

# The Connections That Bring Us Together

ANNUAL REPORT | 2021



***CPAWS Southern Alberta acknowledges that we work in the traditional territories of the Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), comprised of the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, and Amskapi Piikani First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; the Stoney Nakoda, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations; the Ktunaxa Nation; and the Métis Nation of Alberta. Today, southern Alberta is home to Indigenous people from all over North America.***



Cover Photo: East Cherry

Inside Cover Photo: Tony LePrieur



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**The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)** is Canada's voice for wilderness. We are a non-profit environmental organization working to protect half of Canada's public land and water. Since 1967, CPAWS Southern Alberta has led conservation efforts to protect areas in Banff National Park, Kananaskis Country, the Whaleback, and the Castle Wildland and Provincial Parks. Our chapter is a leader in environmental education, offering award-winning programs to help build the next generation of environmental stewards.

## Chapter team

**Katie Morrison** | Executive Director  
**Jaclyn Angotti** | Education Director  
**Tatiana Jaciw-Zurakiwsky** | Office and Finance Administrator  
**Becky Best-Bertwistle** | Conservation Engagement Coordinator  
**Hira Shah** | Communications Manager  
**Vanessa Bilan** | Environmental Educator, Hiking Guide  
**Sheri Tarrington** | Environmental Educator  
**Benjamin Misener** | Conservation Analyst  
**Sarah Elmeligi** | National Parks Coordinator  
**Sabrina Ryans** | Environmental Educator - Southwest Alberta  
**Lisa Coyne** | Hiking Guide and CWSP Program Coordinator  
**Sierra Shade** | Indigenous Event Consultant

## Board Members

Jon Mee, Doug Firby, Jim Donohue, James Early, Jeff Goldberg, Kirsty MacKenzie, Lana Mezquita, Phil Nykyforuk, Nancy Phillips, and Ross Glenfield

# ***Working together to create a resilient Alberta***

***By Katie Morrison, Executive Director***

There is nothing that helps clear my mind more than being outdoors and reminding myself of my place in the natural world — whether that's a walk in an urban park with my dog, canoeing a prairie river, hunting through a backcountry ridge, or fishing at a mountain stream.

This last year has been eventful, bringing both challenges and opportunities, so these connections to place have been incredibly important for me to regain perspective and continue to learn from the land.

Alberta's scenic mountaintops, rolling prairies, foothills, rugged river valleys, and clear blue streams have been home to and cared for by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. As treaty people we are all responsible for ensuring treaty rights are respected. As people who are a part of these landscapes, we also hold the responsibility of learning from the original inhabitants, creating space for people of all backgrounds, and continuing to care for and protect our natural places and our communities.

I take this responsibility very seriously, both in my work and personal life, so it has been hard over the last year to think about the threat of protections being stripped from parks and coal mines being built along the Eastern Slopes of the Rockies. But I have also been incredibly inspired by my colleagues, community partners, grassroots Indigenous groups, CPAWS members, and Albertans across the province who have stood up to protect our parks and to keep our waters clean and our mountains whole.

I've also been humbled by our resilient education team and our partner schools and teachers who, in constantly changing circumstances, have continued to prioritize

students and environmental learning. I'm grateful for our communications and administrative staff who continue to strengthen our work and keep us moving forward.



Photo: Connie Simmons

So, after nine years as the conservation director for CPAWS Southern Alberta, despite the challenges of the past few years, I have even more hope than ever for the future of our province, and I am excited to move into the role of executive director. I'm grateful to Brad Clute for his leadership of the chapter over the past 20 months and honoured to continue working with and supporting all the dedicated and passionate people making such important contributions to nature education and conservation of Alberta's spectacular parks and public lands.

**I hope we, as resilient Albertans, will continue to do this work together.**



# Our journey towards reconciliation

By Jon Mee, Board Chair

Photo: Christopher Landry

Our board of directors is a dedicated group of volunteers. We are scientists, accountants, wilderness guides, wardens, sociologists, journalists, and lawyers. Some of us are retired empty-nesters, others have young families; some are mid-career, others are students. We have backgrounds in the private sector, government, and academia. In short, we're a diverse group. But we're united by a common goal: to support CPAWS Southern Alberta's work in being a voice for nature.

