



YEAR in review

The Regional Economic Development Initiative for Northwest Alberta (REDI) was formed in 2002 to promote and enhance economic growth amongst its member communities and to promote the region.

REDI is geographically located in the far northwest portion of Alberta—within Mackenzie County and the Métis Settlement of Paddle Prairie. The region is home to several progressive and established resource industries such as agriculture, forestry and oil and gas. This has enabled sustained economic diversification.

Like the northern lights that dance overhead, the REDI region is vibrant and alive. The region is filled with unique commercial, residential and industrial investment opportunities. This, together with a high regard for family and lifestyle, make the region an

amazing place to work and live.

It is REDI's mandate to keep this region vibrant and growing, and throughout the past year REDI has worked with its partners to maintain that vibrancy.

In the past year REDI partnered with Northern Lakes College to deliver the REDI Business Bootcamp, a diverse offering of business programs ranging from human resources to marketing and bookkeeping.

A total of 14 offerings of 11 different courses in the areas of Human Resources, Bookkeeping, Marketing & Branding, and Business Planning were offered. The courses were offered in High Level, Fort Vermilion and La Crete and ran from January through April 2018. Approximately 90 people participated in the courses from various businesses and organizations throughout the Mackenzie region.

In 2017, REDI partnered with the Town of High Level to redo their 2016 federal census. In 2015 REDI completed a census for High Level that identified 1,487 residences and 3,823 residents. The federal census; however, only identified 1,163 residences and only 3,159 residents.

While the economy had slowed down, something was amiss. The 2017 census identified 1,495 residences and 3,701 residents an increase of almost 600 people and more than 400 residences. Municipalities rely on their census to access per capita government grants. The result of the 2017 census greatly improved the amount of grant funding the Town receives from the province.

Transportation remains a priority for the REDI region. REDI has belonged to the Northern Transportation Advocacy Bureau (NTAB) since its

inception and continues to work with them to advocate for northern transportation corridors.

Of great relevance is a proposed rail line that would run from Fort McMurray to Alaska. This multicommodity rail line would help move Mackenzie region commodities via rail to Alaska and Asian Pacific markets. It would also open the opportunity for value-added facilities to be built in the region, increasing employment and investment opportunities.

In September of 2017, REDI partnered with NTAB and the Peace Region Economic Development Alliance (PREDA) to host the "North to Alaska" conference. More than 150 people attended the conference which included speakers from industry, Alaska, one of the proposed rail developers and featured Preston Manning as the keynote speaker.

There are opportunities like hemp. No not the marijuana kind, industrial hemp. Over the past two years REDI has partnered with the Mackenzie Applied Research Association (MARA) to complete hemp trials in the La Crete region. We have known for many years the commodities grown in northern Alberta are among the best. With an increasing demand for hemp, REDI invested in MARA on a five-year hemp trial.

Additionally, REDI partnered with the other northern alliances to attract potential hemp processors to northern Alberta. Hemp is being used to build everything from car parts to building bricks. And, while it may seem a little "out there," it is a new reality and REDI wants to be prepared.

Not so far out there is the potential for a ski hill in our region. REDI has partnered with the Mackenzie Ski Hill Society to hire a consultant to prepare the Buffalo Head Ski Area Master Plan. An important aspect of economic viability is the quality of life area residents enjoy and a ski hill is pretty enjoyable.

REDI also partnered with the Mackenzie Frontier Tourism Association to complete brochures and markers for local historical sights.

REDI is continuing its work in all these areas and continues to monitor the region for potential opportunities. REDI is planning a spring conference in High Level to highlight new opportunities.

