



## **McBride Visitor Centre**

**2019**

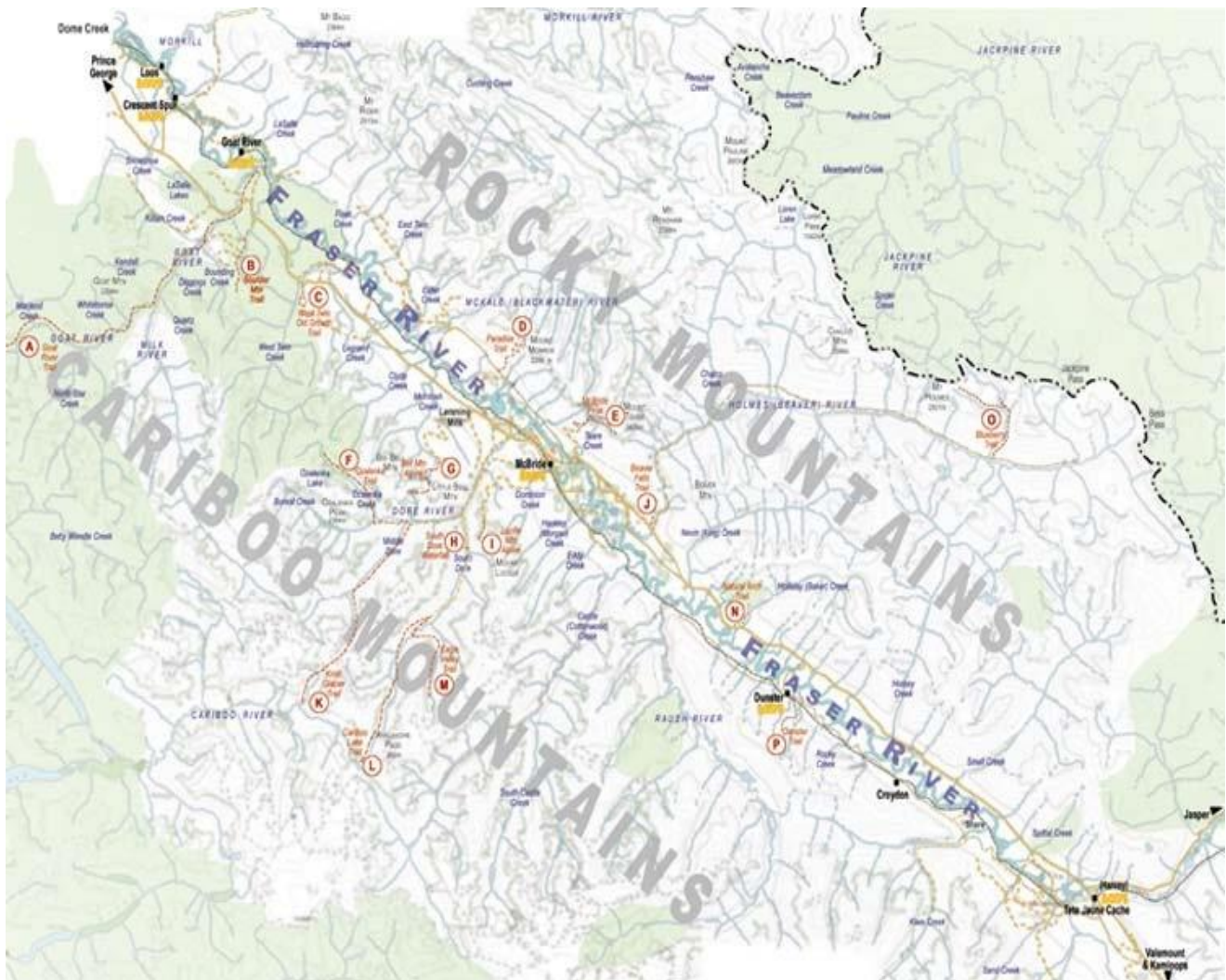
## McBride Visitor Centre Mandate:

To ensure consistent operation of the Visitor Centre; to manage the budget and maintain accurate records; to develop a coordinated approach to marketing and promoting the Robson Valley; to create and distribute community marketing materials; to develop and maintain [visitmcbride.ca](http://visitmcbride.ca) website; to encourage and facilitate community working groups; to seek marketing opportunities outside the valley; to seek funding opportunities for community projects/programs; to attend meetings and conferences as appropriate to exchange ideas and promote the Robson Valley; to continually liaise with the Village, the Chamber, RDFFG, Destination BC, and EDOs from the region; to submit reports of activities and accomplishments; and other duties as required.

## McBride Regional Context Map

While based in McBride, the McBride Visitor Centre serves the entire Area H including the businesses and residents in the communities of Dome Creek, Crescent Spur, Dunster, Tete Jaune and Mount Robson.

This is a large area and the various communities have diverse needs. The McBride Visitor Centre is dedicated to impartially serve the Robson Valley as a whole through advocacy, promotion and accurate information and referral services.