In January 2021, we established a joint board-staff task force committed to reconciliation with Indigenous people. We first gathered information about decolonization and reconciliation efforts. This meant acknowledging that truth comes before reconciliation, and establishing a collective understanding of the truth regarding the histories, legacies, and ongoing injustices of colonialism in southern Alberta. Next, we generated a set of recommendations to guide our chapter's work toward reconciliation, which we are committed to funding and implementing over the coming year.

## **The establishment of protected areas in southern Alberta has historically been approached in a colonial manner.**

Banff National Park draws millions of visitors, but its origin is a clear example of where the interests and treaty rights of Indigenous people were not respected. The Dominion of Canada was founded in **1867**. Three years later in **1870** the government bought all of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, including what is now Banff National Park. The government then began to negotiate treaties with Indigenous nations.

Signed in **1877**, Treaty 7, like others of the time, governed the rights of Indigenous people to hunt on treaty lands. The Stoney Nakoda people hunted and trapped for subsistence throughout the Banff area, especially after the destruction of the Plains bison.

The Banff Springs Reserve was founded in **1885**. Its boundaries expanded through its various iterations as "Rocky Mountains Park" between **1887** and **1911**. During this time, increased enforcement of hunting regulations forced the Stoney Nakoda people to stop hunting in the region. It's well documented that this stepped-up enforcement was driven by lobbying from non-Indigenous big-game hunters and a desire to "civilize" the Stoney Nakoda people by forcing them into an agricultural lifestyle.

So, the very place seen by many as the jewel of the Canadian National Parks system is closely tied with the colonial oppression of the Stoney Nakoda people. I believe this is something we have to reflect on and come to terms with as we move forward with our work.

I look forward with optimism to the things our chapter is poised to accomplish in the coming year, and I'm proud of our work over the past year. Doing this work with integrity is of utmost importance to our board. In addition to our commitment to reconciliation, this integrity is tied to a commitment to using science-based evidence in our decision-making, to respecting a multitude of voices and opinions, and to including people of all political leanings in our non-partisan approach to partnerships and engagement. Now is the time to stand with CPAWS Southern Alberta on behalf of parks, wilderness, and clean water for all Albertans.



# Protecting Alberta's landscape for all to enjoy

All Albertans have the right to be in nature. That's why CPAWS fights for a protected, thriving, and accessible landscape for all. Healthy natural spaces provide us with countless benefits. They supply us with clean water, support our communities and economy, nourish us with food, protect us from natural disasters, and allow us to recreate and enjoy Alberta's landscape.

We envision an Alberta where everyone can enjoy these benefits. That's why it's crucial to fight for these natural spaces. By investing in nature, we are investing in ourselves. We are opening the doors for more opportunities for us and possibilities for future generations.

For this to happen, we must come together. By working side by side, we can ensure that all Albertans are welcomed into nature, are invited to learn more about the landscape, and are teaching one another how to take small, everyday actions to protect what we value the most.

