



2016-2017

CPAWS Southern Alberta Education Report

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Thank you to all our funders and supporters for helping us inspire the next generation of environmental stewards!

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) is Canada’s voice for wilderness. We are a not-for-profit charity with 13 chapters across Canada, from coast to coast to coast. We work on the ground regionally to contribute to the establishment of new protected areas, and effective management of our parks and wilderness spaces. For over 50 years CPAWS has made significant strides to safeguard Canada’s natural capital, and is the only nation-wide organization that has created more than half a million square kilometres of protected areas. Our focus is on public lands and waters, which make up 90% of Canada.

CPAWS Southern Alberta chapter (SAB) works to protect Alberta’s parks and wilderness areas, and educate and inspire Albertans to get outside and engage in stewardship. We have helped create significant protected areas in Kananaskis, the Whaleback, and recently the Castle. We work with government, industry, First Nations, and other stakeholders—using science—to champion conservation solutions. We have a long-standing history in national park management, and our premier national parks, Banff and Jasper, would look very different today if it were not for the work of our chapter. We were instrumental in establishing the wildlife crossing structures in Banff National Park and were the brainchild behind the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y).

In addition to our conservation work, CPAWS Southern Alberta is a leader in environmental education, and has won provincial and national awards for our unique education programs. For 20 years, we have been successfully delivering multi-visit, curriculum-linked, in-class environmental education and outdoor interpretive hiking programs to youth grades 2-12 and adult groups in Alberta, focusing on local stewardship. To date, we have reached over **118,000** participants in this region.

The 2016-2017 school year was a year of celebrating success. It began with winning the national award of excellence for Outstanding Non-Profit Organization contributing to significant environmental learning in Canada, from the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM). This prestigious award demonstrates the effective and innovative approach we take to environmental education. It was a great way to commemorate the **20th anniversary** of our education program.

Our school based education program for Grades 2-12 links local conservation with curriculum, and includes programs on species at risk, trees and forests, water conservation, grizzly bears, and Alberta’s parks and wilderness. These programs follow a unique multi-visit formula of two in-class visits and a guided hike, fostering a connection to nature, and bringing deeper meaning to the learning experience. Our hands-on interactive programs are extremely relevant for students, teaching them current conservation issues in Alberta; inspiring them to care about our local environment, resources, and species at risk; and empowering them to engage in stewardship to make a difference.

The CPAWS Action Challenge Contest is a chief component of our environmental education programs. We work with thousands of students each year, providing them with knowledge pertaining to the issues surrounding Alberta's species at risk and their habitats. Our goal is for this learning to be taken beyond the classroom and used by students to create a positive impact on the environment. We want students to care about the environmental issues in our province, and demonstrate that by taking on an Action Challenge project that shows their commitment to environmental stewardship.

Our adult education program is grounded in our expertise with school programming, and extends these learnings to an adult audience, including teachers, corporate groups, community groups, and new immigrants. Program topics include outdoor education, parks and protected areas, water stewardship, grizzly bears, and more. Each year our adult audience is growing, especially in our successful new immigrant program.

The 2016-2017 school year's results further demonstrate the growing demand, and success, of our education programs. Thanks to continued support, each year we are able to fine-tune and build our programs to ensure their high quality. This year included developing new programs, adding to our repertoire, engaging more students than ever in environmental action, and continuing to receive positive feedback from participants. In terms of numbers, this meant that from September 2016 to June 2017 we delivered **425 programs** to over **8000 youth, teachers, and adult new immigrants**. These programs included:

- 120 hikes in Alberta's parks and protected areas
- 18 snowshoe treks during the winter
- 236 classroom visits
- 37 adult new immigrant programs
- 14 workshops for teachers and the general public
- 68% of the schools were high needs and/or rural schools:
 - 44 high needs schools
 - 56 rural schools
- 95% of participants committed to or engaged in positive environmental stewardship

In the 2016-2017 school year we piloted the Environmental Leaders Program, in partnership with the Tim Horton Children's Foundation; ran our first full season of snowshoeing for youth; and piloted a high school climate literacy program. We deepened our partnerships with the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS). We have established new partnerships, with the YMCA and the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society (CIES), to provide nature education opportunities for the ever-growing new immigrant population in Calgary. As part of our aquatic field study programs, we continue

to have a successful relationship with RiverWatch. Our students collect data in the field and share this with the RiverWatch water quality database. We are committed to reaching as many participants as we can with engaging and impactful environmental education, we believe that our programs, partnerships, and growing audience will enable us to continue to expand our reach and success for the coming year.

Our success and future achievements would not be possible without our funders. Their support not only helps keep program costs at a minimum for schools, it is integral to run the education department, and deliver the sheer number of quality programs each school year. Thank you! The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's Southern Alberta Chapter looks forward to sustaining and strengthening these relationships as we continue to provide outstanding educational programming in the region.



OUR EDUCATION TEAM

The success of our education program directly correlates to the highly skilled and amazing people involved. It is important for us to recognize the incredible talent, passion for nature and conservation, and hard work that goes into running this successful program each year.

