

Golden Peaks Resort Traditional Use Study

Prepared for:

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Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to assess the impacts of the proposed Golden Peaks Resort on the traditional uses of the area for the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Nation, this study commenced on September 26, 1998. Traditional Use information contained within this document originates from historical documents, oral history and from direct observation by the Ktunaxa Traditional Use Study team during groundtruthing. The information contained within this report is only intended to represent the interests of the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council, not that of any other First Nation.

Traditional Use Studies differ from other studies, such as archaeology in that many of the sites are not spatially constrained, nor do the sites necessarily contain artifacts. Some sites, such as rapids where salmon fishing took place are indeed site specific while others such as general hunting or plant-gathering areas may be watershed or region specific. The less spatially specific sites pose the greatest difficulties in assessing and mitigating for.

Since European contact there has been vast changes to the ecosystems of British Columbia including: logging, large fires triggered by development, agriculture, mining, the introduction of noxious weeds etc. For the modern day traditional use researcher these ecological changes cause great difficulties in assessing the sites, not only are the ecosystems different but also the sites are difficult to identify, even by the Elders who frequented these places in their younger years. In terms of mitigating the loss of traditional use sites it is difficult for the general sites, the loss of 1000 hectares may seem entirely inconsequential in the context of the Columbia Valley, however these incremental losses have caused profound damage to aboriginal rights.

The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Peoples evolved around the mountains, because of this all of the mountains in the territory have names in the respective languages and are of special spiritual significance. The destruction of mountain ecosystems is analogous to the destruction of ceremonial religious sites. Whenever consulted the Elders always tell us how the entire territory was used, this does not imply constant use, but that these areas were used throughout different years and seasons depending on environmental and cultural conditions. Please see map of Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Traditional Territory in Appendix I.

Methods

The first stage of this project was identifying past work in the Golden area through archival research. Once the archival research was completed interviews were conducted with Elders, first the Elders Working Group in Cranbrook, then later a meeting at the Shuswap Hall with Elders from the Columbia Valley. Directly after the last meeting the TUS groundtruthing crew traveled to Golden for field research to look at sites the crew was informed of. The field methodology worked as follows: maps and airphotos were studied to gain a perspective of the area, after which the crew did a drive around for site orientation. During the site orientation photographs and plant species lists are taken, along with notes on wildlife sightings.

Results

The meetings held revealed one specific traditional use site at the ski hill, however the whole territory is covered by general berry picking, medicinal plant gathering and hunting sights. The one specific site is a huckleberry picking sight, which is in the direct vicinity of the ski hill. During field work it was noted that the berry picking potential was medium to low, however this is likely because of current land management practices as well as environmental change in the last 150 years.

Due to the topography much of the traditional use occurred below the ski area, however when you look at the landscape as an interconnected web it is obvious that changes to the ski hill will affect the ecology of the surrounding area. Sites below the development include fishing (traditional and contemporary), high bush cranberry picking along the river, as well as hunting and general plant gathering. Please consult study area map in Appendix I.

Vegetation Management Suggestions

In terms of traditional use values in the resort area, the greatest impact is in the loss of ecosystem integrity through the loss of forest area, fragmentation of the ecosystem and the incursion of people into the ecosystem. Careful and thoughtful development may reduce many of the impacts.

During fieldwork it was noted that there were crews brushing out the ski runs. These crews were cutting down all species of shrub growth, unfortunately they were not leaving the huckleberry bushes. Of the shrubs huckleberries are perhaps the most important traditional berry crops. The huckleberry bushes have very flexible stems making them unlikely to cause any problems to skiers as the snow quickly flattens them. It would be desirable for brushing crews to be instructed in the identification of these shrubs so that they could be left.

In order to minimize impacts all plantings must be done with native plants from local genetic stock. According to provincial botanist, George Douglas (per. com.) the use of exotic species in hydroseeding projects has caused the introduction of numerous serious noxious weeds into British Columbia, as these seeding mixtures are grown in Europe. There are numerous local indigenous plants that are highly suited to hydroseeding mixes, these include numerous grass species, yarrow, cow parsnip and others, and unfortunately these seeds are not readily available commercially and thus must be collected. There are members of the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Nation who are qualified to

do this seed collection which could take place next spring, summer and fall. Native plants are also ideally suited for landscaping the Golden Peaks Resort as they fit into the landscape and will best attract wildlife such as ungulates and birds. Well suited native landscaping plants include: all the locally found conifers, red osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*), numerous willow species (depending on height and other characteristics desired), black elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), kinnikinnik (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), highbush cranberry (*Viburnum edule*) and many others.

