

= Tumbler Ridge =

Tumbler Ridge is a district municipality in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies in northeastern British Columbia , Canada , and a member municipality of the Peace River Regional District . The municipality of 1 @, @ 558 square kilometres (602 sq mi) , with its population of 2 @, @ 710 people , incorporates a townsite and a large area of mostly Crown Land . The housing and municipal infrastructure , along with regional infrastructure connecting the new town to other municipalities , were built simultaneously in 1981 by the provincial government to service the coal industry as part of the British Columbia Resources Investment Corporation 's Northeast Coal Development .

In 1981 , a consortium of Japanese steel mills agreed to purchase 100 million tonnes of coal over 15 years for US \$ 7 @. @ 5 billion from two mining companies , Denison Mines Inc. and the Teck Corporation , who were to operate the Quintette mine and the Bullmoose mine respectively . Declining global coal prices after 1981 , and weakening Asian markets in the late 1990s , made the town 's future uncertain and kept it from achieving its projected population of 10 @, @ 000 people . The uncertainty dissuaded investment and kept the economy from diversifying . When price reductions were forced onto the mines , the Quintette mine was closed in 2000 production and the town lost about half its population . Coal prices began to rise after the turn of the century , leading to the opening of the Peace River Coal Trend mine by Northern Energy & Mining Inc . (now owned by Anglo American Met Coal) and the Wolverine Mine , originally owned by Western Canadian Coal , which was purchased by Walter Energy in 2010 .

After dinosaur footprints , fossils , and bones were discovered in the municipality , along with fossils of Triassic fishes and cretaceous plants , the Peace Region Paleontology Research Centre opened in 2003 . The research centre and a dinosaur museum were funded in part by the federal Western Economic Diversification Canada to decrease economic dependence on the coal industry .

In 2014 , both operating coal mines were put into " care and maintenance mode " . This means the mines are effectively closed , but are still allowed to restart without needing to go through the process of getting a new mines act permit .

Economic diversification has also occurred with oil and gas exploration , forestry , and recreational tourism . Nearby recreational destinations include numerous trails , mountains , waterfalls , snowmobiling areas and provincial parks , such as Monkman Provincial Park , Bearhole Lake Provincial Park , and Gwillim Lake Provincial Park .

= = History = =

Archaeological evidence show a human presence dating back 3 @, @ 000 years . The nomadic Sekani , followed by the Dunneza and then the Cree , periodically lived in temporary settlements around the future municipality . Formal exploratory and surveying expeditions were conducted by S. Prescott Fay , with Robert Cross and Fred Brewster in 1914 , J.C. Gwillim in 1919 , Edmund Spieker in 1920 , and John Holzworth in 1923 . Spieker coined the name Tumbler Ridge , referring to the mountains northwest of the future town , by altering Gwillim 's map that named them Tumbler Range . Permanent settlers were squatters , five families by 1920 , who maintained trap lines . In the 1950s and 1960s , oil and natural gas exploration and logging was conducted through the area , and 15 significant coal deposits were discovered . Coal prices rose after the 1973 oil crisis leading to 40 government studies examining the viability of accessing the coal , given the 1 @, @ 130 km (700 mi) to the nearest port and the mountainous barrier .

With these coal deposits in mind , a purchasing agreement was signed in 1981 by two Canadian mining companies , a consortium of Japanese steel mills , and the governments of British Columbia and Canada . As part of the deal , the provincial government committed , under the North East Coal Development plan , to build a new town near the deposits , two highways off Highway 97 , a power line from the W. A. C. Bennett Dam at Hudson 's Hope , and a branch rail line through the Rocky Mountains . An alternative of using work camps staffed by people from Dawson Creek and Chetwynd was also considered . Massive initial investments were required as planning for the new town began in 1976 with the objective of having a fully functioning town ready before residents

arrived . Coordinated through the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs the town , regional infrastructure , and mining plants were all built simultaneously . When the municipality was incorporated in April 1981 the area was completely forested . During that year building sites and roadways were cleared and in the winter the water and sewerage system was built . In 1982 , houses and other buildings were constructed . Full production at the mines was reached the following year .