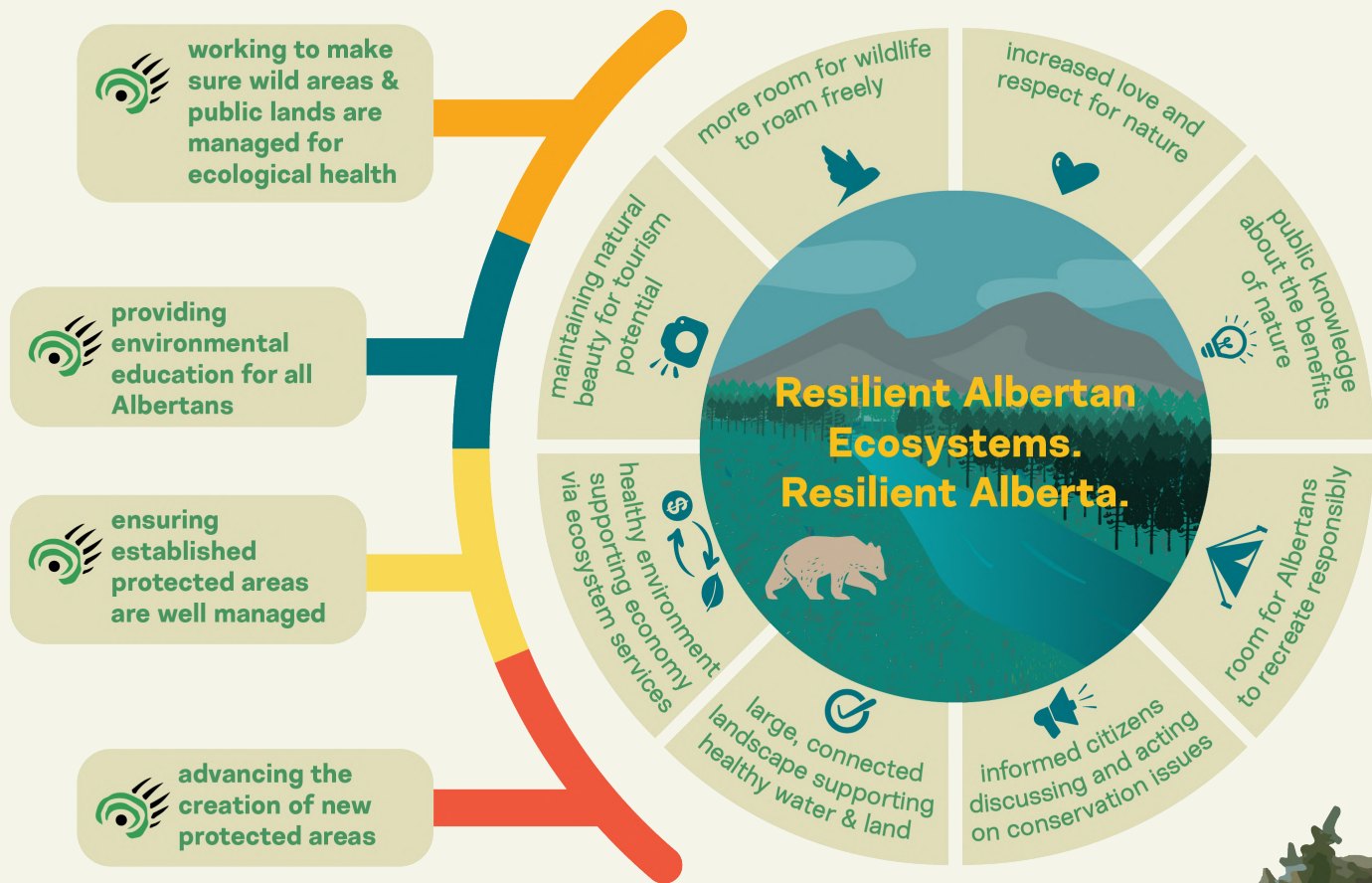
By bringing nature into our communities, and bringing our communities into nature, we can create a healthy, resilient, and diverse Alberta.

**Join us in creating a landscape that welcomes everyone.**





# How do we help protect nature?



*We bring Albertans together to fight for our shared values*



# Highlights from 2021

8,500

Albertans were engaged in meaningful environmental education and action

WATER  
NOT  
COAL



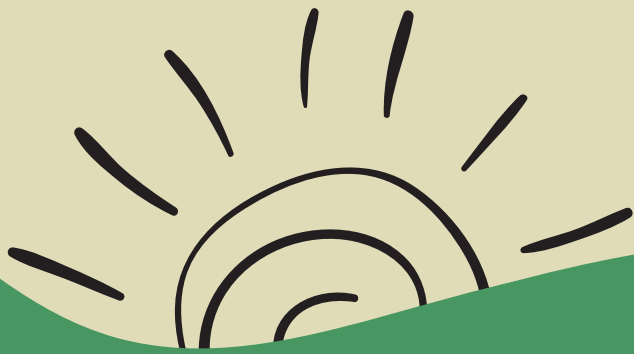
2,800

hectares of the Eastern Slopes were protected from the development of a metallurgical coal mine through the denial of the Grassy Mountain Coal Project