Conclusions

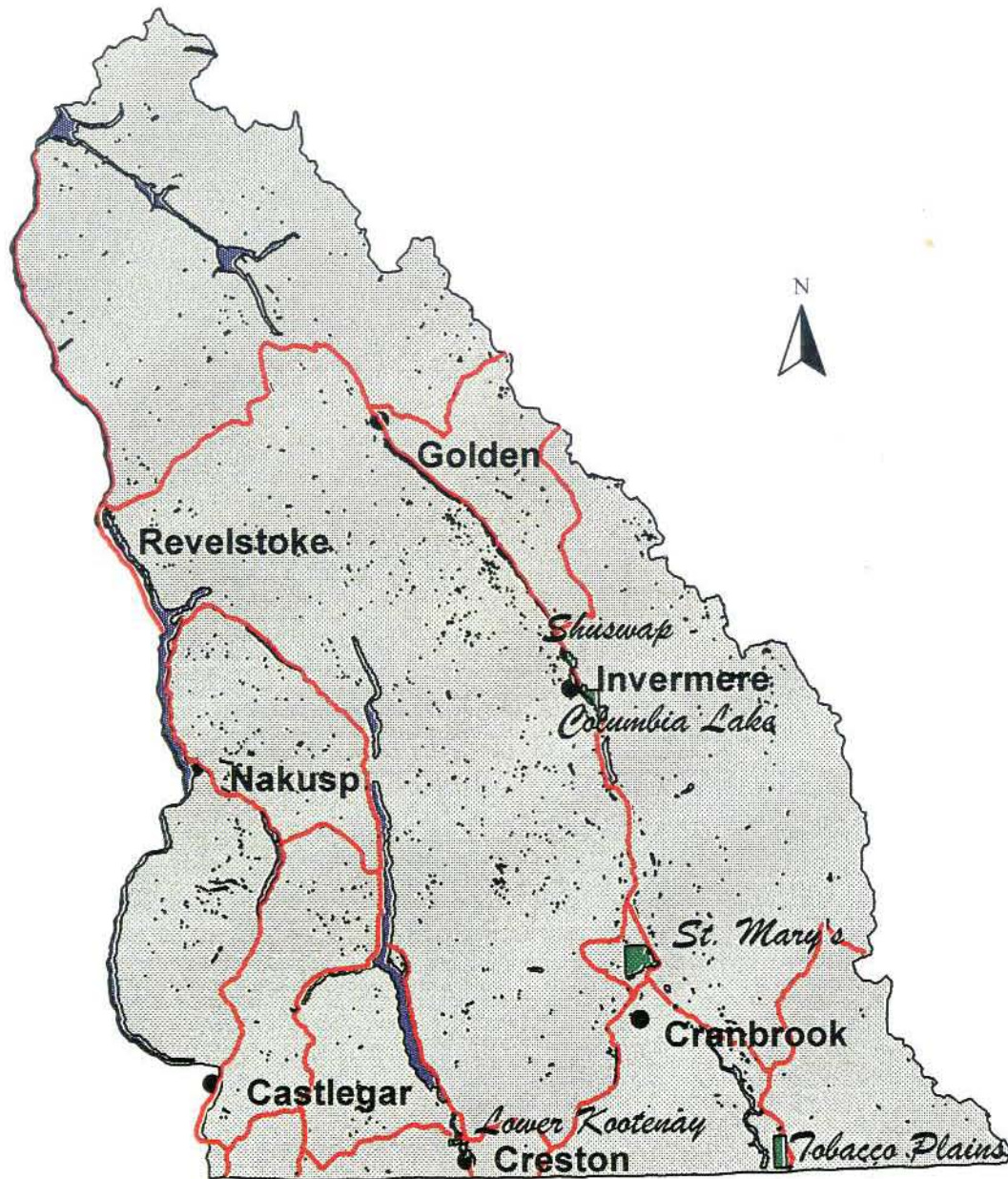
The Golden Peaks Resort development has the potential to cause damage to the land, however if all the recommendations are adhered to within the Ski Area Master Plan and, other related studies such as this one, the permanent damage to ecosystem health should be minimal. In fact the opportunities for the town of Golden and the Columbia Valley as a whole may help mitigate the damage to the ecosystem through the economic transition from a resource extraction based economy.

