

It's time for a COMMUNITY-FIRST APPROACH for Bouchie Lake Rec.

January 28, 2017

Open Letter to Cariboo Regional District and the residents of Bouchie Lake:

We are Bouchie Lake residents, volunteers and North Cariboo Recreation and Parks taxpayers. We believe in the community in which we live; making it stronger, more viable, active and a healthier place to live, work and play.

We are very concerned about the management structure and lack of access our community and volunteers have to our facility, the Bouchie Lake Hall and Recreation Grounds. Our hall was constructed in 1976 by volunteers, on land that was donated to the community of Bouchie Lake, for the enjoyment and access of residents. The hall and facilities are now owned by the Cariboo Regional District / CRD, our local government, whose job is to serve us, the people. In speaking to longterm residents, the hall was "gifted" to the CRD on the understanding that it be funded with OUR tax dollars to be kept in a state of good repair and be accessible to residents. This intent is not being met by the CRD. Under the existing governance structure, we pay a considerable amount of recreation tax receiving very little in return in our own community.

Volunteer and resident engagement are key to the success of Bouchie Lake Recreation and the delivery of programs and activities. The current structure and management style, supported by the CRD does not empower, support nor value the efforts and in-kind contributions of volunteers. Our hall sits empty more often than it is used. There are volunteers who are willing to support our community and create opportunities for it, and they require to do this is **free** use of our hall.

For example; a group of us is involved in a necessary project that will have a lasting positive impact on our community. The project, "*Developing Capacity for Rural Families*" is underway now in Bouchie Lake. It is focused on collaboration and developing partnerships with local groups, non-profits, businesses, and agencies at the local level. Under this project we have secured funding through Northern Health and the Rotary Club of Quesnel, to support the "Bouchie Lake Country Club" / BLCC, a club created to bring our community together.

Bi-weekly activities are planned, cooking equipment has been purchased and a community garden is being discussed. These activities are not to make money, but for residents to become engaged and involved. We have partnered with the Canadian Diabetes Association to offer a FREE "Food Skills for Families" program. We have come across nothing but roadblocks in an attempt to book space at the Bouchie Lake Hall. Here is a prime example of how residents of this community are volunteering their time to contribute to a free program, but our hall is charging a fee to use the space. This is our hall. We pay the taxes. If a group has intentions of putting on a community event, not focused on making money, why are we being charged to use the space?

We believe this is the first time this program is being offered in the North Cariboo outside of the City of Quesnel. Other nearby rural communities are watching, to see how to undertake similar projects. There is no charge to residents to participate. In our opinion, Bouchie Lake Recreation should be "*bending over backwards*" to accommodate this project and do everything possible to support this project and be involved. Rather, the process to access our hall is onerous, time consuming, not solution focused, not welcoming and unfriendly. As such, we are looking at accessing a different venue.

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This is simply one example of how the Cariboo Regional District is directing how our rural facility is managed. In the summer of 2016, we hosted a drop in "Tye Dye Event" for the BLCC. The green space at the Bouchie Lake Recreation grounds was chosen as the venue as it was outdoors and easily accessible to the public. Management at the hall overstepped their rights, trying to stop our event, in saying we could not host our event here. This area is open for public use, so we persisted and did hold our event there.


Volunteering is on the decline in Canada. This has been acknowledged time and time again. As such, our belief is that volunteers need to be supported and barriers, real, perceived, or otherwise, need to be removed so volunteers who wish to participate remain involved and engaged. Bouchie Lake Recreation has had a long list of volunteers come and go. In discussing this with other residents, a recurring complaint is with the way the facility has and is being managed, the lack of appreciation for volunteer contribution, and the way that volunteers are treated. The closed-door approach does not work to engage resident/volunteers. It is time for the CRD to ensure the processes being implemented work for the community of Bouchie Lake. The policies being followed currently do not work and have not for a long time. Volunteers are not being empowered, nor does it seem that their contributions are being welcomed, valued and /or appreciated.

We believe our hall should have a "*community-first focus*" rather than the "*money-making focus*" which seems to be the current direction. Money should be made from individual, private bookings (ie weddings, parties etc...), not off the backs of community-based, volunteer-run user groups. If Bouchie Lake Recreation requires more funds to operate on, we need to lobby the CRD so more of our tax dollars come home. Volunteers should not be expected to raise funds and /or work to off-set shortfalls in the amount our facility receives in taxes while being unable to easily access the very facility we pay taxes for. If the CRD and the BL Rec Commission would just look at the big picture of having more of the community using and enjoying their own Hall, more people would see and think of booking or suggesting this hall for events that would bring in additional income. We see our volunteer groups as equal partners in Bouchie Lake Recreation rather than as tenants.

We joke about "*picketing the hall*", "*doing a sit in*"... and simply "*Taking Our Hall Back*". The bottom line is... none of this is a laughing matter.

Respectfully Yours,







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It's time for a **COMMUNITY-FIRST APPROACH** for Bouchie Lake Res

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It's time for a COMMUNITY-FIRST APPROACH for Bouchie Lake Rec.

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