In early 1983 , the families of the managers at the Bullmoose Minesite , led by Dean Sawas appealed to the British Columbia government and were able to create a new settlement , called Bullmoose Settlement . This was done because Dean 's wife was expecting and he wanted his child to have something different to say about her birthplace . He wanted her to be able to say that a settlement had been created for her and that she was , and would always be the only one born at that place . At her birth , Alicia V. Sawas was also written into the Tumbler Ridge records as the first child born in the Quintette area . Bullmoose Settlement was closed down after the reduction in mine activities with just the one birth .

In 1984 , world coal prices were dropping and the Japanese consortium requested a reduction in the price of coal from the Tumbler Ridge mines . As price reduction requests continued , the concern over the viability of the mines led the BC Assessment Authority to lower the 1987 property assessments for the Quintette mine from CAD \$ 156 million to \$ 89 million and the Bullmoose mine \$ 70 million to \$ 43 million . This lowered their taxes as they tried to enforce the purchasing agreement at the Supreme Court of Canada . Their 1990 ruling required the Quintette Operations Company to reduce coal prices and reimburse the Japanese consortium \$ 4 @. @ 6 million . The company responded by reducing production , cutting employment , and applying for court protection from creditors . This allowed Teck to acquire 50 % interest and take over management of the Quintette mine , but it was unable to stop further job losses . As most residents left town , apartment blocks were closed and the mine companies bought back all but 11 houses in the town . After 30 % of the workforce had been laid off , new contracts with the Japanese consortium were signed in 1997 , allowing re @-@ hirings to begin , but with lower export levels . The North East Coal Development was projected to create a net benefit of CAD \$ 0 @. @ 9 billion (2000) , but incurred a net loss of \$ 2 @. @ 8 billion and half the expected regional employment .

The population declined as many residents were unable to find other work in the town , even as a sawmill for specialty woods opened in 1999 . After Teck closed the Quintette mine in August 2000 and shifted production to the lower cost Bullmoose mine , the town council established the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force to investigate ways to boost and diversify the economy . The Task Force negotiated the return of the housing stock from the mines to the free market , grants from the province to become debt @-@ free , and stabilized funds from the province for healthcare and education . The discovery of dinosaur tracks in 2000 by two local boys while playing near a creek , led to major fossil and bone discoveries from the Cretaceous Period . To survey and study the finds , government funding was secured to found both the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre .

After the Bullmoose mine exhausted its supply of coal in 2003 , world coal prices increased , making exploration and mining in Tumbler Ridge economically feasible again . Western Canadian Coal opened new open @-@ pit mining operations creating the Dillon mine using Bullmoose mining infrastructure , the Brule mine near Chetwynd using new infrastructure (projected 11 @-@ year life span) , and the Wolverine mine . These mines were purchased by Walter Energy in 2010 , but world coal prices began to drop again in 2011 , and in April 2014 , Walter put their Canadian operations into " care and maintenance mode " , laying off nearly 700 people .

The Peace River Coal Trend Mine was issued its mines act permit in 2005 , and was a partnership between NEMI Northern Energy and Mining Inc . , Anglo American , Hillsborough Resources and Vitol Anker International . In 2011 , Anglo American bought out the rest of the partners to become sole owner of the property .

Anglo American started working on the Roman Pit next to their existing Trend operation in 2014 , hoping to reduce the cost of production per tonne of coal . However , in late 2014 , they announced the mine would be going into care and maintenance mode as well .

As of Fall , 2015 , there are no coal mines operating in Tumbler Ridge . However , HD Mining is continuing work on the Murray River Coal Mine , a proposed Underground Longwall Mine near Tumbler Ridge . The company was issued its Environmental Assessment Certificate from the BC Government in October 2015 , though construction on the mine , if it were to go ahead , is not expected to begin until after a Mines Act Permit is issued , which is not expected until late 2016 .

On September 22 , 2014 , the area around Tumbler Ridge was designated North America 's second Geopark .

