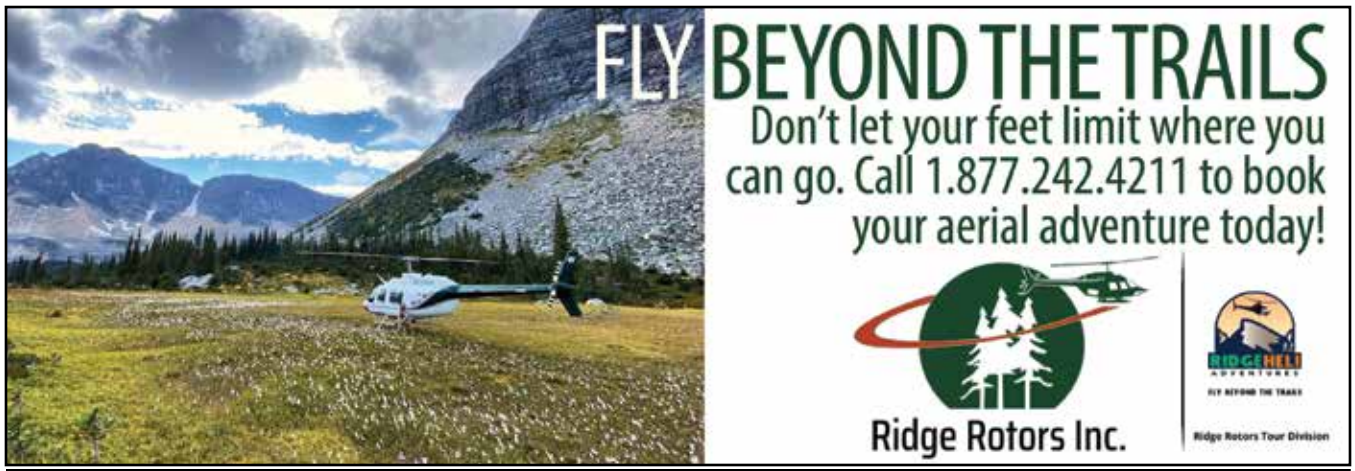
About a year ago, that reporter—Anne Mullens, who is now best known for covering health issues, not municipal builds—bumped into local doctor, Charles Helm. They got to talking and the seed for a book, based on those original stories, was born.

That book comes out in August, and documents the earlies days of Tumbler Ridge.

But that's not been the town's only time in the spot-light. Less than twenty years after those stories were

Continued on Page 5

Above: Tumbler Ridge from the Bald Spot. Lisa Allen photo.



written, the mines closed down and there were rumours that the town would be destroyed. So long and thanks for all the coal.

But a group of locals for whom the town had become home stood up and declared not today, and in the early 2000s, over 1000 houses sold in the community, many for under $50,000 and Mayor Clay Iles became a local hero, travelling to Ottawa to fight for the community.

That same year, a pair of young boys made a discovery that would also bring media attention to the town. While tubing down Flatbed Creek, they decided to run a particularly challenging section again. While walking back upstream, they saw something in the rock.

One of the boys wondered aloud: 'Could those be...?' 'Dinosaur tracks?' his partner completed the thought.

They were, the first in what would be hundreds of such trackways, each new discovery focusing fame on the community.

As the town was scrambling to find industry to fill the gap left by mining, tourism (fueled by the dino discovery) became a big thing. The town became North America's second-ever Global Geopark. Queue international resound.

Or that time the town won an alternative energy award for its work developing wind energy. Indeed, there are dozens, if not hundreds of such incidents that has rocketed the town to provincial, national or international news.

One of those events happened this year, on February 10, when a former student at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School walked in with a gun and killed six people—five students and a teacher's aid—then turned the gun on themselves.

For a week, for two, it was the top story worldwide. Maybe you read some of that news. Maybe you came here to see what the town was like. That's okay, you are welcome here.

Just know that we are more than this tragedy, that there are trails to hike or ride, waterfalls to see, mountains to climb. We are a community defined by the people who live here and by the landscape that surrounds us. We welcome you here, and we hope you enjoy your stay, but remember, for us, this is more than that place where the shooting happened.

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Babcock Falls. Lisa Allen photo.

Destination: Babcock Falls

There are certain destinations around Tumbler Ridge that hold a special place in my heart. I've previously told the story of standing at the base of Kinuseo Falls for the first time, before the Kinuseo Road was constructed, understanding for the first time what true wilderness was.

Babcock Falls has a place in my heart for a different reason: I built the trail there.

While I wasn't in any way the first person to the falls (trail construction was part of a summer works program for young people; I was the trail boss, building trails to a handful of destinations on behalf of the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society) or anything like that, the fact that I was one of the people to build the trail here, and I spent much of the summer hiking back and forth to the falls means that I feel connected to the trail.

Any time I hike here, I point out where the trail has been re-routed around the start, and that the bridge we built with so much care is no longer there, having been washed away by a spring flood twenty years ago now. I talk about the way the boardwalk keeps people's feet dry as they pass through the meadows, and I discuss that, while this is the official end of the trail here, very few people make the 1 km hike in to the falls (2 km round trip) without scrambling down to the base of the falls, which is where the real magic happens.