## **What We Do**

VC staff field thousands of requests each year for information, tourism development initiatives, grant application help, tourism marketing advice, etc. The McBride VC provides updated information to Northern Tourism BC, Destination BC and other organizations. Staff regularly attends focus groups, meetings and forums to be better informed and educated about current tourism trends and opportunities for growth. Staff at the VC network with tourism operators throughout the area, providing information and resources to allow them to further develop their own businesses and works with other community groups and organizations to maximize results through cooperative efforts. The McBride Visitor Centre management is always seeking new opportunities to improve the viability of VC operations.

The primary purpose of the McBride Visitor Centre is to assist visitors to organize vacation and travel plans with accurate, up to date information while promoting local businesses, products and services. Our goal is to encourage new and return visits and longer stays in the Robson Valley. Visitor Centre staff work with industry partners for the betterment of the tourism industry in British Columbia. Employees track and record visits to the Centre and report quarterly to the McBride Chamber of Commerce.

Ideally the location of a Visitor Centre is in a high tourist traffic area or easily accessible from a major highway. The existing location of the McBride Visitor Centre is centrally located on a loop that allows visitors to leave the highway and travel on a scenic through route through town and back out to the highway with ample parking, play park for children and dining, shopping and recreation opportunities. While some visitor centres are located on the highway, notably Provincial Gateway Visitor Centres, it is more effective for small communities to encourage visitors to leave the highway and see what the town has to offer.

The McBride VC produces the Robson Valley Visitor Guide and the Robson Valley Outdoor Adventure Guide as well as provides copy for various information sites and advertising media. The VC maintains the [visitmcbride.ca](http://visitmcbride.ca) website, a Facebook page and a twitter account and is open 7 days a week, from 9am-5pm daily year round. The VC shares the heritage train station with an art and craft gallery and a coffee shop/bistro.

## **Tourism Products in McBride and the Robson Valley**

McBride is bracketed by two world-class attractions less than an hour away. To the east, there is Mount Robson Park and west in the newly created Ancient Cedar Forest /Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park.

### **Ancient Cedar Forest /Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park**

The Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut (pronounced Chun Toe Wood-yu-jud) Park has been established 90 km west of McBride near the community of Dome Creek and is an 11,190-hectare Class A provincial park that makes up part of the only known inland temperate rainforest in the world. The forest itself has been largely undisturbed for thousands of years and may have had its beginnings at the end of the last ice age. The Caledonia Ramblers Hiking Society has built, and maintains, three kilometres of walking trails in the Ancient Forest, as part of an agreement with the B.C. Recreation Sites and Trails program. This includes a 500-metre wheelchair-accessible boardwalk. In 2015, more than 20,000 visitors used these trails, set

amongst the towering trees that measure up to 16 meters in circumference and may be over 1000 years old.

The BC Government has expressed an intention to apply for UNESCO World Heritage designation for the park and if successful will be the second World Heritage site in the Robson Valley, joining Mount Robson's designation as part of the Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.

### **Mount Robson Provincial Park**

(Reprinted from the BC Parks site)

Mount Robson Provincial Park, the second oldest park in British Columbia's park system, is truly one of the world's crown jewels. The mountain for which the park is named guards the park's western entrance. At 3,954 metres, Mount Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies, towers over the lesser surrounding peaks; winter or summer, this is one of the finest views in the Rocky Mountains. Just as the early trappers, hunters and explorers felt in awe at the mountain's magnificence, travellers today experience the same feelings.

With Alberta's Jasper National Park as its easterly neighbour, Mount Robson Provincial Park comprises a portion of one of the world's largest blocks of protected areas. Designated as a part of the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1990, Mount Robson provides everything from developed, vehicle-accessible camping to remote valleys that seldom see a human footprint. Mount Robson Provincial Park also protects the headwaters of the Fraser River.

#### **Outdoor adventure activities:**

The McBride area provides many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in all seasons. Camping, fishing, hiking, river rafting and horseback riding in summer. Ski touring, heli-skiing and snowmobiling in winter, all attract visitors. Views over the valley begin a few minutes from town if you head up McBride Peak on skis, on foot or wheels (4-wheel drive recommended). A few hours' walk up the alpine can take you to the peak (alt. 7446 feet), just 5 km from the village as the crow flies.

Hiking or trail riding can be a day trip, or a multi-day trek. Canoeing or rafting on the Fraser River, mountain biking or driving up some of the side valleys are great ways to see the magnificent scenery and wildlife. In spawning season, salmon are easily spotted jumping at the Holmes (Beaver) River Falls.

Winter provides excellent groomed snowmobile trails, cross-country ski trails a few minutes from McBride, and spectacular places for self-guided snowshoeing and telemarking. Guided hiking, rafting, heli-hiking, heli-skiing, ATV and snowmobile tours operate in the valley.

#### **Arts and Culture**

Art and culture is evident throughout the Robson Valley. Changing history and art displays are on view year-round at the Valley Museum and Archives, located in the McBride Library. There is also an outdoor heritage farm display located on 2nd Avenue beside the ballpark. Enjoy the heritage murals in the downtown depicting scenes from McBride's rich history.