= = Demographics = =

Population projections in 1977 were for 3 @, @ 568 residents in 1981 , 7 @, @ 940 in 1985 , and 10 @, @ 584 in 1987 , after which the level was expected to stabilize . However , requests for lower coal prices shortly after the production began placed a persistent insecurity over the viability of the mines , and therefore the town , discouraging long term investments . Temporary work camps , where workers numbered between 200 and 2 @, @ 000 , were used during the construction of the town and mines . The planners of the town advised the mining companies to hire workers who were married , believing they would live in Tumbler Ridge longer and reduce employment turn @-@ over . The population rose slowly to 3 @, @ 833 people in 1984 , nearly half the projected level . The 1986 Canadian census , the first census to include Tumbler Ridge , recorded 4 @, @ 566 residents after which in @-@ migration ended and the population level began to fluctuate . The population peaked in 1991 at 4 @, @ 794 people but then declined to a low of 1 @, @ 932 people in 2001 . Since then , population growth has been led by new mining activities and increased exploration following higher world energy prices . The town 's population is currently in a state of flux as people dependent on the mines for work leave , while other people , attracted by the town 's low rent , arrive .

The Canada 2006 Census reported 2 @, @ 454 residents living in 1 @, @ 045 households and 765 families . This was 27 % more people than the previous census five years earlier when the town was at its lowest population level since opening . The median age increased from 38 @. @ 8 years in 2001 to 42 @. @ 2 in 2006 , as the proportion of the population aged over 65 rose from 5 % to 11 % . In 2006 , of those over 15 years of age , 62 % were married , higher than the 54 % provincial average . The town has few visible minorities as 94 % of Tumbler Ridge residents were Canadian @-@ born and 93 % had English as their first language . Though not included as a minority , 9 % of residents claimed to have an Aboriginal identity . Reflecting the nature of the industrial jobs available in town , in 2001 , only 12 % of residents between 20 and 64 years of age completed university , half of the provincial average , and 26 % did not complete high school , much higher than the 19 % provincial average .

In 2005 , the five officer Tumbler Ridge Royal Canadian Mounted Police municipal detachment reported 346 Criminal Code offences . This translated into a crime rate of 137 Criminal Code offences per 1 @, @ 000 people , higher than the provincial average of 119 offences . During that year , the RCMP reported lower crime rates in Tumbler Ridge , compared with the provincial averages , in all categories except bicycle thefts , property damage , impaired driving , and cannabis @-@ related offences . Until 2005 , the town had a lower crime rate than the province , except between 2001 and 2003 after the Quintette mine closure and a large out @-@ migration from the town . In 2004 the Tumbler Ridge RCMP reported no robbery or shoplifting offences , and only 4 @. @ 5 theft @-@ from @-@ motor @-@ vehicle offences per 1 @, @ 000 people compared with 20 provincially .

= = Geography and climate = =

The townsite is located on a series of southern @-@ facing gravel terraces on a ridge of Mount Bergeron , overlooking the confluence of the Murray and Wolverine Rivers . The site , above the floodplain of the Murray River , has well @-@ drained soils with easy access to aquifers with potable water . The rocks , mostly shale and mudstone but lacking quartzite , make the mountains less rugged than their neighbouring ranges . The terraces grow Lodgepole Pine , White Spruce ,

Trembling Aspen trees . Moose and elk are common . Escarpments to the east and north could pose a snow avalanche threat but are kept forested for stability . In 2006 , the town was evacuated for several days as four forest fires approached the town .

Major coal deposits indicate the site was a swampy forest during the Cretaceous . Paleontologists have discovered tracks or fossils from ankylosauria , ornithopods (including a Hadrosaurus) , and theropods . Fossils of Cretaceous plants such as ferns , redwoods , cycads , and ginkgo , and Triassic fishes and reptiles such as coelacanth , weigeltisaurus , and ichthyosaur have been recovered .

The town experiences a continental climate . Arctic air masses move predominantly southwestly from the Mackenzie Valley towards the Rocky Mountains and through the mountains north of town . The town is in a rain shadow behind Mount Bergeron , though much of the precipitation is lost in the mountains beforehand . Town planners laid out the roads so that they run along wind breaks , and buildings and parks are located in wind shadows .

After examining other resource towns in Canada , the planners followed socio @-@ spatial guidelines and principles in physical planning . The coal mining facilities were well separated from the townsite to minimize the feeling of a company town . An attempt to mitigate potential lifestyle conflicts between families and childless households was made by separating the low @-@ density , single @-@ family dwellings from the low @-@ rise apartments . The apartment blocks were planned for areas with clusters of trees and excellent viewsapes , but close to the town plaza . The low @-@ density residences that were more likely to have children living in them were oriented around elementary schools and parks . Cul @-@ de @-@ sacs were avoided in favour of better linkages and pedestrian access .