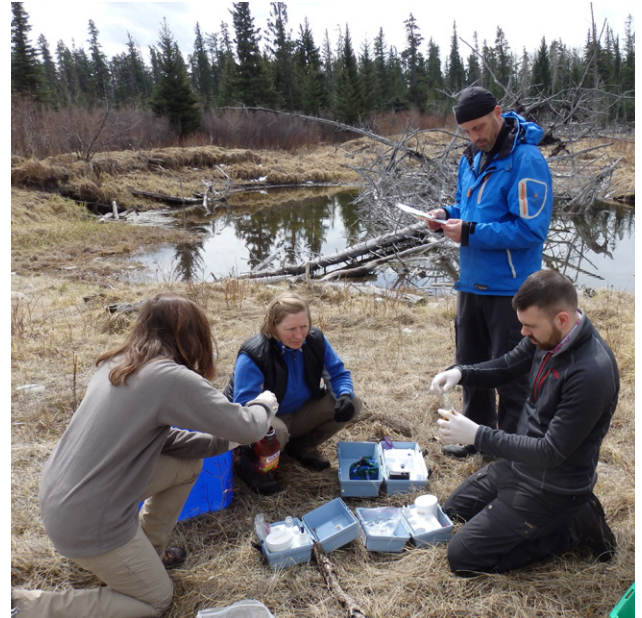
Jaclyn Angotti, *Education Director* – Jaclyn is an Environmental Educator with eight years of experience leading science and environmental education programs. She has a BSc. in Biology with a Business minor from the University of Alberta and a Graduate Certificate in Education for the Environment from the University of Calgary. Her passion for connecting others with nature is integral to everything she does.

Chelsey Zurowski, *Education Programmer* – A zoologist by training, Chelsey’s interests led her studies in many directions, including evolutionary developmental biology, paleontology, and functional anatomy, while pursuing her BSc Honors in Zoology and MSc in Evolutionary Biology at the University of Calgary. Chelsey has over four years of science and environmental education experience in many different facets.

Alex Mowat, *Hiking Guide* – Alex is certified as a professional interpretive guide by the Interpretive Guiding Association. Grizzly bears, lichens, woodpeckers, beavers—and all the wonders that nature has to offer—are magical to him. In 2004, Alex moved out to the Canadian Rockies, and he has been involved in environmental advocacy, parks and guiding work ever since.

Julie Walker, Hiking Guide – Julie has been a hiking guide and outdoor educator for over 20 years. She started out with Elderhostel and has been working backwards with adult and kids programs since then. Her specialty is edible and medicinal plants, and the human/natural history connection. Julie’s philosophy of “connecting people with nature” drives her in her work as an interpretive guide.

Lauren Bally, Hiking Guide – Lauren’s love of the wilderness began at 12 when she went on her first weeklong canoe trip. She was so taken with the great outdoors that she completed a degree in Outdoor Adventure Leadership and a teaching degree so she could share it with others. For the past 12 years Lauren has been building future leaders through outdoor education programs.



Vanessa Bilan, Hiking Guide – Vanessa grew up taking vacations and weekend trips to the mountains with her family. These outings grew into a passion and lead Vanessa to go to school for a Bachelor of Health and Physical Education, majoring in Ecotourism and Outdoor Leadership at Mount Royal University. Now a graduate, she is working in her passion and sharing her love of nature and the outdoors with others.

Justin Howse, Hiking Guide – Justin has a Diploma in Biological Sciences specializing in Renewable Resources from NAIT, and is a Professional Interpretive Hiking Guide with the Interpretive Guides Association. With his experience in the outdoors, Justin feels blessed to share his love of the environment with the people who join him on CPAWS hiking programs.

Our education programs would not be possible without the entire CPAWS Southern Alberta team and our dedicated education volunteers. The CPAWS Southern Alberta team includes:

Anne-Marie Syslak, Executive Director

Katie Morrison, Conservation Director

Kirsten Olson, Office and Fund Program Administrator

Ian Harker, Communications Coordinator

Karlee Squires, Summer Outreach Coordinator

10 Adult Education Volunteers, 3 volunteer Graphic Designers, 3 Education Assistant Volunteers and 3 teachers who volunteer their curriculum expertise

OUR PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS

Species at Risk (Grades 2-5)

Classroom Program: We guide students on a unique, hands-on, curriculum-linked journey to becoming Environmental Detectives. They investigate Alberta wildlife that are at risk of becoming extinct.

Guided and Interpretive Hike: Learning moves outdoors with a Guided Hike! We explore the complex case of local Alberta species at risk while hiking in their natural habitats. CPAWS hiking guides bring curriculum to life through outdoor games, activities and stories.

Water Rangers (Grades 4-5)

REVAMPED! Classroom Program: Students discover a wave of knowledge during an interactive journey down the Bow River. Participants learn about the importance of water in their lives, and how they can become Water Rangers!

Guided and Interpretive Hike: Youth discover the wonderful world of wetlands at a wetland! They collect samples and learn about different organisms that live in these unique habitats and explore the surrounding watershed.

Trees and Forests (Grade 6)

Classroom Program: We begin with tree biology and branch out to forest succession, ecosystems, and the ecological importance of forests. The students explore local tree species and investigate forest issues.

Guided and Interpretive Hike: Youth walk among the giants and discover the important role of various plants in the forest ecosystem. They participate in hands-on identification and other topical activities and games.



Stories in the Snow (Grade 4-6)

Guided and Interpretive Snowshoe Trek: Classes discover dynamic and dramatic stories of the past and present while snowshoeing along a beautiful wilderness trail. Students create their own stories about the surrounding Alberta winter landscape, play games, and discover the wonder of Alberta's wildlife and ecosystems.

SECONDARY PROGRAMS

Discover Parks! (Grade 7-9)

REVAMPED! Classroom Program: Students discover, experience, and value park ecosystems and explore the relationship between humans and the environment.

Guided and Interpretive Hike: These youth get outside and discover the wonders of Alberta parks!

Alberta's Winter Playground (Grade 7-9)

Guided and Interpretive Snowshoe Trek: We take science outdoors for the day during this snowshoe program. Classes snowshoe on a beautiful wilderness trail, play games and discover the wonders of Alberta's wilderness and wildlife. They experience amazing sights and sounds of Alberta winters via the quiet of snowshoes.