The falls are spectacular in any season, and, while I am particularly partial to the ice formations that grow here in the winter, summer is also a spectacular time to visit.

While the falls are a particularly lovely hiking destination, they are also a popular place for doing...well, most anything you want. I've photographed people rappelling down the falls with full climbing gear, and I've photographed people swimming in the pool at the base of the falls. And yes, the fact that I've photographed so many people at the base of the falls speaks to just how pretty a location it is.

To get here from Tumbler Ridge, drive south on Highway 52, to the turnoff to Monkman Park/Kinuseo Falls. For now, most people are turning right towards the falls, then left 1 km down this road onto the mine haul road. In the past, this road was closed to private vehicles, and may be closed again as Conuma is planning on opening the mine out here sometime in the next few years. Still, this route is better maintained then if you go past the turnoff another 6.8 km and turn right onto the Core Lodge Road, which meets up with the mine haul road. Both these roads are radio controlled. Watch for industrial traffic.

At 12.5 km, there is a fork. Take the right fork, following the sign saying "all other traffic". The left fork is for mine traffic only. Before you get to the turn-off to the core lodge, watch for the Babcock Falls parking area on your left.

This whole area is a hiking paradise, with trails to the Boulder Gardens (built that one), the Shipyard Titanic (built that one, too) Mount Kostuik and more.

TUMBLER RIDGE
FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Family Assistance program helps feed Tumbler Ridge Residents by supplementing their basic food needs monthly. We do emergency hampers for people in distress, as well as for family or persons needing one time help to get on track.

Address: **275 Murray Drive, Box 1521**
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Enjoy the Fun Day at Gwillim Lake, July 18 weekend. Lisa Allen photo.

Summer Fun: Community Events

WNMS Workbee

The First Saturday of every month the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society will be hosing a workbee. *wnms.ca*

Flatbed Loops

Every Thursday at 7pm, come train for the Emperor's Challenge by doing the hilly route, or just enjoy a group walk with friends along the flat route. *wnms.ca*

Geopark Passport

Pick up your passport at the Visitor Centre and get out there to explore! Every time you complete a hike, take a photo at the location and share it on social media using the hashtags #TRGEO and #GEOPASSPORT and tag Visit Tumbler Ridge. Each hike with photo counts as an entry into a prize draw to win one of three amazing backpacks filled with adventure gear. *tumblerridgegeopark.ca*

Annual Fishing Derby

Enjoy three days of fishing at one of three spectacular lakes and get hooked on the fin-tastic derby fun! After the weigh stations close, there's a BBQ-style buffet at the Trend Conference Centre. June 26-28. *tumblerridgegeopark.ca*

Ribfest

If fish isn't your thing, the Western Canada Ribfest Tour is hitting the Tumbler Ridge Fairground with award-winning BBQ and live music. Bring your friends, bring your appetite, and don't miss one of the tastiest events of the season. *June 26–28. wcrft.ca*

Canada Day Hike

This annual hike is part training session for the Emperor's Challenge, part low-key celebration of Canada Day. July 1. *wnms.ca*

Canada Day

Don't want to climb a mountain to celebrate your country? Join the community downtown for an annual celebration of being Canadian. July 1.

Fun Day on the Water

This event will be held the July 18/19 weekend at Gwillim Lake. Talk to TRORA for an exact schedule. *trora.org*

Tumbler Tales

45 years ago the town of Tumbler Ridge was incorporated, and reporter Anne Mullens was sent up by the Vancouver Sun to document the development of BC's last "instant town". This year, the Musum is are launching a collected volume of her articles and photos. August 1. *trmf.ca*

Emperor's Challenge

This challenging but accessible half marathon goes up and over Mount Babcock. This year it will be on August 8. *emperorschallenge.com*

TRORA Golf Tournament

The Tumbler Ridge Outdoor Recreation Association is the umbrella organization for all the outdoor clubs in Tumbler Ridge. This year, they will be hosting a Golf Tournament on August 22. *trora.org*

TR Cares Golf Tournament

TR Cares offers free medical shuttle services for people unable or unwilling to drive to out of town appointments. Their annual fundraiser happens September 4.

TR Strong Concert and Fall Fair

Join the TR Days society for a full day of music and events, 11am to 10pm. 100 percent of gate reciepts to support our community. *trdayssociety.ca*

Destination: Stony Lake

Highway 52 continues south, then east past Tumbler Ridge.

Back in the day, the paved section ended much sooner than it does now and the "gravel" section featured rocks the size of coconuts. Many an unwary traveller took what they thought was a quicker way to Tumbler only to be disabused of that notion by the relentless abuse on their vehicles.

The gravel road section is much improved, and the paved section now takes travellers past the Rat Lake Road turnoff (which doesn't actually go to Rat Lake) only to end without warning in the middle of nowhere.

Before you get there, though, you will pass the sign to the Stony Lake Recreation Site.

