

He's here to breathe new life into B.C. ghost town

BY LENA SIN
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Krishnan Suthanthiran has bought his B.C. ghost town. He's even given it a slogan. Now all the 55-year-old U.S. developer needs to do is erase some memories.

To make that happen, he woke up at 3 a.m. in Atlanta yesterday, hopped a plane for Vancouver and plans to spend the rest of the week meeting with business folk, native leaders and students to kickstart the rebirth of Kitsault.

"The first thing we've done is try to erase the memory of a ghost town," said Suthanthiran. "The town has been sitting empty for 20-plus years and we're trying to create some excitement."

Suthanthiran bought the former B.C. mining town last December without even seeing it — and against the advice of his closest financial advisors.

"I come from a poor country where people have no homes and I saw this whole town that is not being used — it's a shame," he says. "I felt it was a tragedy."

It wasn't until February that Suthanthiran glided into Kitsault in a float plane to see for the first time what his investment of close to \$7 million got him. Situated 139 kilometres north of Prince Rupert on Alice Arm, the isolated town didn't disappoint.

"Kitsault: Experience heaven on earth" is the slogan Suthanthiran has come up with.

The purchase of the town has since thrown the low-key philanthropist and entrepreneur into the limelight, and the inevitable TV pitches, includ-



KRISHNAN SUTHANTHIRAN

ing CBC's *Venture*, have already come in.

But Suthanthiran has turned them all down, insisting it's time to focus. His first task is to assemble two teams — one in Vancouver and another in Terrace.

He is adamant that Kitsault will be more than just a real-estate development. He is ready to throw in millions more to create a viable community, which includes building a movie studio, launching eco-tourism, building an integrated hospital clinic and working with universities to create an environmental research facility.

A champion of students and education, he's also meeting with B.C. Institute of Technology students this week to collect their business proposals.

In the meantime Suthanthiran has already mapped out Phase 1: Replace the roofs, renovate the existing 92 houses and 210 apartments, put in a new sewer system, water treatment plant and fix up the roads. Target



Under the slogan 'Kitsault: Experience heaven on earth,' Krishnan Suthanthiran plans to spend millions to revitalize the former ghost town. — THE PROVINCE

completion date: End of 2005. Phase 2, the construction work, begins in 2006.

The Carleton University-educated engineer, who was raised in India, spends 98 per cent of his time in the medical field. He is the founder of Best Medical International, a Vir-

ginia-based firm specializing in oncology and radiology products.

In the past six months, he has also acquired two companies in France and bought another five properties, including Kitsault. He is also trying to acquire another company in Atlanta.

For now, there's Kitsault, which he wants to be both economically viable and a benefit to the community.

"I guess Kitsault is something in my heart," says Suthanthiran. "Five to 10 years from now, we want to be able to say, 'We started the rebirth of the town.'"

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