



**District of Lillooet**

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*Via email: [yoursilga@gmail.com](mailto:yoursilga@gmail.com)*

**RE: SILGA Community Excellence Awards – Submission for Economic Development**

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In 2020 the world added to its vocabulary – “COVID” became universally known. In Lillooet, without officially recognizing it in our vocabulary, we functioned in line with another new word “thact’ – meaning to ‘think and act’. If you ask anyone in Lillooet what ‘thact’ means, they won’t be able to explain. Yet it was the ‘thact’ philosophy that informed every aspect of our approach to economic development in 2020. We thought and we acted. In a year of unprecedented challenge, we came together as a community and created a strong foundation both for COVID recovery and for a sustainable, resilient economic future long after COVID is but an unpleasant memory. Thinking and acting – this is the story of Lillooet in 2020 and its progress in economic development.

We thought – we thought about our opportunities, our priorities and our partners. We thought about better practices being employed elsewhere and how these lessons learned from others could be enacted in Lillooet. We thought about where we needed to build relationships and how best to reach out and form partnerships. We thought about where we could secure the resources to make things happen. We thought about where the ‘line’ was between encouraging visitation and keeping our community safe.

We acted – we formed an Economic Development Advisory Committee with broad representation across all sectors of our community including the all-important not-for-profit sector and shared knowledge and insights into the challenges and opportunities before us. We surveyed our residents to check in and see if they were comfortable welcoming travellers from within our own Province. We prioritized and seized the immediate tourism opportunity arising from BC residents touring their own province and supported Tourism Lillooet’s development and launch of a new destination website [visitlillooet.ca](http://visitlillooet.ca) and social media campaign. We reached out to our neighbours in the Northern St’át’imc communities around us on whose territories we are so fortunate to live and work. We initiated a joint table for economic discussion with representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. We initiated discussions with Sekw’el’was First Nation for a long-term operating agreement of the Cayoosh RV Park & Campground. We applied for \$2 million in grant funding to support campground improvements, and \$1 million for Rec Centre improvements. We shared better practices for Buy Local programs with our Chamber of Commerce and new developments in Visitor Information services with the Lillooet Museum and Visitor Centre. We initiated discussions with BC Hydro to create more meaningful dialogue regarding local employment and business opportunities arising from their significant multi-year capital program in our backyard. We secured funding to support business planning for the St’át’imc Cultural Centre and initiated this work together with Lillooet Tribal Council in order to create a strong St’át’imc presence in the heart of our community - an anchor attraction for visitors and a catalyst that will convert Lillooet from a stop en route to a destination in its own right.

We thought – we acted – we began. There is still much to do but the foundation is there and the future is bright for Lillooet.