The recreation site offers 11 rough (or, as forestry likes to put it "rustic") sites along a rustic 1.2 km drive in from the highway.

In addition to the camping spots, there is a rustic boat launch where you can trailer launch a small (10 hp max) boat. That's basically a trolling motor, and, as you might be able to guess, fishing is a popular past time at the lake. While the lake holds perch, most people are here for northern pike, which don't get too large, but are quite plentiful.

(One of my favourite fishing stories involves a group of three teens who were out fishing Stony in a canoe. One snagged a pike and was so surprised, she tipped the canoe, but held onto her rod and the fish. A passing boat towed the group to shore, whereupon she climbed up onto the boat launch and proceeded to reel in her prize fish.)

For my money, though, the real joy of being here is paddling east from the campground in a canoe or kayak or on a paddleboard, and into a series of shallow canals that are incredibly peaceful on a summer's morn.

For the more adventurous, the lake is 2 km long and 400 m wide, and can easily be circumnavigated by an energetic paddler. Note that winds can blow up on the lake quickly, and can strand paddlers for hours until the wind either dies down or changes direction.

Paddle princess Winston enjoys a perfect moring on Stony Lake.



Viewing platform to remain closed

Last year, the Kinuseo Falls viewing platform was closed, as the 34-year-old viewing platform was nearing the end of its structural lifespan and requires full replacement.

BC Parks considered reinforcing the current platform, but it was determined that would have only extended the lifespan two years.

Kinuseo Falls is one of Tumbler Ridge's most popular destinations. While it doesn't move as much water as Niagara Falls in Ontario, Kinuseo is taller, at 60m high, and most people experience the falls from the viewing platform.

While the platform was expected to open sometime this year, according to the latest estimate from BC Parks, it will probably be 2027 before the popular platform is re-opened.

The good news is that when it does re-open, it will be rebuilt using fire-resilient materials. While the previous platform did not have to deal with fire, there were a few tense moments back in 2021, when a wildfire burned up to the edge of the river on the far side.

In addition to the platform rebuild, the project will include significant upgrades to the parking lot and access trail, with a strong focus on improving accessibility for all visitors. While the short trail to the platform is wheelchair accessible, it is rough in some places.

New interpretive signage will also be installed to enhance the visitor experience and share the cultural and ecological significance of the area.

There is a chance the work will be completed early; for the latest on access to the falls, check the Tumbler Ridgelines website, at *tumblerridgelines.com.*

While the main viewing platform is closed, visitors can still enjoy stunning views of the falls from the upper viewpoint, a 250 m walk from the parking lot, the Leake Viewpoint, 1.5 km from the parking lot, or the Downstream Viewpoint & Riverside Viewpoint, 2 km from the parking lot.

While the trail to the viewing platform is wheelchair accessible, the trail to the other viewpoints can be challenging, with steep terrain and drop offs. Past the upper viewpoint, the chance of finding trees down on the trail is likely.

The trail to these viewpoints splits, with one path leading down to the river. This is the path down for paddlers looking to launch below the falls. One might think that viewing the falls from river level would be even more impressive. One would be wrong. An outcropping of rocks blocks most of the falls from view from water level, and getting onto the rock for a better view is difficult, and even if you manage to get onto the rock, there are trees blocking your view.

If you really want to experience the falls up close and in person, consider taking a boat to the base of the falls. You can, as mentioned, bring a canoe or kayak down the trail, then paddle upstream, or you can catch a ride with Wild River Adventure Tours up to the base of the falls or with Ridge Rotors to the top of them (see page 14).

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Kinuseo Falls Road ATV concerns

For years, the former Murray Forest Service Road—now the Kinuseo Falls Road—was used by local ATVers to access prime riding areas, including the Five Cabin Creek area.

But Tim Croston, president of the Grizzly Valley ATV club, says he was recently talking to a Conservation Officer regarding the status of the road.

"This road has been used for years as an important connector for riders, and many people may not be aware that its legal status changed back in 2020," he says. "According to the information I received, the road was formally transferred to the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) on August 5, 2020. At that time, the Forest Service Road designation was discontinued."

On one hand, this is a good thing, as the road is now listed in the MOTT's inventory as a maintained public road and is recognized as a "highway" under the Motor Vehicle Act, and is being maintained to a much higher standard.

But for ATVers, this is a bad thing, as it is no longer considered a Forest Service Road or resource road under the Off-Road Vehicle Act.

"What this means is the provisions that allow registered and insured off-road vehicles (ORVs) to operate on Forest Service Roads do not apply to the Kinuseo Falls Road," says Croston. "ATVs, side-by-sides, and other ORVs are not permitted to operate on that road unless they meet the Motor Vehicle Act requirements for highway use."

He says the Conservation Officer service acknowledges that this road has historically been an important connector for local trail networks, and that the current classification creates challenges for riders who are trying to remain compliant while accessing the area.

"They also noted that officers do exercise discretion and consider the full context of each situation, including rider intent, registration, insurance, helmet use, whether there is any safety risk or resource damage, historical use of the area, awareness of regulatory changes, and the overall public interest."

