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THE BABY BOOMERS AND DARWIN'S LAW

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If you're somewhere in your thirties or forties, you've got lots of company. You are a Baby Boomer, one of nine million Canadians born between 1947 and 1964. Collectively, we Boomers have created quite a stir since our arrival after World War II.

Lately, Boomers are again the subject of considerable scrutiny. The reason is that the 750,000 Baby Boomers in British Columbia make up more than one quarter of the population in the province. What affects this demographic bulge has dramatic repercussions which will continue well into the Twenty-First Century. Where the Boomers go, the rest of society is compelled to follow.

We Baby Boomers have been labeled "The Predictable Generation" because whatever we do, we do as one third of Canada's population. The benefits have been many. We, as a generation, have enjoyed life as trend setters. We're better educated, politically sophisticated, more traveled, and more affluent; that's the upside. The downside is job security or the lack of it.

Today, the average Baby Boomer can expect to engage in four careers in his or her work lifetime. Job security only exists in the sense that while you're working, you have the opportunity to develop talents, skills, and connections that will keep you employed or gain you employment somewhere else. The cradle to the grave concept of employment no longer exists.

The problem is too many of us are competing for too few existing jobs. Lateral thinking must now be implemented. What you learn in one job must be adapted and applied to another. The world of Future Shock has arrived. The key phrase for the future is: survival of the fittest and the fittest must be *flexible*.

In the Kootenays, this is hardly a new concept. Living in an area labeled economically

depressed at the best of times, local Boomers seeking a living have long subscribed to Darwin's Law: diversify, adapt, and prosper.

Like the Vancouver actor who moonlights as a cabby, it's not uncommon in the Kootenays to see someone operate a small business and hold down a part-time job while supplementing these incomes with the marketing of an extrinsic talent or skill. This has given rise to the New Age worker: the housekeeper-cashier-writer or the waiter-landscaper-musician.

Cottage industry operated by Boomers flourishes in the Kootenays. Recognition of this kind of ingenuity born of necessity may come as a surprise to those of us now wholly accustomed to carving incomes from alternate sources.

What is even more surprising is that most of us came to the Kootenays to get away from it all: the rat race, power lunches, the need to own a BMW; to enjoy a slower pace, the country lifestyle and quiet. Who'd have thunk it? We've been on the cutting edge all along!