

Community Profile

Economic History of Fernie

FOUNDED IN 1898, Fernie was officially incorporated as a municipality in 1904. The economy was built on extraction of the Elk Valley's plentiful natural resources - coal and forestry. The Coal Creek mine was officially opened late in 1897, the railway followed in 1898, and Fernie came to life.

In 1963, the original ski hill, called Fernie Snow Valley, opened. It was purchased in 1997 by the Lake Louise Group, who expanded it significantly under the new name of Fernie Alpine Resort. The new resort has stimulated an ongoing surge of business development as Fernie has gained international recognition as a ski destination.

Fernie's colourful past is rich in history and legend. The legendary tale of the Ghost rider speaks of a curse placed on the town by an angry Indian chief. Fernie's two great fires, in 1904 and 1908, both reduced the town to rubble and ash and are attributed by many to the Ghost rider's vengeance. The present-day Fernie City Hall, which is located in the old Crows Nest Pass Coal Company office, was spared from the 1908 fire and offered refuge to hundreds of the citizens of the day.

Fernie today is supported by mining, forestry, healthcare, social services and tourism, and the many new business opportunities that build on Fernie's spectacular natural assets and quality of life.