Grizzly Bears Forever (Grades 7-12)

REVAMPED! Classroom Program: Youth explore the biology of the threatened Alberta grizzly bear and their habitat. Through engaging activities, stories, and biofacts, students learn about bear biology and ecology, human impacts, staying safe in bear country, and the role they can play in grizzly bear recovery.

Guided and Interpretive Hike: The students explore the habitat of Alberta's threatened grizzly bear and learn about current research and human impacts through stories, biofacts and activities.

Biodiversity in Winter (Grade 10-12)

Guided and Interpretive Snowshoe Trek: Winter offers a unique opportunity to study Alberta's biodiversity and the balances and imbalances of the ecosystem. Classes snowshoe through an Alberta ecosystem to investigate plant and animal population dynamics during the quiet of the winter.

Fresh Water Ecosystems Discovery (Grade 8):

REVAMPED! Classroom Program: Youth become stewards for Canada's fresh water ecosystems. Students dive into freshwater issues through interactive demonstrations, pictures, videos, and case studies

Guided and Interpretive Hike: Students discover the characteristics of fresh water ecosystems through site observation, sample collection, testing and exploring the surrounding forest. Data collection is shared with the RiverWatch Citizen Science database.

Aquatic Field Study (Biology 20 and 30)

NEW! Classroom: Youth learn about the Bow River watershed, where their water comes from, and the conservation issues surrounding water use in Southern Alberta. Students prepare diagrams of biogeochemical cycles, and then analyze how human activities affect these cycles.

Guided and Interpretive Hike: Students embark on a detailed exploration and analysis of ecosystem health through a comparative wetland study. They become citizen scientists by sharing their data with RiverWatch.



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS PROGRAM - NEW

New this past school year, was our innovative Environmental Leaders Program. This pilot program helped youth from low-income families in Calgary connect to nature, through learning and experience, to become environmental stewards and leaders in their communities. In partnership with Tim Horton Children's Ranch in Kananaskis, CPAWS SAB selected O.S. Geiger School (grade 5 and 6) and designed and developed special environmental leadership programming for students. The program included a four-day stay at the Tim Horton Children's Ranch, where students immersed in nature and explored leadership, teamwork, and stewardship skills. The camp experience provided inspiration and motivation to continue the learning and growth throughout the school year. Our education team spent time with students at the camp, and provided follow-up and mentoring throughout the school year. The resulting stewardship project was amazing!

The Grade 5 and 6 students of the pilot program chose to build a community garden in their school, to grow fresh produce for the food bank. With the help of CPAWS SAB, the youth researched and selected plants to grow in their garden. They designed and built the garden beds from scratch. Our education team led a workshop for the students to make newspaper pots, plant their seeds, and then helped the group transplant their seedlings into their finished garden beds. The Grade 5 and 6 students have built a lasting legacy at their school that will provide wonder and learning for youth, and fresh food for the food bank for years to come. We were pleased to develop this pilot and are currently seeking funding to see this impactful program continue for the 2017-2018 school year.



ADULT NEW IMMIGRANT

Calgary is the fourth largest centre for newcomers in Canada. With a growing new immigrant population, programs and opportunities to learn about community and conservation are invaluable. Many new immigrants come to Canada with a frame from where they lived. Water is not potable, carnivores are bad, and wilderness is riddled with danger. Education is key. Education not only dispels many misconceptions, but also is a path to understanding and belonging in one's community, and one's ecosystem. CPAWS SAB is the only group in our region currently providing such programming for this demographic. This program builds language skills, conservation learning, and a sense of local community. CPAWS SAB collaborates with new immigrant groups across the city, including the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, and the Calgary Chinese Community Service Association, to provide programming to improve language, enhance conservation literacy of this region, develop a sense of place, build community, and share nature and conservation experiences from different countries.

Discover Parks!

In this program, participants discover Alberta's amazing network of parks and protected areas. They find out what activities they can enjoy sustainably in Alberta's parks, and what they can do to be stewards and protect them. This session helps new immigrants develop the tools to find local parks, and enjoy them safely and responsibly. Through the hands-on use of biofacts, photographs, and stories, CPAWS helps newcomers connect to their community, develop new vocabulary, and learn about the impacts they have on our landscapes.



Grizzly Bears Forever

The Grizzly bear is an iconic species, symbolizing Alberta’s wilderness landscape. To safeguard the survival of this species, we need to understand them and ensure our own safety when recreating in bear country. Through biofacts, pictures, and stories, participants find out how truly fascinating and important grizzly bears are. Adult new immigrants will discover why grizzly bears need our help, and how we can all participate in grizzly bear stewardship. They will learn how to recreate safely and responsibly in bear habitat.



In the Know about the Bow

Participants learn about the Bow River watershed, where their water comes from, and the conservation issues surrounding water use in Southern Alberta. Through interactive demonstrations and activities, CPAWS helps adult new immigrants connect to their community by understanding water issues, develop new vocabulary, and learn about the impacts we can all have on our watersheds.

