

Local campground adds features

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An Okanagan entrepreneur and international tourism consultant is developing what he believes is the "next generation" of campgrounds.

Joseph Dubois, who owns and operates Summerland Campground and RV Park in Summerland with his wife, says RVing and camping remains a "pretty cost-effective" way of traveling through B.C., pointing to the large number of recreational vehicles.

At the same time, the number of safe, family-oriented campgrounds is dropping, he said.

"In a nutshell, demand (for camping space) is increasing exponentially, while supply is dwindling at the same rate," said Dubois.

That is certainly the case locally. Regional camp grounds face pressure from developers wanting to build more luxurious accommodations like the development proposed for the former

Skaha Lake Tent and Trailer Park in Penticton's south end.

"Campgrounds in the Okanagan, specifically, family-oriented, safe, secure clean campgrounds are dying," he said. "The land is so valuable, people are cashing in. They are building condos or retiring."

Dubois is confident that his business, which is holding its grand reopening this Tuesday from 3-7 p.m., is in it for the long-run. Located on a property running along Trout Creek, the site offers 41 campsites spread across two-and-a-quarter acres of land just off Highway 97.

So the campground is by Dubois' own admission not large. But it includes features which Dubois believes will give him an competitive advantage.

They include not only a swimming pool, play ground and volleyball nets, but also movie nights that will give parents and their children some breathing room.

Dubois added movie nights last year

after he and his family stayed at a campground in the United States that offers the service. "Our daughter just loved it and we thought that is a fantastic added value for a campground," he said.

Dubois also plans to expand wireless internet service on his property, so customers can stay in touch with the office. The campground also includes other features to attract more "more discerning, more family-oriented people."

They include a strict 11 p.m. curfew and an electronic gate that locks down between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. to eliminate vehicle traffic.

People can leave, but will not be able to re-enter during that period.

"We are screening out, for the lack of a better term, all the yahoos and the partyers," he said.

Available evidence suggest his approach already paying off. Dubois said advanced bookings for July and August are up 40 per cent.