= = Infrastructure = =

Two highways diverge from Highway 97 and intersect in Tumbler Ridge : Highway 52 (Heritage Highway) which runs 98 km (61 mi) south at Arras , and Highway 29 which runs 90 km (56 mi) southeast from Chetwynd . At the intersection Highway 29 ends but Highway 52 continues south through Tumbler Ridge , then unpaved , it runs northeast to Highway 2 near the Alberta border . In town , the 28 km (17 mi) of paved roads are laid out in a curvilinear pattern that use two arterial roads , MacKenzie Way and Monkman Way , to connect each section of town . Service roads from the townsite to the mines and forestry areas are maintained by the industries but are unpaved .

The unmanned Tumbler Ridge Airport , with its 1 @, @ 219 m (4 @, @ 000 ft) asphalt runway , is used by chartered and local flights . The closest airports with regularly scheduled flights are in Dawson Creek , Fort St John and Grande Prairie . The rail line into town is a 132 km (82 mi) formerly electrified branch line through the Rocky Mountains constructed by BC Rail to transport coal to the Ridley Terminal at the Port of Prince Rupert . The branch line includes two major tunnels : the 9 km (6 mi) Table Tunnel and the 6 km (4 mi) Wolverine Tunnel .

The town funds its own 21 @-@ member volunteer fire department , water treatment system , and sewage disposal system . Drinking water is drawn from two springs south of the townsite where it is stored in a 7 million litre reservoir before being chlorinated and pumped into town . The storm sewers empty into the Murray River , but the sanitary sewage is processed through a lagoon system and released into the Murray River north of town . Both the town and the province , through the Northern Health Authority , operate the Tumbler Ridge Community Health Centre . The closest hospitals with over @-@ night beds are in Chetwynd and Dawson Creek . The two public schools , Tumbler Ridge Elementary School and Tumbler Ridge Secondary School are run by the School District 59 Peace River South . Post @-@ secondary courses , programs , and industry training are offered by Northern Lights College at the secondary school and community centre .

= = Economy = =

Tumbler Ridge was built to provide a labour force for the coal mining industry , which has remained the dominant employer throughout the town 's history . The mining companies had a contract to sell

100 million tons of coal to a consortium of Japanese steel mills over 15 years for US \$ 7 @. @ 5 billion (1981) . The Quintette Operating Corporation (QOC) was formed by partnership between Denison Mines (50 %) , Mitsui Mining (20 %) , Tokyo Boeki (20 %) , and other smaller firms , and began blasting at the Quintette mine in October 1982 . The Bullmoose Operating Corporation was formed by the Teck Corporation (51 %) , Lornex (39 %) , Nissho Iwai (10 %) and worked the smaller Bullmoose mine . The economic viability of the mining companies were in question since the world coal prices began falling in the early 1980s and the Japanese consortium requested reduced prices . After the Supreme Court ruled that the coal prices must be reduced , the QOC filed for court protection from its creditors allowing the Teck Corporation to take over management in 1992 . By 1996 , even as lay @-@ offs continued , over half the town 's labour force were employed at one of the two mines . New contracts with the Japanese consortium , signed 1997 , moved production to the lower cost Bullmoose mine but guaranteed production until 2003 when that mine was expected to be exhausted . The Quintette mine was closed altogether on August 31 , 2000 .

While there was an intent by the town 's planners to move to a more diversified economy , the few initiatives in this direction were not supported by the industries or local decision @-@ makers . Uncertainty about the town 's future had been a serious concern to residents since the 1984 price reduction demands , but it was not until the closure of the Quintette mine that the town seriously investigate a diversification . Since then employment has been generated in tourism (attractions from dinosaur fossil discoveries , outdoor recreation , and nearby provincial parks) , forestry , and oil and gas exploration .