Croston says continued access along this corridor is important to the local riding community, and says the club is planning on working with MOTT, the District of Tumbler Ridge, and possibly the province to see whether a formal exemption or accommodation could be considered.









THE WAY TO A HAPPY CAMP

An excerpt from Anne Mullen's new book on the early days of Tumbler Ridge due out in August, **Go North, Reporter: a young journalist covers the early days of Tumbler Ridge**, which will be released August 1.



A group of Japanese businessmen dine in the 1,000 man camp dining hall. Photo provided by District of Tumbler Ridge.

During my time in Tumbler Ridge in 1983, I spent a day among the kitchen staff at Quintette's 1,000–man camp (which at the time housed 1,200 people.) The kitchen and mess hall were staggeringly enormous. It is hard to do its size justice. The eating area for the camp residents was at least half-a-football field, with hundreds of tables, full of men eating to their heart's content. The food storage, as described in the story, was mind-boggling.

I had never seen food production on that scale in my life—three meals a day, 7 days a week, 12 months a year for 1200 people. Few chefs could manage that daily load in a city, let alone in such a remote location. Nor could many have coped with the threat of labor tension, such as a so-called wobble, when unhappy captive workers flexed their limited power by taking workplace displeasure (that had nothing to do with the food) out on the kitchen staff.

After I had interviewed chef Fischer and staff, they invited me to eat dinner. I can't remember what I chose from the cornucopia of offerings. But I will never forget the feeling of dismay and fear as I exited the food line carrying my tray of food. All eyes in the mess hall were on me, the Vancouver reporter they had heard about.

Where would I sit? The feeling of vulnerability and social anxiety was 100 times worse than entering a high school cafeteria on the first day as a new kid. I was only one of a handful of women there that day. In fact, I could see no other female face and just a vast sea of men. And it felt like every single one was looking at me.

I chose a section of vacant seats and almost immediately, four or five men sat down around me. They were a construction engineering crew from Ireland. "You look like the girls back home!" they said excitedly, seeing my strawberry blond hair, freckles, and my "Irish face." (A drunk in New York once yelled at me "you have a big Irish face!' That was what people meant, I guess, when they said I looked Irish.)

And indeed, I told them, yes, my ancestry was Irish immigrants from the potato famine. And we passed a pleasant dinner chatting about camp life, and why they had come from Ireland, as others looked on. I was grateful for the polite and engaging company.

JUNE 16, 1983

QUINTETTE MINE — Klaus Fischer is both a god and a scapegoat.

As the chef for the 1,200-man camp on the Quintette Coal mine site, he is responsible for feeding its inhabitants three times a day—satisfying their hunger as well as their culinary expectations.

It is a fact passed down from the first bush camps that, just as surely as the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, the route to a happy construction crew is through the kitchen.

If you give the men as much good food as they can eat, three dinners to choose from every night, T-bone steak twice a week, 25 home-made desserts every meal, fresh home-baked bread every day, and anything they want for breakfast, the work, it is hoped, will go smoothly.

And, as the old rule goes, if the men are unhappy about anything, fire the cook.

Although labor negotiations are more sophisticated these days, the cook still takes the brunt of many a discontent.

"When anything is wrong, anywhere in the camp, they invariably take it out on the kitchen staff," said attendant Rod Heinekey, chairman of the camp committee (akin to a city council), that deals with all complaints about food, as well as complaints about other aspects of camp life.

"It is constant stress," said chef Fischer, a German who moved to Canada in 1974, as he sat at his desk in the dry stores of the enormous kitchen.

While he organized the menus and schedules for the coming weeks, out in the front of the kitchen his 37 staff—including three first cooks, two second cooks, and two third cooks—served at least 900 men beef, curried chicken and rice, beef sausage, roast and mashed potatoes, peas and carrots and baby lima beans.

Dinner is an all-you-can-eat extravaganza costing $7 a person for those without a meal card.

Fischer, who orders the supplies, sets the schedule, creates the menus and directs the kitchen, arrived at the camp last October, when there were only 600 men. The camp has since grown to 1,200 men.

"The last chef left because the size was too big for him. Sometimes I wonder whether it is too big for me. Feeding 1,000 men is a lot of work."

Fischer and the kitchen staff are all employed by Cal Van Canus Catering, one of six catering firms for camps in B.C. who bid for the job of feeding the men within a certain budget.

Fischer's grocery bill is between $250,000 and $300,000 each month.

The catering company, of course, wants to make a profit, so it is the chef's job to serve not only the best food he can, but to stay with a certain percentage of food and labor costs.

The kitchen workers are all unionized and make between $17 and $20 an hour.

Fischer, who works from 5 a.m. until 8 p.m. most days, with a two-hour rest between lunch and dinner, must not stray from the food requirements written in a handbook of camp regulations put out by the B.C. and Yukon Building Trades Council.

"It is the bible," sighs Fischer. "It specifies what I have to serve, I cannot deviate. I go to sleep with that thing."