2016-2017 EDUCATION PROGRAM RESULTS

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

CPAWS SAB had a very successful 2016-2017 programming season, delivering 374 school programs. We exceeded classroom targets, and engaged more students than ever in environmental stewardship, inspiring many of them into conservation action. In fact, about 95% of our program participants committed to and/or completed some form of environmental stewardship action. Of the 148 schools we worked with this year, 44 were high needs schools, and 56 were rural schools. Together, these account for 68% of our schools. The following chart shows the results for our school-based education programs:

CPAWS SAB School Programs Numbers 2016 – 2017

| Program | # Classroom Programs | | # Program Visits (based on double visit model) | | # Hikes | | # Students | | |
|--|----------------------|------------|--|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | Class-room | Hike | Total |
| Species at Risk (including Trees & forests) | 40 | 54 | 80 | 94 | 40 | 48 | 1263 | 480 | 1743 |
| Water Rangers | 40 | 50 | 80 | 83 | 20 | 27 | 1285 | 698 | 1983 |
| Discover Parks | 20 | 12 | 40 | 17 | 20 | 25 | 305 | 732 | 1037 |
| Grizzly Bears Forever | 20 | 24 | 40 | 41 | 20 | 19 | 655 | 475 | 1130 |
| Snowshoeing | -- | -- | -- | -- | 15 | 18 | -- | 501 | 501 |
| Climate Literacy Pilot | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 8 | 33 |
| Totals | 121 | 141 | 241 | 236 | 116 | 138 | 3533 | 2894 | 6427 |

Overall, we exceeded target numbers for school programs during the 2016-2017 school year. Our in-class program for Discover Parks! was slightly shy of the target. This can be attributed to a lack of funding specific for this program, as well as trends in programming, with repeat teachers who alter from Discover Parks! to the Grizzly Bears Forever Program every other year.

ADULT EDUCATION

Our adult education programs continue to grow. In addition to new immigrant audiences, we provided adult education opportunities for seniors, public groups, and corporate sponsors, and professional development (PD) for teachers. The following chart shows the results for our formal adult education programs:

CPAWS SAB Adult Education Programs Numbers 2016 – 2017

| | New Immigrant Programs | | Community Programs | | Teacher PD | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| | # Programs | # Participants | # Programs | # Participants | # Programs | # Participants |
| Discover Parks! | 14 | 240 | 5 | 48 | 0 | 0 |
| In the Know about the Bow | 13 | 278 | 2 | 45 | 0 | 0 |
| Grizzly Bears Forever | 11 | 131 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 20 |
| Nature Connection | -- | -- | 1 | 10 | -- | -- |
| Schoolyard Hikes | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3 | 52 |
| Take Action! | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | 40 |
| Totals | 37 | 649 | 9 | 108 | 5 | 112 |



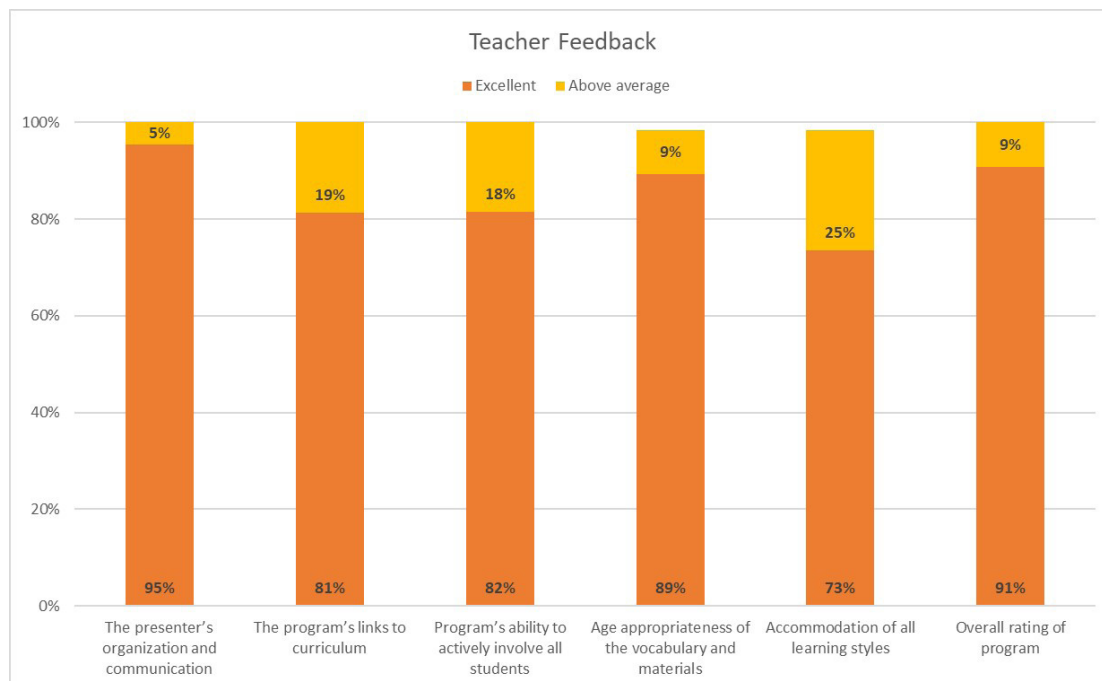
IMPACT

Part of making positive change includes measuring impact. To understand this impact, we need to measure evaluation feedback and action resulting from our education programs. Our evaluation process includes well-established evaluation of teachers and students, from both forms and interviews, as well as stewardship action taken. We measure the number of participants who commit to and/or take stewardship action through program activities (e.g. stewardship pledges) and evaluation form questions, as well as the projects submitted to the Action Challenge Contest. This rigorous evaluation and accountability gives us the necessary feedback to maintain our quality, and make improvements where necessary. This is critical to our ongoing success.