A \$ 1 @. @ 4 billion Murray River coal mine project near Tumbler Ridge , operated by HD Mining International , a company majority @-@ owned by Huiyong Holdings Group , a private company from China uses long @-@ wall mining in which " coal is extracted along a wall in large blocks and then carried out on a conveyor belt . " Penggui Yan , CEO of HD Mining and its controlling shareholder , was a manager of the state @-@ owned China Shenhua Energy Co (CSEC) , China 's largest coal company , which had developed a highly advanced long @-@ wall mining technology . In 2013 HD mining brought in 52 workers from China through the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) claiming a requirement of the job is an ability to speak Mandarin . The hiring was challenged in a Vancouver federal court by two labour unions in April 2013 , The unions claimed there were qualified Canadian job applicants , however the case was dismissed by Justice Russell Zinn who found there was nothing to support the unions claim .

= = Culture , recreation and media = =

After dinosaur trackways were discovered in 2000 , and bones in 2002 , the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation began excavations and opened the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre . Fossils and bones are displayed at both locations . Tours and educational programs related to dinosaur , the trackways , and the wilderness are offered .

Tumbler Ridge 's location among the Rocky Mountains has allowed for the development of numerous trail systems for motorized and non @-@ motorized recreation . The trails and open areas span numerous mountains . Kinuseo Falls along the Murray River in the Monkman Provincial Park is the most popular destination for visitors to Tumbler Ridge . Two other provincial parks are just outside the municipal boundaries : Bearhole Lake Provincial Park and Gwillim Lake Provincial Park .

Annual events held in Tumbler Ridge include the Grizfest Music Festival , Emperor 's Challenge ? promoted as the most beautiful and most challenging half @-@ marathon in the world ? and the Ridge Ramble Cross @-@ Country Ski Race . The Grizfest Music Festival (formerly Grizzly Valley Days) is a two @-@ day concert held on the August long weekend , and includes a parade , dance , art show , and other community @-@ wide events . The Emperor 's Challenge , also in August , is a 21 km (13 mi) marathon up Roman Mountain .

Tumbler Ridge has one newspaper published in the community , the locally owned and operated Tumbler Ridge News (formerly Community Connections) . The Tumbler Ridge Observer formerly covered the town and was published by the Peace River Block Daily News in Dawson Creek . The

Ridge Blog was a short @-@ lived online news source . One newsletter , Coffee Talk , based out of Chetwynd , is circulated in the town . No radio station , or television station broadcasts from the town but there are local repeaters for stations from larger centres .

In Fall 2014 Tumbler Ridge was designated a full member of UNESCO 's Global Geopark Network being only the second Geopark in North America and the first in the West . The Tumbler Ridge Geopark Committee is dedicated to developing tourism and business in the area .

= = Government and politics = =

The District of Tumbler Ridge 's council @-@ manager form of municipal government is headed by a mayor (who also represents Tumbler Ridge on the Peace River Regional District 's governing board) and a six @-@ member council ; these positions are subject to at @-@ large elections every three years . Don McPherson was elected mayor on November 15 , 2014 , succeeding Darwin Wren . Sherry Berringer was elected as school trustee for a third term , sitting on the board of School District 59 . The city funds a volunteer fire department headed by full @-@ time fire chief Matt Treit .

Tumbler Ridge is part of the Peace River South provincial electoral district , represented , since 2013 , by Mike Bernier in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia . Prior to Bernier , the riding was represented by Blair Lekstrom who was elected in the 2001 provincial election , with 72 % support from the town 's polls and re @-@ elected in 2005 with 64 % and in 2009 with 70 % support . Before Lekstrom , Peace River South was represented by Jack Weisgerber as a member of the Social Credit Party of British Columbia (1986 ? 1994) and Reform Party of British Columbia (1994 ? 2001) . In 1996 , as leader of the Reform Party , Weisgerber won re @-@ election despite the Tumbler Ridge polls placing him second to the New Democratic Party candidate .

Federally , Tumbler Ridge is in the Prince George ? Peace River riding , represented in the Canadian House of Commons by Conservative Party Member of Parliament Bob Zimmer . Before Zimmer , who was elected in May 2011 , the riding was represented by Jay Hill since 1993 . The riding was represented by Frank Oberle of the Progressive Conservative Party from 1972 to 1993 . Oberle served as Canada 's Minister of Science and Technology in 1985 and Minister of Forestry in 1989 .