



Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort sold to Lower Kootenay Band

Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort, a popular Kootenay Lake tourist destination, is being purchased by the Lower Kootenay Indian Band, Chief Jason Louie announced on Thursday.

The acquisition, which will see ownership change hands in April, is an important economic development investment for his people, and it has historical significance too, he said.

“The Lower Kootenay Band has a history with the site that dates back hundreds of years,” he said. “The Ainsworth Hot Springs are known by the Ktunaxa people as ‘nupika wu’u’, which has a literal translation meaning Spirit Water.”

The resort, located 22km south of Kaslo on the west shore of Kootenay Lake, has been family-owned since 1962. Current owners Norm and Joyce Mackie purchased the property from Joyce’s parents, Sam and Belle Homen, in 1979.

The Lower Kootenay Indian Band is one of Four Canadian and two US communities that comprise the Ktunaxa Nation. Lower Kootenay (Yaqan Nukiy) is located in the Creston Valley and has a population of about 250.

No immediate changes are planned for the resort, Louie said. He and band representatives met with resort staff on Wednesday to announce that all employees would be kept on. LKB will be investing in capital improvements at the resort in the near future.

“The resort will provide meaningful employment and business opportunities for the citizens of Yaqan Nukiy and local residents, and will continue to be a major tourism destination of the region,” he said. The resort currently provides about 50 jobs in the management and operation of the hot springs, 41-room hotel and restaurant.

“We are privileged and pleased to enter into this purchase agreement with Chief Jason Louie and the Lower Kootenay Band,” Norm and Joyce Mackie said in a written statement. “The resort has been a family affair since 1962 and transferring ownership is a daunting experience.

“This has been a wonderful 35-year ride for our family. Probably the best part for us has been to watch young people, in their first job, come to work with us, and become self-assured contributors to the work force. Many of these people come back to visit and tell us this was probably the best job they ever had. This is truly gratifying.”

One of the goals for the new owners is to work closely with Ainsworth area residents and to continue to build relationships to strengthen the area’s tourist economy, Louie said. “The Spirit Water has been medicine for healing various ailments that the human body experiences,” he said. “This business venture reconnects our First Nation to a significant cultural site of the Ktunaxa people.

“The Lower Kootenay Band will continue to strive for excellence in hospitality and experience. Professional development will be ongoing and customer service will remain a priority.”