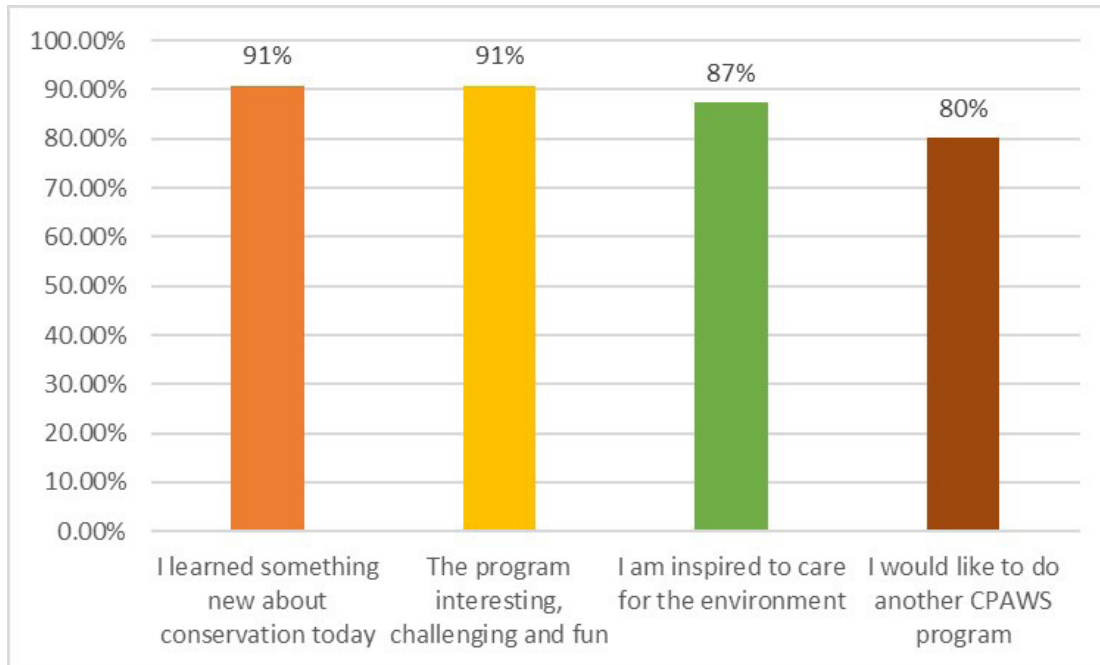
We continue to receive positive feedback for our programs. Indicators demonstrate that our programs are exceeding expectations, and inspiring participants to make a difference in terms of environmental stewardship. We continue to see a high percentage of participants engaging, or committing to engage, in stewardship as a direct result of our programs. The graphs below show that all of our program participants (youth, teachers, and adult new immigrants) are enjoying our programs, finding value in them, and being inspired to take stewardship action.

EVALUATION FORMS

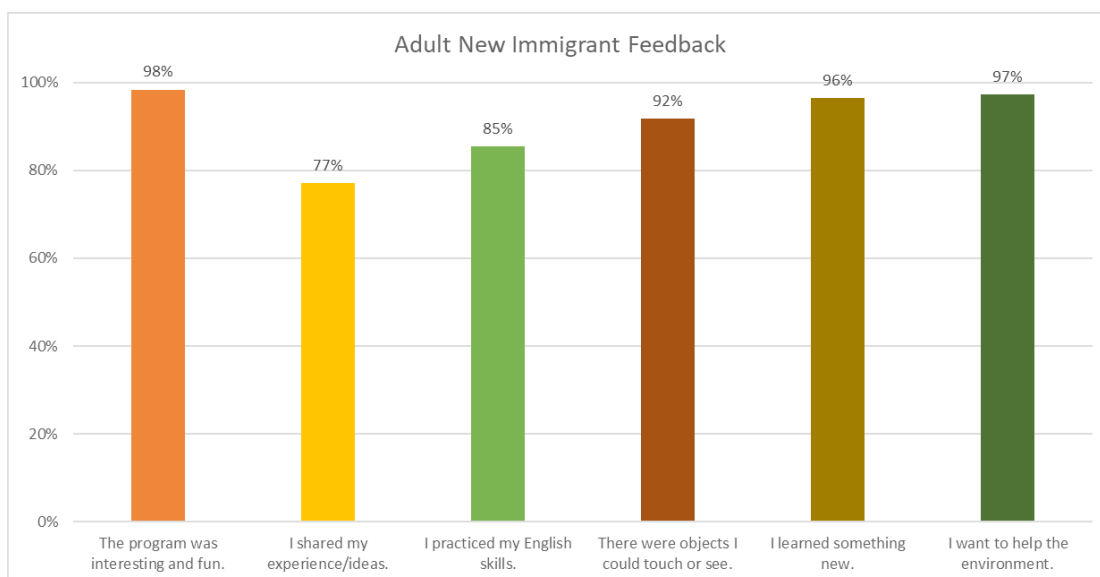
The graph below shows the ratings that teachers gave to various factors of our education programs. Our teachers consistently rate our programs as excellent and above average, across all categories.



The next graph shows the responses of students to questions regarding their experience during our programs. Students reported that they had fun, learned a lot, and were inspired to take action for the environment.



The final graph shows the responses of adult new immigrants to questions regarding their experience during our programs. Adult new immigrant participants responded that our programs were highly valuable, fun, and inspiring.



TESTIMONIALS

Feedback is critical to ensuring that our programs maintain our high standard. The following are some testimonials that we heard this last school year.

Student Testimonials

The best part of the program was “the Nature and wilderness and learning about animals and what they do in the winter.”

-Grade 4 snowshoe participant, Nose Creek Elementary, Airdrie

“I like that we got to go outside and do an amazing hike and learn while we were doing the hike.”

