

The Basin Record

Time Moves On

When we started collecting and posting historic photographs twenty years ago, our clients were looking for images from the 1890s to 1930s in East Kootenay. Now requests frequently focus on the 1960s and '70s. Whether in Castlegar or Cranbrook, people are interested in the downtowns and activities of the places where their parents worked and played. We are fortunate that donors are now responding with more modern photos and 8 mm film that show a time more recently past but still surprisingly distant. Can you imagine B-4 bombers and large passenger planes landing on Industrial Road #1 in Cranbrook? Or ski jumpers soaring over Kimberley? Then there is Eremenko's store and Bob's Pay-n-Take-It, clustered around the single light, in downtown Castlegar. The CBIRH is entering an unprecedented field of image collection, driven by the demands of our user base. We aim to please.

Cranbrook Girls' Bugle Band Exhibit



Anna Majkowski & Derryl White flank the Cranbrook Girls' Bugle Band Exhibit at the SD#5 Board Office - Image courtesy of Erin Knutson



Legacy of Learning

Our Legacy of Learning Project with School District No. 5 (SD#5) is a highlight. This initiative features "Living Legends," including a rotating display of the Cranbrook Girls' Bugle Band at the SD#5 Board Office.

By bringing school history into modern exhibits and classrooms, CBIRH supports educational accuracy and shares regional stories through online platforms, physical exhibits, and digital tools.

As we move forward with our 2026/2027 SD#5 partnership, the CBIRH looks forward to workshopping and developing its app, Building Families Through Time, within school classes. Our initiative continues to expand the history of education and research into the classroom. We look forward to presenting this archiving tool to students across the district in a curriculum-based setting. By opening our archives to new generations, we strive to create practical tools and content. These will be conducive to education, research, and academic development. Our Archives Room is a treasure chest brimming with school artifacts, stories, and keepsakes from every corner of the district, and now it's ready for the next act. As we bring this collection to life online, we're crafting a living, breathing exhibit—a celebration of SD#5's schools, told through the voices and relics we've gathered. The story is ours to share, and the adventure is just beginning as we forge into the stories sitting on shelves, waiting to be discovered online.

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Defenders of the Kootenay Lands

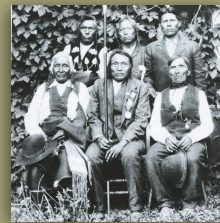


Ktunaxa Nation: Standing left – Sebastian Joe; Mounted left to right: Philips Brown Tail, Alpine Gus, Joe Nana, Kootenay Pete; Front from left – William Paul, Louie Storkin, Chief Isadore, Kuvalo – Images courtesy of Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History (CBIRH)

In the summer of 1887, a telling photograph, captured a pivotal moment in British Columbia's East Kootenay region. Ktunaxa Chief Isadore flanked by his council of leaders and warriors. Dressed in traditional regalia, the men project quiet dignity amid rising settler tensions. This image, preserved in archives like the CBIRH, the Glenbow and BC Archives, symbolizes more than a meeting: it marks a crossroads where Ktunaxa resilience clashed with colonial expansion.

Chief Isadore (c. 1850s–1894), head of the Upper Ktunaxa St. Mary's (Fort Steele) band, was no ordinary leader. A wealthy rancher and farmer, he had inherited influence—possibly as stepson or successor to Chief Joseph—from a people whose homelands stretched along the upper Kootenay and Columbia rivers for millennia. The Ktunaxa, influenced by Plains cultures, once hunted buffalo across the mountains. By the late 1870s, depleted herds forced a shift to cattle and crops. Isadore cultivated Joseph's Prairie (today's Cranbrook site) and fiercely opposed fences that restricted shared grazing lands. "No man had the right to erect fences," he maintained, embodying a traditional ethos of communal stewardship.

Tensions boiled over in the 1880s. Gold rushes at Wild Horse Creek drew miners and settlers, who claimed land without a treaty. In 1884, Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly allotted reserves that were too small and poorly located, excluding vital campsites. Isadore refused them outright. Then, in 1887, two Ktunaxa men—Kapla and Young or Little Isadore (possibly the chief's relative)—were arrested on flimsy suspicion of murdering two miners near Golden three years earlier. Believing justice, his domain, Isadore led 25 to 30 armed warriors to the jail at Kootenay. They freed the prisoners without bloodshed. Settlers panicked, crying "Indian uprising." British Columbia's government summoned the North-West Mounted Police and with it the tenure of the diplomatic Superintendent Samuel Benfield "Sam" Steele. The council at Fort Steele embodied Ktunaxa governance. Though the names of surrounding chiefs and advisors are not recorded in many accounts, the photo reveals a deliberate group, uneven in number, ensuring no tie votes on weighty matters. These men, warriors and knowledge keepers, supported Isadore's stand for land and autonomy.



