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September 22, 2008

Dedication commemorates ongoing legacy of Kananaskis Country

Former Premier Peter Lougheed among honorees as part of 30th anniversary celebration

Kananaskis Country... Three prominent Albertans were honoured in a site dedication in recognition of their vision and commitment towards the creation of Kananaskis Country.

As part of Kananaskis Country's 30th anniversary celebration, bronze plaques honouring former Premier Peter Lougheed, Clarence Copithorne (former MLA for Banff-Cochrane) and prominent architect/environmentalist Bill Milne were unveiled at Barrier Lake Visitor Centre, the Clarence Copithorne Viewpoint and the Bill Milne Trail.

"More than four decades ago, Kananaskis Country was conceived through the passion and foresight of these three men who dreamed of creating an area where preservation, recreation and a working forest could co-exist," said Cindy Ady, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. "Today, Albertans and visitors alike continue to enjoy this magnificent legacy."

In the 1970's former Premier Peter Lougheed, the late Clarence Copithorne, Minister of Highways and Calgary architect Bill Milne worked together to develop a proposal for a large multi-use area in what is now known as Kananaskis Country.

On September 22, 1978, Premier Lougheed officially dedicated Kananaskis Country as a multi-use area, balancing recreation and commercial opportunities with the protection of watersheds, wildlife habitat and landscapes. The provincial park also dedicated at that time was renamed Peter Lougheed Provincial Park in January 1986.

Located a half-hour west of Calgary, nearly two-thirds of the 4,200 square kilometre area in Kananaskis Country is now protected as a park, ecological reserve or recreation area. About 75 million visitors from Alberta and abroad have experienced the spectacular landscapes and wildlife in Kananaskis Country.

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Editor's Note: Backgrounder on three honorees attached.

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Kananaskis Country Dedication - The Honorees

The Honourable Peter Lougheed

During his tenure as Premier of Alberta from 1971 -1985, the Honourable E. Peter Lougheed became one of Canada's most prominent political figures. At that time, the Alberta Government's major priorities focused on control of Alberta's natural resources and their development for the benefit of future generations of Albertans; participation of Albertans in the mainstream of Canadian life; economic diversification; and the improvement of health, research, and recreational facilities in the province. Mr. Lougheed demonstrated his leadership by focusing the resources of the Alberta government to create a sustainable legacy in Kananaskis Country that could be shared by everyone.

Clarence Copithorne

In the 1960s, the late Clarence Copithorne witnessed the growing impact of Calgarians looking for recreation opportunities in the foothills, and the pressure this placed on local ranchlands. He was first elected to the legislature as an independent MLA for Banff-Cochrane in 1967. As Minister of Highways in the Peter Lougheed government, Copithorne collaborated with prominent architect and environmentalist, Bill Milne, to develop a proposal for a multi-use area where preservation, recreation and a working forest could co-exist harmoniously.

The Clarence Copithorne Viewpoint was chosen as the site for his commemorative plaque, because of its views of rangeland and mountains - the landscapes that he wanted to protect.

Bill Milne

The late Bill Milne was a prominent Calgary architect and a passionate environmentalist. When the late Clarence Copithorne, then Minister of Highways, unveiled a plan to create a paved highway into the Kananaskis Valley, Milne challenged the government to hold a meaningful public consultation process. Copithorne agreed and more than 48,000 Albertans responded to a survey about the future development of the area, most coming out in favour of creating a park. Milne and Copithorne secured the support of Premier Peter Lougheed after a helicopter flight over the valley demonstrated the need to conserve a large part of the eastern slopes. Milne made a significant contribution to the plan for what is now Kananaskis Country.

The Bill Milne Trail (formerly known as the Evan-Thomas Bike Trail) runs from the Evan-Thomas Recreation area into the Spray Lakes Provincial Park.

For additional information on Kananaskis Country, visit www.kananaskis-country.ca.

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