-Grade 8 Grizzly Bears Forever hike participant, Westmount School, Okotoks



The best parts of the program were “the grizzly bear game, our classmate dressed as a bear and the cool fun facts”

-Grade 8 Grizzly Bears Forever classroom participant, Valley Creek School, Calgary

Teacher Testimonials

“I really liked how the students were outdoors and able to experience first hand different aspects of Alberta. Hearing stories about how the dam was built and the naming of Kananaskis was interesting and sunk in given the location.”

-Grade 4 teacher, Nose Creek Elementary, Airdrie

“I like that the program incorporated Science curriculum/vocabulary with fun and engaging activities for the students.”

-Grade 7/8/9 teacher, Crestomere School, Crestomere

“All the youths present were engaged and our guide (Lauren Bally) was very knowledgeable about the flora fauna of the surroundings in Fish Creek. It exceeded my expectations as the topics that the guide selected really roused the interest of the students.”

- Children & Youth Program Coordinator, Calgary Chinese Community Service Association



Adult New Immigrant Testimonials

Our adult new immigrant participants told us that the best part of the program was:

“Sharing personal experiences and having social interaction.”

“Knowledge on the outdoors and parks in Canada.”

“New Information about bears and how to help protect them.”

These participants also told us:

“I really enjoyed the program because it helped me a lot to know about many things about saving and using water.”

“I like when she shown the part of body of the bear and she compared the black bear and grizzly bear.”

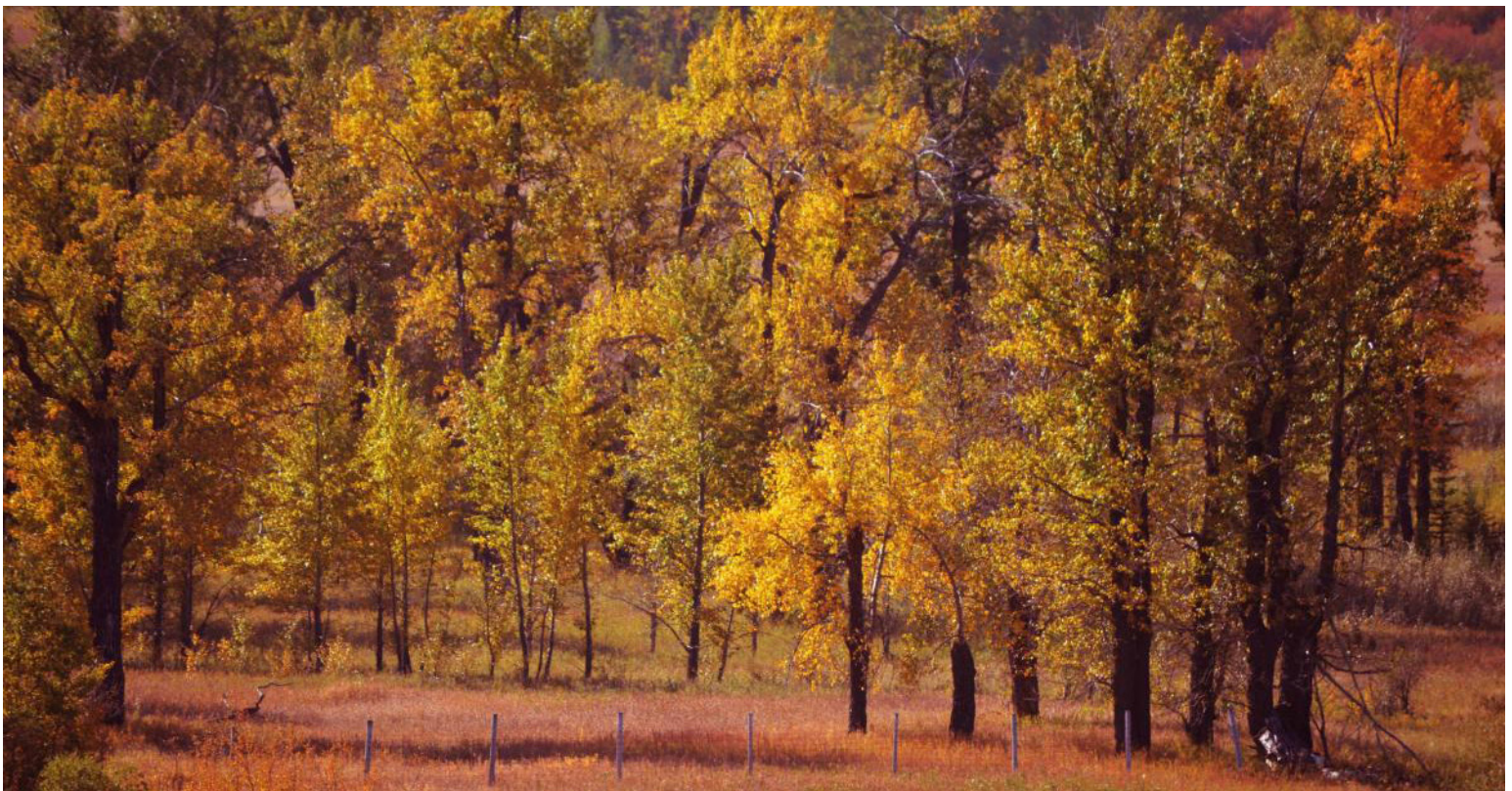
“I really enjoyed it and I think it was perfect”

Adult new immigrants who participated in CPAWS programs want to help the environment:

“To share and transfer this information to others and encourage our families and friends to care about water.”

“Starts with me by protecting parks each time I visit.”

“Tell my family, my friends, what valuable lessons that I have learned today.”