Explore the shops, visit the library/museum, and attend a concert at the Roundhouse Theatre (Sept. to June); enjoy the restaurants, pub, and activities at the Recreation Centre.

### **Birdwatching, Leisure, Festivals and Events**

A pleasant path within the village meanders along Dominion Creek, and off Second Avenue is a walk to the bird watching gazebo at Horseshoe Lake Bird Sanctuary, a stopping place for swans, Canada Geese, ducks and many others. The McBride Visitor Centre has compiled the Robson Valley Birdwatchers Guide and birdwatching is a popular activity that draws many visitors each year. Just outside the village is beautiful Koeneman Regional Park with its original log house, a great place for a family picnic and there are trails along the accessible beaches that line the Fraser River.

Visitors can also enjoy our many festivals and event held throughout the year, including the Robson Valley Music Festival, Pioneer Days, McBride Adventure Weekend, Dunster Ice Cream Social, Canada Day celebrations, Mount Robson Marathon, and various concerts, original theatre productions, craft fairs, farmers markets and much more.

### **Current Trends**

McBride and Robson Valley is close to Jasper and the McBride Visitor Centre is seeing an increasing number of overflow travellers escaping the crowds and commercialism in Alberta. We have become a destination of choice for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts from across Canada and are seeing a steady increase in European visitors. We generally attract the "Authentic Experiencer" who comes to the McBride/Robson Valley seeking a natural outdoor experience and who is prepared, educated and flexible in their travel plans.

We have a great deal of traffic that goes through on Highway 16 as we are on the route to Alaska either by road or by ferry. We get a large number of travellers spending one night or tour busses stopping for just a few hours as they travel from Vancouver or Calgary to Prince Rupert or Dawson Creek. These account for much of our American traffic and some of our European visitors.

There is daytime passenger service through McBride year round, three days a week in each direction provided by the Skeena (VIARAIL). In summertime VIA adds a baggage car for bicycles, canoes, kayaks (fees extra) and the train can drop off or pick up at remote stops if prearranged. The railway passes through many communities not seen from the highway and is a popular attraction for visitors. There is also a 2700' (830m) airstrip in town.

We have been getting a growing number of repeat visitors from all over the world and many who have had friends or relatives visit and are encouraged to visit themselves.

We are in a remote area not well served by cell phone or highspeed internet services, therefore our visitors rely on us for trip planning, road conditions, emergency services, weather information, bookings and just human interaction after travelling through hundreds of kilometers of unpopulated highways.

We have two part time year round staff and up to four extra seasonal staff depending on funding. There are also a number of volunteers throughout the year that put in hours working to enhance our tourism offerings, educate visitors on the significance of the Robson Valley and maintain our backcountry trails and overnight huts.



### **Visitor Services Goals**

We are working hard to become the destination of choice for travellers seeking to experience breathtaking outdoor adventures and a jumping off point for travellers to explore the significant attractions located within an hour of McBride. By doing so we encourage lengthier visits and greater traveller satisfaction.

We stress exceptional visitor service to enhance the enjoyment and safety of our visitors and direct, authentic conversations to create the emotional connections needed in order to attract repeat visitors and positive word of mouth interactions. The McBride Visitor Centre is #1 on Trip Advisor for attractions in McBride, largely due to our partnerships with other groups in the building and our commitment to visitor service.

### **Visitor Services Strategic Initiatives**

Continue developing training materials and guides to ensure high service standards

- Refine employee manual and monitor training activities for possible improvements
- Implement employee incentive program
- Conduct exit surveys with visitors and use results to identify strengths and weaknesses in staff services

Enhance our online activity and visitor responsiveness

- Include social media experience in hiring seasonal staff criteria
- Encourage user generated content on Facebook and Twitter
- Work with businesses to improve Trip Advisor ratings
- Utilize contests, giveaways etc. to improve social media reach

Increase visitor service outreach throughout the region

- Work with BC Parks staff to facilitate visitor travel within the region (I.E. Mount Robson/Ancient Forest cross promotion)
- Work with businesses and user groups in smaller outlying communities to cross promote and identify key events to have visitor services staff on site
- Have staff visit and educate front line workers in high traffic service industries (gas stations, restaurants etc.) about visitor services offered at the Visitor Centre and encourage workers to direct traffic and enquiries to the Visitor Centre.

Work with businesses, tourism operators to identify needs and opportunities for cooperative efforts.

- Help groups (Ozalenka Hiking Club, Robson Valley Mountain Bike Association, Back Country Horsemen etc.) with promotional material and website presence
- Work with bus tour companies to identify tourism products in the area that add value to their clients
- Help educate businesses regarding service standards and travellers needs using the data gathered and information provided by Destination BC resources

In addition to the above efforts, we will continue our advocacy work with all levels of government to improve backcountry access, demonstrate the economic and social benefits of the tourism industry, and build productive partnerships.

Our website is regularly updated and is a source of current, relevant information about McBride and the surrounding Robson Valley [www.visitmcbride.ca](http://www.visitmcbride.ca). For more information about our trails and outdoor adventure activities visit: <http://visitmcbride.ca/media/RobsonValleyActivityGuide.pdf>