The Chiefs of Goodness - 1880s - Queen Victoria Medal: Back left to right- Chief Alex Alexander (Government Chief, Creston), Chief Abel Three Feathers (Church Chief, Creston), Chief Pierre Thunderbird (Government Chief, St. Mary's band. Front left to right: Chief Pierre Kinbasket (Chief of Shuswap band Athalmer), Chief Francis Francois (Chief, St. Mary's Band), Chief Abel Morning Star (Chief Columbia Lake Band, Windermere). Image courtesy of CBIRH

Isadore retired to farm along the Kootenay River, improving his people's holdings until influenza claimed him in the harsh winter of 1893–94 on St. Mary's Reserve. Indian Agent Robert Galbraith called him "one of the most remarkable men of the tribe," a leader of "strong will" whose influence could sway for good or ill.

Today, Fort Steele Heritage Town preserves this history, with Ktunaxa exhibits highlighting craftsmanship and resilience. Chief Isadore's trail—named in his honour—winds through ancestral lands, inviting reflection on stewardship amid change. His council's stand reminds us: in the face of dispossession, Ktunaxa leadership chose diplomacy over destruction, securing a fragile peace that still echoes in the valleys.

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National Indigenous History Month



Ktunaxa Legends - Leadership, Regalia and Tradition - Images Courtesy of Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History (CBIRH)

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Name That Teacher – Dave Etmansky (left), Marianne Langin, Gayle Slobodian and Derryl White together track down names, faces and places for the CBIRH's archives, CDRTA, SD#5, and CDTA. Image courtesy of CBIRH

It takes a Village

Over the past eight months, volunteers have dedicated an average of 14 hours per week to identifying thousands of unnamed teachers and students in historic Cranbrook school photographs, dating back to 1920, in the Name That Teacher project.

Their work transforms anonymous images into “information-rich” records, allowing families to reclaim personal stories and engage the public. The initiative aligns with our Building Families Through Time app and promises broader engagement. By bridging 20th-century schoolrooms with 21st-century technology, CBIRH fosters intergenerational connections and preserves the human dimension of educational history.

Our retired teachers are building the archive to support student research and genealogical projects while sharing fellowship and memories of days spent in the classroom. We invite anyone interested to join us and take part in ‘Name That Teacher’. If you want to learn more or volunteer, contact us at info@basininstitute.org.

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Volunteers in Motion

With local histories at risk of being lost or forgotten, CBIRH's community-driven preservation approach is more important than ever. Our volunteer-led, flexible way of working helps ensure these stories will inspire and teach future generations.

Ongoing community support will help keep the traditions of the East Kootenay and Columbia Basin alive and meaningful for everyone.

To our volunteers, your enthusiasm and dedication have brought joy and depth to CBIRH and have been vital in building and enriching our archive. We would like to thank everyone involved in Name That Teacher, as well as those processing and activating collections on a weekly basis. Your contributions are valued by all. This past year has seen huge growth and development in our volunteer base and for our organization. The social component of bringing volunteers together from a large pool, is one of the most important aspects of this project.



Derryll White (left) and Gerald Hudson at the CBIRH Office

Walks with Derryll

Walks with Derryll began as an in-office equipment check and has since evolved into a dedicated content initiative with our in-house historian, Derryll White. White is an experienced curator, historian, writer, and anthropologist with over 50 years in the field, including 30 years at Fort Steele. He is a contributor to our many projects and an integral part of our communications team. By combining history, technology, experience, and a passion for storytelling, the CBIRH aims to produce engaging and educational content for the public. As we continue to develop this series, we plan to create a content-rich site that explores the hidden gems of the Canadian Columbia Basin while engaging a wider audience.



Linda Holt (left) and Shelly Proctor at the CBIRH office - Images courtesy of CBIRH

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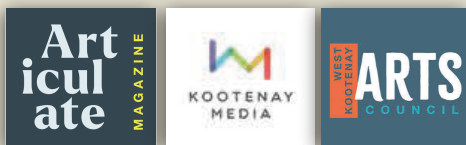
The CBIRH would like to acknowledge and thank our donors, volunteers, sponsors and partners. Our mission is made possible with the support of these groups and individuals.

Time is a valuable commodity, and our organization greatly appreciates the time and dedication of our volunteer base, which supports data entry and activation in our archives and contributes to many other departments, including accounting, community outreach, and consulting.

We are fortunate to have a solid board of directors, who bring individual strengths to the CBIRH and have made many contributions and donations over the years. Our board members are generous and gifted individuals, and we are incredibly grateful to have their expertise and support as we continue to bring history to the world, especially to the Canadian Columbia Basin.

Thank you to our excellent IT and Web Development support through Murray Technical Excellence and Eggplant Studios for their continual guidance, insight, and expertise as we continue to develop our digital footprint and presentation.

As always, donations and members are vital to our success. We invite you to continue partnering with us through donations, fundraising, and collaborations to help us preserve and share history. For more information, to volunteer, or to donate, please visit basininstitute.org or email info@basininstitute.org.



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