The chef must serve three lines of food every lunch and dinner. The first line is a top grade meat, either a roast or off the grill.

"The variety on the first line is very limited, roast beef, roast pork, steak, roast lamb. Anything in gravy automatically makes it a second line meat," said Fischer. The third line is the chef's choice.

Men don't like pork

He can serve chicken only once a week so Fischer will serve barbecued chicken one night of the week and Cornish game hen on Sunday.

He can use no leftovers, so he must be able to guess accurately what line will be the best seller on a given night.

"What the men will choose depends on the combination of the menu," said Fischer, 46. "In general, the men don't like pork, so if you put a first line of pork chops with a second line of beef liver, the beef liver will be the big seller. Or if you put baked ham with beef stew, more men will go for stew."

What the men eat also depends on the ethnic breakdown of the camp.

"If you have lots of Italians and Greeks, then consumption of olives goes way up," said Fischer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

FLY ME TO THE FALLS

TAKING A TRIP WITH RIDGE ROTORS

I've long held that the rewards of reaching your destination are equal to the effort that you put in, but as I've gotten older, and more importantly, have found myself on one too many bushwhacks that simply lead to more bush to whack through (all effort and no reward), I'm starting to rethink this philosophy.

Especially when, by the simple expediency of climbing into a helicopter and sitting there for an hour or so, you can be treated to some of Tumbler Ridge's most spectacular scenery.

This was the case last September, when the wife and I went out to the Tumbler Ridge Airport (yes, Tumbler Ridge has an airport) and climbed into said helicopter to partake in the Monkman Park flight, over Kinuseo Falls, the Monkman Cascades and up and over the mountains, including the Shark's Fin and Boone Taylor Peak.

This was not my first flight into the area (a few years back, I went heli-snowshowing up into that area, which remains one of the most epic days of my life), but it was my wife's first time. As we flew, the pilot pointed out the highlights of the scenery and regaled us with stories of previous trips through the area, including rescuing one of the group out filming the Monkman Pass documentary *Ancestor's Path*.

The views from the air are something to behold, and begin as soon as you leave the airport. I am particularly partial to watching the patterns of trees pass below, various shades of greens and—thanks to an early frost—yellows.

As you follow the Murray River upstream, the river wends its way below, leaving behind the occasional oxbow lake. While there are a variety of trips you can take—Ridge Rotors has tenure sites to land on Mt Watts, Mt Abby, Albright Ridge and Goat Ridge on Bertam Peak—the Monkman Park flight is the most popular, and that's the one we're doing today.

After maybe ten or 15 minutes of flying, Kinuseo Falls presents itself in front of you, the towering cascade (higher than Niagara, I am obligated to mention), from here it appears much smaller than I am used to seeing it.

Looking down at Kinuseo Falls from the air.

After slowing down to get a good look at Tumbler Ridge's single most popular tourist destination, the flight continues. For most, Kinuseo is the highlight of their trip. For us (and anyone else who books the tour), it is simply the start.

The next major point of interest is the Monkman Cascades. I've hiked to these waterfalls, and while they are marvelous from ground level, they are spectacular from the air, with up to four falls visible at times. Not better, necessarily, just different. More expansive. You miss the spray in your face proximity in exchange for expansive views.

Upstream a little more is Monkman Lake, where two different sources of water form an uneasy barrier between themselves, something that is probably not visible from ground level.