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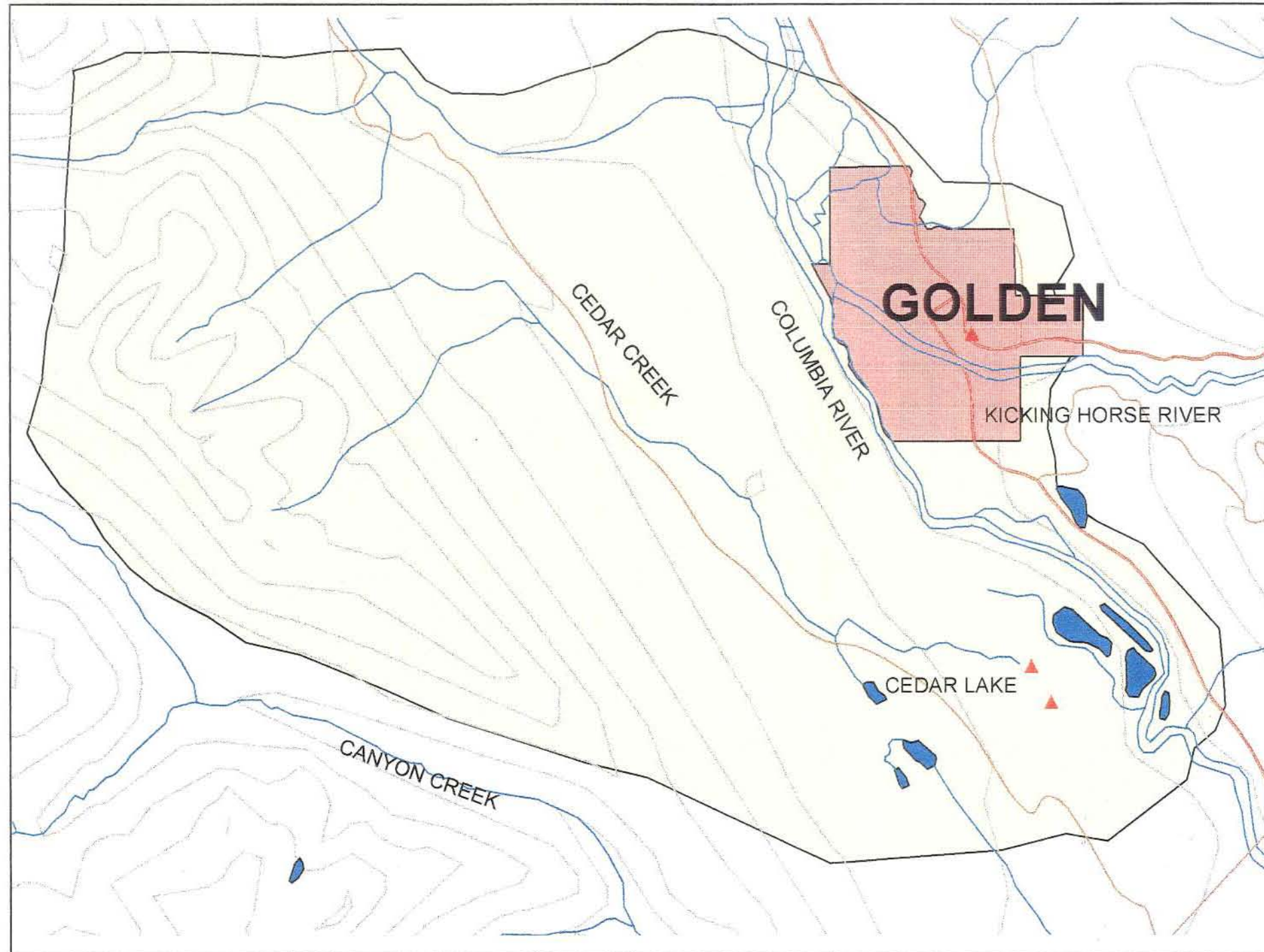
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Appendix I: Maps

Ktunaxa Traditional Territory in BC



Golden and Vicinity



LEGEND

- ▲ Archsites
- Roads
- Rivers
- Contour
- Highway
- Lakes
- Municip
- TUS AREA
HUNTING
GATHERING
HABITATION SITES



Treaty Council

0 22 44 Kilometers