ACTION CHALLENGE

The CPAWS Southern Alberta Action Challenge is a unique feature of all of our education programs that truly sets them apart. Each year we work with thousands of students, linking local conservation with curriculum, building knowledge and creating meaningful outdoor experiences that highlight Alberta’s parks and wilderness. Our goal is to empower students to make a difference, and inspire them to engage in positive environmental stewardship by taking on Action Challenge projects. In spring 2017, with the help of an amazing volunteer graphic designer, we launched a new website to promote the Action Challenge initiative, to inspire students, and support action projects: www.actionchallenge.ca. Projects often include personal conservation efforts, fundraising campaigns, writing letters to government, and education awareness campaigns. Each year we give out three awards: our Awesome Action Award; our Hazel Gillespie Water Rangers Award; and our Gareth Thomson Award to schools and students who have demonstrated extraordinary conservation action, and who are an inspiration to others. We would like to thank the sponsors who donated prizes for the Action Challenge program. New this year is our Individual Action Award for students who take inspiring environmental action on their own. We want to congratulate the following 2016-2017 Action Award winners:



| Awesome Action Award | Hazel Gillespie Water Rangers Award | Gareth Thomson Award |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| St. Luke School | Peter Lougheed School | Elboya School |

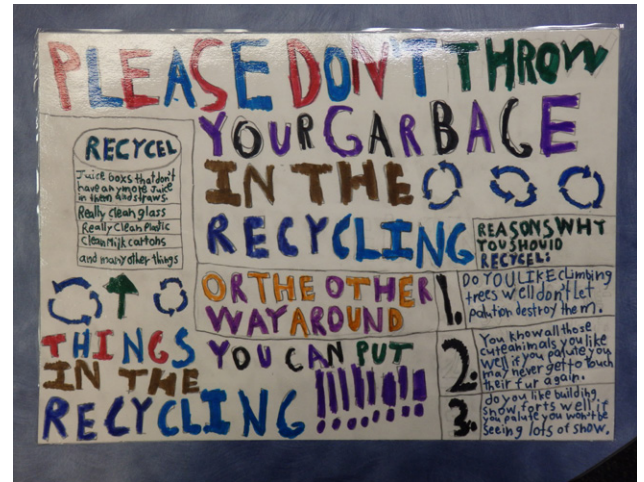
Awesome Action Award – St. Luke School

The Awesome Action Award is designed for elementary students (grade 2-6) who engage in an exemplary action stewardship project. This year’s winners were the Grade 5 students of St. Luke School. These amazing students and their teacher developed and rolled out a three-part juice box recycling project, and impacted the culture of environmental stewardship in their school. First, the students composed and delivered public service announces over the intercom

to the entire school about why and how to recycle. Additionally, the Grade 5 students created posters for the whole school to illustrate the importance of recycling. Finally, in groups, the students developed and delivered presentations to each class in the school in order to encourage a school-wide culture of recycling.

For winning this award, the school received...

- a visit with Lito the Swainson's Hawk donated by the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society (CWRS)
- a framed award for display in the classroom (award winning photo from CPAWS Canada 150 photo contest)
- a CPAWS Southern Alberta water bottle for each student
- a green cleaning kit donated by Green Calgary and
- a class celebration party, including cookies donated by Yummi Yogis



Thank you to CWRS, photographer Ron Beugin, Green Calgary, and Yummi Yogis for their contributions.

Hazel Gillespie Water Rangers Award – Peter Lougheed School

The Hazel Gillespie Water Ranger Award is for an exemplary Action Challenge project, taken on by a class of any grade, focusing on water conservation and stewardship. Hazel Gillespie was a visionary and leader in Calgary who supported the original development of our Water Rangers program. She believed in the importance of inspiring youth to care about the environment and make a difference.

This school year, the Grade 5 and 8 students of Peter Lougheed School were the recipients of this award. Peter Lougheed School is fortunate to have a wetland, that is home to diverse wildlife, just around the corner from the school. Students were shocked to discover that the wetland is also home to large amounts of litter, including plastic wastes that present a significant and persistent health hazard to the wildlife. The Grade 5 Environmental Stewardship and Grade 8 Environmental and Outdoor Education classes decided to take on the challenge of leading the school through a cleanup



of this area. They included an education program to help their community understand how to take better care of this site. This project fostered a greater appreciation for the importance of local ecosystems, the diversity of wildlife that may inhabit urban landscapes, and the profound impact of simple stewardship activities.

For winning this award, the school received

- a class celebration party including an edible education experience donated by Poppy Innovations
- sunglasses for each student donated by FortisAlberta
- a rain barrel donated by the City of Calgary and
- a framed award for display in the classroom (award winning photo from CPAWS Canada 150 photo contest)

Thank you to Poppy Innovations, FortisAlberta, the City of Calgary, and photographer Vince Varga for their contributions.

Gareth Thomson Award – Elboya School

Each year, we grant the Gareth Thomson Award to a junior or senior high class (grade 7-12) who takes on the most inspiring Action Challenge project. Gareth Thomson is the founder of the CPAWS Southern Alberta education program. This year's recipients were the Grade 8 students at Elboya School for their water management projects. In small groups, the grade 8's identified and researched water management issues; decided on effective, sustainable, and feasible solutions; planned an effective course of action; and put their plan into action. Projects included awareness campaigns using posters, brochures, videos, and social media; letters written to members of the local government; fundraising; and community cleanups. One group organized a school-wide water conservation project. There were two bake sales held One group sold re-usable water bottles, and donated the profits to the WWF And several groups went door-to-door, spreading awareness for the importance of water conservation in their neighborhoods.