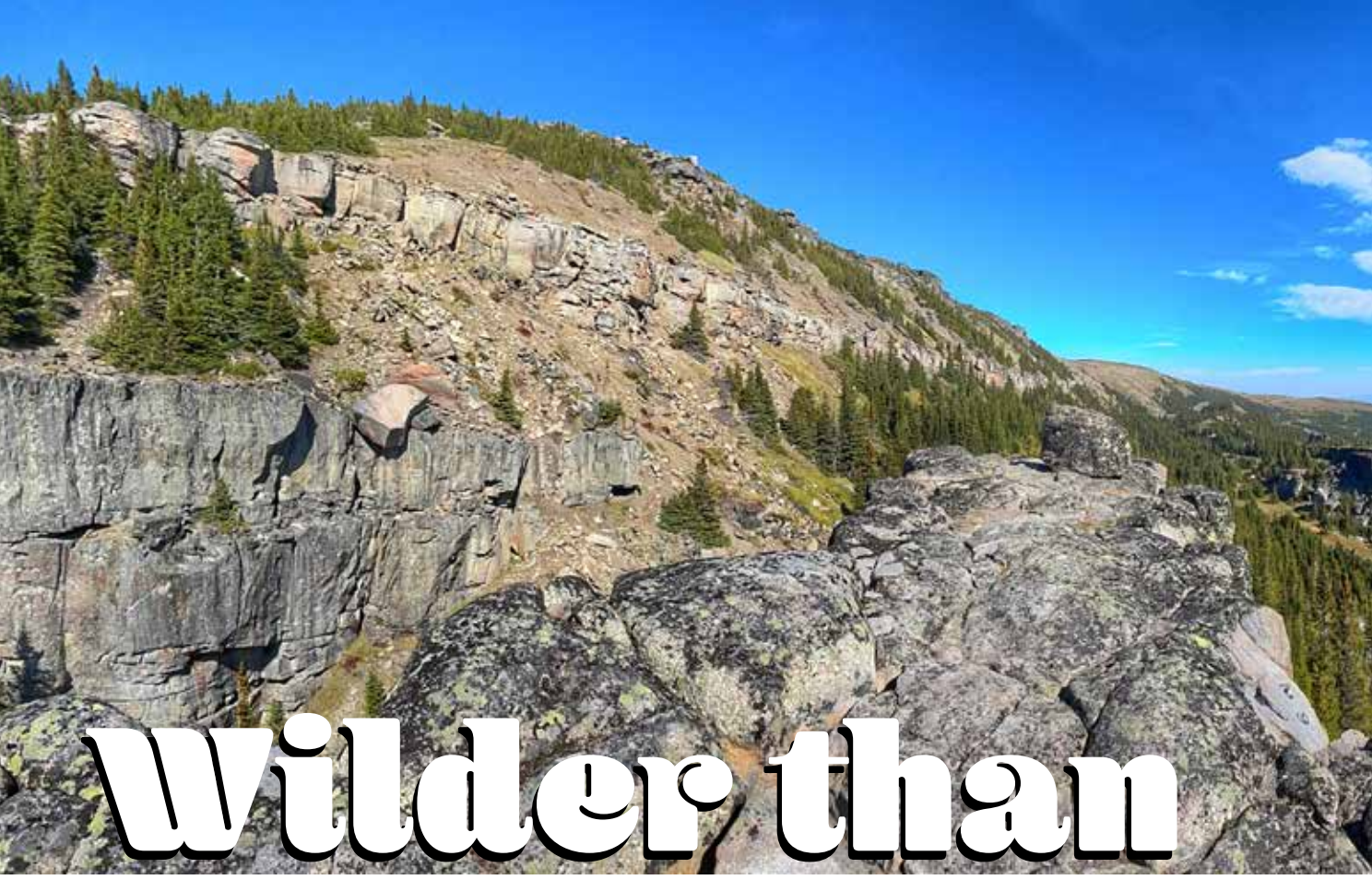
From Monkman Lake, a trail climbs up to Hugh Lake in the alpine, one of the most beautiful locations in the Tumbler Ridge area. The 8 km hike takes about five hours by foot, gaining about 1200m. We do it in about five minutes.

Backcountry explorers can set up camp here and wander for days in the alpine, but we're over the area in a matter of minutes, on our way to the high country at the back of the park, including Monkman Glacier. As I go, I identify dozens of spots that I'd love to get to in the high country back here, either on foot, or—more likely after this experience—with a helicopter assisted ascent.

There's an option to stop in an alpine meadow and get out and explore, but we're not doing that this trip. Instead, the helicopter passes over all the places that I yearn to explore, and begins it return home.

For folks looking for a shorter (and more affordable) flight, Ridge Rotors will be doing tours to Bergeron Falls during the Fall Fair. The Monkman tour is $1,850. www.ridgeheliadventures.ca





Wilder than

Last year, the District of Tumbler Ridge engaged Selkirk Planning & Design to help create a Destination Management Strategy and Trail Inventory for the community.

As of the publication of this magazine, the public draft had been made available.

The goal of the strategy is to shape "the sustainable development, management, and promotion of Tumbler Ridge's trail network and tourism assets, strengthening the community's position as a four-season outdoor recreation hub."

The strategy has six goals, including assessing the current trail system and creating a full inventory of available trails, complete with GIS mapping, analyzing past and present trail usage trends and their impact on the local economy and engaging the community on what their priorities are, in order to develop a vision, goals, and prioritized list of trail recommendations.

The goal is to establish Tumbler Ridge as the premier year-round destination for trails-based adventure. "Experience wilder-than-wild, rugged mountain landscapes and thundering waterfalls carved from the history of the Earth, where jagged rock outcrops and dinosaur fossils fire imagination," according to the document.

Between trails for hiking, mountain biking, ATVing and snowmobiling, there are 1,154 km of trails in the area, across 106 trails in 13 distinct trails area.

"The network has continued to grow across all activity types over the past four years," says the draft strategy, "with notable expansion in motorized use and the establishment of mountain biking as a new segment. Of the network's 106 trails, 49 are unsanctioned in at least one season, accounting for the majority of total trail length on Crown land. Many of these are actively used and stewarded by volunteer organizations without formal authorizations or Partnership Agreements in place."

The document identifies 90 trails that are used in the summer, from signed and gazetted trails like the Windfall Lake trail, to the unsigned and unmaintained but increasingly popular route to Mount Crum. In total, 46 of the trails are established, 44 are unsanctioned, with another 22 planned and seven proposed.

That also includes water routes, like paddling the Murray River from the boat launch near Flatbed to



Lone Prairie.

Trail counter data collected over the last five years shows that the network is being used more intensively as time goes on. Hiking remains the dominant activity, with the largest share of recorded users in every year of the monitoring period. Motorized use is also on the upswing, though it is harder to collect data on that, as some of the ATV routes are also on industrial use roads.

"Mountain biking has emerged as a new segment of measurable size, with the TR Mountain Bike counter recording roughly 3,500 trail passes in each of its first two full years." Of course, that does not count unique visitors, and many of those would have been yours truly.

"The most heavily used trails (Quality Falls, Cabin Pool, Kinuseo Falls, and Shipyard-Titanic) continue to reflect the strong draw of the Geopark's signature waterfall and viewpoint destinations."

There are 13 trail counters along the hiking trails, with 18,320 hikers recorded last year, up from 15,185 recorded two years earlier, or an increase of 21 percent.

Motorized trail use went from 4,325 in 2022–23 to 5,477 in 2024–25, an increase of 27 percent, though again, that is based on a limited number of trail counters (two).

The single most popular trail in the area is Quality Falls, which saw 5,080 visitors in 2024–25, followed by the Cabin Pools Trail (4,044 visitors) and the Kinuseo Falls Trail (3,726).

The fourth most popular trail (or group of trails) was the new Tumbler Ridge Mountain Biking Trail, with 3,546 visitors. That speaks to the popularity of mountain biking in the area, though it should be noted that the main trail is open to hiking, so not all those trips up and/or down are necessarily by mountain bikers. As well, the counter does not record unique visitors, so a biker making three laps of the trail system would be counted as three visits.

All told, there were nine trails that saw more than 2,000 visitors in 2024–25, and another seven that saw over 1,000 visitors.

The purpose of the strategy is not merely to document the trails, but to come up with ways to improve the trail system and establish best practices for trail management. Indeed, there are 140 recommendations across seven key goals.

Looking for ADVENTURE

RYAN LAMMING

Adventure biking.

Even the name is cool.

Anything that has the word "adventure" in the title better deliver. It packs quite a bit and so can you on these types of motorcycles. It's what makes them so unique compared to other motorcycles.

Powersports has always been a means of access for me. Sure, there's nothing quite like the rush of drifting with speed around back road corners but it's the versatility and ability to access remote areas, quickly all while leaving a small foot print. Getting into areas quicker and further allows for more exploration. That's the best part.

Riding into areas where only few have ever gone (or can even go) is half the adventure. The open spaces, the smells, feeling the warm and cool air pockets, the views, all part of the experience. It sure beats driving in an enclosed vehicle.

Motorcycling has this built-in experience that only those that partake understand. There's also great risk. You must ride defensively and keep your wits about you, for it can all be over in an instant. Trust me, I've been there. Waking up in a hospital bed isn't fun. Mitigate these risks by wearing the proper gear. Plan your route and always leave an itinerary. Just some of the prerequisites of having a successful ride. Ensuring you get home to loved ones or to have the ability to experience the adventure all over again.

Packing for an adventure bike trip requires some forethought. Much like that of a backpacking trip, you want to be light. Carry less. It makes the riding part much more enjoyable when you can throw around the bike in technical areas.

You're also going to go down. Crashing is all part of it and picking up your bike with all of your gear attached to it can be quite cumbersome. Knowing the little techniques go a long way. There are many courses you can take to ensure you have the tools to navigate the backcountry, confidently.

But the riding is only half the experience. It's the end of the trail where the other half of the adventure starts. This has always been my favorite part. Being in the backcountry. Away from it all. There's nothing like it and it should be something that everyone should experience at least once in their lifetime. No words will ever suffice. It truly must be experienced.

The saying nature heals is true. There may be no one thing that can heal as quickly nor as effectively, than that of being in nature. Couple that with remote nature, no one around for many a mile, the effect is multiplied, exponentially. You get lost in it.

All consuming.

You feel.... grounded. Not the kind you got from your parents. That grounding sucked. This kind of grounding allows one to connect your soul to this beautiful planet we're so very fortunate to traverse.

What better place on earth to set out on an Adventure Bike trip than that of Tumbler Ridge. Copious amounts of Forest Service Roads (FSRs) are at our disposal. All leading to a path less traveled.

Tumbler's diversity is second to none. From highway, high grade gravel, to technical offroad, there's something for everyone. It's what makes Tumbler Ridge so unique.

You can quite literally, stop at the bakery for your morning coffee, grab your snacks from the local grocery, fuel up, and hit the road. Within an hour you can be accessing remote backcountry! You'll be setting up your tent for the night and hiking into areas filled with pristine nature and plentiful wildlife in no time.

The best part..... no one around but you and your thoughts. It's both equal parts exciting and scary for no one wants to get into this dudes head.



Oh, the places you can go with two wheels and an open road. Photo by Ryan Lamming.

Where to go, you ask?

If you're new to this or looking to take things easy, stick to the FSRs and you will not be disappointed.

Hit the Wolverine/Perry Creek area and pack your fly rod. Stunning views and awesome campsites along the rivers.

Bullmoose and Windfall are some of the best road conditions in the region. Stellar hikes as well.

Looking for a bit more adventure?