Students learned how much water they waste every day, and why it is important to conserve water and protect the environment. Many groups became especially passionate about climate change and the melting ice in the Arctic. Students also learned how much work has to go into a project that is trying to create a social change. They learned to think critically and adapt their projects when something was not going as planned. They identified areas of improvement if they had another chance or more time to complete their projects.

For winning this award, the school received:

- an insect hotel workshop led by Riley Waytes and Jennifer Retzlaff, bee researchers at the University of Calgary. Students built insect hotels for the school
- a gelato coupon for each student donated by Fiasco Gelato
- a framed award for display in the classroom (award winning photo from CPAWS Canada 150 photo contest)
- a composter donated by the City of Calgary and
- a class celebration party

Thank you to Riley Waytes, Jennifer Retzlaff, Fiasco Gelato, photographer Vince Varga, and the City of Calgary for their contributions.

Individual Action Award – Skyler and Mackenzie

This year, we opened up the Action Challenge Awards to individual students who are passionate about the environment. The 2016-2017 Individual Action Award goes to Grade 8 students Skyler and Mackenzie, of the Westmount School Student Council Green Team. During this school year they worked on a self-watering planter box. They hoped that by making the box self-watering, they could increase success of the garden over summer and limit the use of water. Skyler and Mackenzie plan to put the boxes near eaves troughs and use rainwater to fill the boxes. Having these boxes, they plan to encourage elementary grades to better understand plants and insects by being able to see it daily. They also plan to incorporate the planter into a bench form, in order to encourage the junior high to be outside more by having a welcoming place to sit. Skyler and Mackenzie are excited to leave this legacy at the school.



LOOKING AHEAD

CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPIONS ENHANCING ALBERTANS' CLIMATE LITERACY AND ACTION

Climate change is the biggest issue of our time, and Alberta emits more greenhouse gases than any other province in Canada. With the launch of the Government of Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan, we have a real opportunity as a province to make positive change and become a climate leader, not only in Canada, but globally. CPAWS Southern and Northern Alberta are recipients of the Community Environmental Action Grant from the Government of Alberta. Our "Climate Change Champions - Enhancing Albertans' Climate Literacy and Action" project will build on CPAWS SAB's award winning education and community engagement programs in order to boost awareness about core climate change concepts, based on credible science; enhance skills and applied knowledge; and achieve individual and community behaviour changes to reduce or avoid emissions. As part of this initiative, the CPAWS SAB Education team will develop grade specific education programming about climate change for all our existing classroom and interpretive hiking programs. Together with the Government of Alberta, and our partners, we can build awareness, develop skills, and achieve action for climate change in our province. Let's all be Climate Change Champions for Alberta!

NEW IMMIGRANT INTERPRETIVE HIKES

Our new immigrant program is growing and we are excited to build on its success. In the coming year, we are pleased to add a hiking component. This will deepen the learning and experience for this program, and we plan to reach more new Calgarians than ever. Seeing our program in action over the past several years, we see how conservation education is particularly influential to newcomers. In our experience, they are keen to learn about and connect with their new home, and may be unaware of local conservation issues. Immigrants are an important growing population in our city, and there is currently no other outdoor conservation education program specifically designed for them. We received multiple requests from immigrant service providers and new immigrants for outdoor learning opportunities like this. Thanks to the generous support of RBC, CPAWS SAB will be developing and delivering fun, hands-on interpretive hikes in Fish Creek Provincial Park, helping new immigrants develop a sense of place in the Bow River Basin, and easily access and connect with nature. This new program will launch in summer 2017, and will focus on stewardship. We aim to inspire new immigrants to take simple actions to conserve energy and water, and to protect nature in and around Calgary.



NEW PARTNERSHIPS

We have formed several new partnerships that will take root this summer. CPAWS SAB is collaborating with Green Calgary to pilot a Citizen Science summer camp. Citizen science is scientific research conducted by non-scientists. This is a unique opportunity to connect young learners to working scientists that will foster curiosity, environmental awareness, and scientific observation skills. Youth participants will attend a week of day camps, where they will engage in hands-on workshops tackling water and wildlife conservation issues, collecting data, and submitting observations to citizen science research projects. CPAWS SAB will also provide our environmental education programs to six other summer programs in 2017:

- YMCA's Kids in Motion program
- Junior Forest Warden National Camp
- Calgary Humane Society's Walk on the Wild Side camp
- Canadian Immigrant Woman Association's Youth Cultural Summer Camp
- Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST)'s Summer Bike Trip and
- Calgary Catholic School District's English Language Learners summer program

We look forward to a full summer of connecting youth with nature!

CONCLUSION

2016-2017 was an exciting year where we won a national award, celebrated our 20th anniversary, and began several exciting new initiatives. We exceeded program targets overall, and increased our presence in rural and high needs schools throughout southern Alberta. We reached out to new communities, increased our adult programming audience, piloted and delivered new programs, and saw students engage in amazing stewardship action challenge initiatives. Our program feedback continues to be positive, and we constantly strive to improve our program to suit the needs of our participants and the community.

With the support of our funders and partners, we are able to continue to deliver award winning environmental education programs to thousands of students in Alberta. Thank you. We rely on you to ensure that environmental education is easily accessible for all in Alberta. We were delighted to celebrate 20 years of conservation education with you this year. We look forward to the next 20 and beyond!

We are currently looking for additional funding for our Species at Risk Program, Grizzly Bears Forever Program, and Discover Parks! To support our Education Department, or for more information about our programs, please contact us at education@cpaws.org, 403-232-6686 or check out our website:

<http://cpaws-southernalberta.org/campaigns/education>