Sukunka. There's a sense of remoteness there that is daunting but equally exciting.

Looking to get spicy?

The Red Deer falls area has some of the best, most scenic, and technical riding in the region. It never disappoints. Ever.

Whatever you do, have fun and ride safe. Check the local wildfire situations, use caution on FSRs and ride prepared, and always leave an itinerary. It isn't cool sending out our valuable resources like SAR, expending their precious time looking for a needle in a haystack. They have families waiting for them at home and there could be others in need of help that you are taking up precious time away from their rescue. A simple letting someone know where you are can eliminate much of the beforehand mentioned.

Above all else, respect our backcountry. It's the only one we have.

Feel free to reach out on the ol Instagram for I'm always willing to share info on all things Tumbler Ridge. @backcountrybanditinc on Instagram

MLA Larry Neufeld is working hard to make sure your voice is heard in Victoria.



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To do: Flatbed Loops

Every Thursday night between now and August, a group of people will head down to the Lions Flatbed Campground for 7pm.

Some of them will set off at a run, following the campground road that follows the river until the end of the campground, where the road turns into a trail, then an ATV track.

Meanwhile some of the others will set off at a more leisurely, walking pace.

Both groups are going to cover about two km as they make their way around the flats that give Flatbed its name.

In 1914, explorer Samuel Prescott Fay led a party of five men and twenty horses on a scientific expedition from Jasper, AB to Hudson's Hope (says local historian Dr Charles Helm). Part of his journey took him down what would become known as the Murray River, and he describes a large flat area, then covered in grass, which has now mostly grown in.

There is still some grass at the Lions Campground but through the trees are now numerous interweaving trails. The one that the people are following is this year marked with pink flagging tape.

One? I should say "ones", because after about a kilometre, the route splits. The first group—the keen-

A trio of runners make their way through the freshly (control) burned area of the Flatbed Loops.





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ers—turn left off the ATV track along a narrow trail that quickly begins to climb up the slopes of the hill that leads up to Tumbler Ridge. After gaining the top of this section, the route then begins downhill again and back to the start.

Meanwhile the hikers (as well as any runners not interested in partaking of the hilly route) stay on the ATV track, which now passes through an area where, earlier this year, BC Wildfire did a controlled burn to get rid of much of the fuel on the ground. Already, the area has begun to green up, with grass and other new vegetation springing up in the void left after the burn.

Still, it would be a lie to say that the signs of the burn are fast fading. Some trees bear the scorch marks of the passing fire. In other places, stumps, maybe ten feet tall, have been hollowed out by the fire. And BC Wildfire crews have cut down some of the danger trees that potentially might have fallen on the trail.

While this is ostensibly a training run for people looking to do the Emperor's Challenge, many of the people who do the route (especially among the walkers) are just looking to get out for some exercise and a chance to visit friends.

Whichever you choose to do, you can do it Thursdays at 7pm.

CONTINUED FROM 13

The amount of food consumed by the men boggles the mind.

They drink 120 gallons of milk and 10 cases of apple juice a day. They eat 1,200 dozen eggs a week.

They eat 25 tonnes of meat each week. Butcher George Schinkel said the cleaver is never out of his hand as he showed me the cooler where 12 grade A hindquarters of beef hung from the ceiling. On the shelves were tray after tray of steaks, stewing beef and sausages, plus box after box of bacon and at least 40 rolled hams.

"This is a five-day supply," said Schinkel.

Salad man 'the best'

And the choice is astounding.

Camp members can have anything they want for breakfast—ham, sausage, bacon, french toast, pancakes, eggs any style, fried potatoes, any type of omelette (even a Spanish omelette), cereals and porridge.



The salad bar, prepared by Jimmy Poulos ("the best salad man in any of the camps," say his colleagues) has at least 30 different dishes, including asparagus tips, Greek salads, egg salads, chicken salads, olives, pickles, cheeses and cold cuts.

There are at least 20 desserts, all baked or made in the kitchen by baker Joe Beck, who cooks his bread, buns and desserts from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

The dessert choices include apple, cherry, raisin, pumpkin or lemon meringue pie; peach, raisin or cherry squares; jelly rolls, chocolate eclairs, pound cake, brownies, coconut cake, cinnamon buns, strawberry cake, butterscotch or rice pudding, doughnuts, cookies, fresh fruit or canned pears, six flavors of ice cream and fresh whipped cream.

On steak night, the men can order their steak cooked to their taste.

The event the cooks dread most is a wobble.

Fischer and the cooks wouldn't talk about what happens when there is labor tension in the camp, but a camp member who would not identify himself said: "It is usually a couple of aggressors who get the ball rolling. They take plate after plate of food and leave them on the tables, then go up and get more. The cooks cannot refuse them anything, they have to keep serving it up, and if they run out they have to find a substitute."

Despite wobbles, do the men appreciate the food? David Derochers, a summer-student surveyor on the mine site, thinks it's great.

"I'm a student, so I'm used to really crummy food. I really like the food. It is free, it tastes good, you can have as much as you like, what more could you ask for?

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