Hosted 9

Indigenous land-based learning walks in honour of Truth and Reconciliation





**11,000+**

Albertans sent a letter against the cancellation of the 1976 Coal Policy using our letter writing tool, with even more supporting the campaign on their own, leading to the reversal of the decision

All seven Rocky Mountain National Parks Draft Management Plans highlighted the need for human use management & climate change strategies incorporating over

**10 years**

of recommendations from CPAWS Southern Alberta



Helped to prevent

**175**

parks and protected areas from being removed from the system





# Our work in southern Alberta:



Safeguarding National & Provincial Parks

Defending the Eastern Slopes

Forests for Everyone



Environmental Education

Healthy Wildlife Populations



Proper Land-use Planning







## Safe-guarding parks

**What we're doing:** Parks and protected areas make Alberta resilient and provide us with countless benefits. We are working to promote effective management of parks to ensure that their long-term environmental and social benefits are maintained. We're doing this by providing recommendations on park management to ensure ecological integrity is the priority.

**What we're aiming for:** Alberta provincial and national parks are protected and public for all Albertans and visitors, and demonstrate values of conservation, community, sustainability, education, and stewardship.

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## Defending the Eastern Slopes

**What we're doing:** We are working with community groups in southwest Alberta to fight against a series of coal mine projects in the Eastern Slopes region which provides clean water for local communities, and unique and essential habitat for flora and fauna species. As a new coal policy is developed for Alberta, we are working to ensure it will maintain conservation and community values.

**What we're aiming for:** No new coal mine development in southwest Alberta to maintain watershed health, key habitat for wildlife, and prevent climate change impacts.

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## Forests for everyone

**What we're doing:** Alberta's forests are an important place for our water, wildlife, and communities. We are working to make sure these values are prioritized and management decisions are helping local communities to become more involved in forest management. Together we can ensure the long-term sustainability of Alberta's forests.

**What we're aiming for:** Ecosystem and community-based management implemented in Alberta's forests.

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## Healthy wildlife populations

**What we're doing:** From the rolling grasslands to frigid and fast mountain streams, Alberta is home to a huge diversity of wildlife. We are working to increase knowledge about Alberta's species at risk, including native trout, like westslope cutthroat and bull trout, and their habitats, to encourage Albertans to celebrate these ecologically important species.

**What we're aiming for:** Healthy landscapes, water and riparian areas, as indicated by thriving native trout populations, supporting wildlife across the province.

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## Proper land-use planning

**What we're doing:** There is a need for stronger land-use planning in southern Alberta. We are working to ensure the commitments of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan are fulfilled through specific land-use plans that protect biodiversity, manage human disturbance, and provide sustainable recreation opportunities.

**What we're aiming for:** Land-use plans in southern Alberta prioritize headwaters, wildlife, and low-impact recreation.



# Albertans are ready to move on from coal

Photo: East Cherry

**By Becky Best-Bertwistle, CPAWS Southern Alberta Conservation Engagement Coordinator**

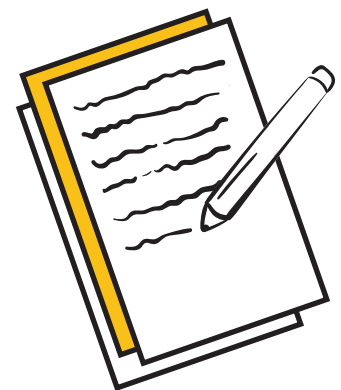
This past year, 2021, has seen a battle play out for the future of Alberta's Eastern Slopes. Renewed interest in coal development was facilitated by the rescission of the 1976 Coal Policy in June 2020. Since this decision, communities have risen up in opposition to coal development, galvanizing Albertans like never before.

CPAWS Southern Alberta has been leading in this fight on many different fronts — from our formal legal intervention in the Joint Review Panel process on the Grassy Mountain Hearing, to facilitating community engagement in the development of the new Alberta coal policy.

**Here are some of the major wins we saw this year in the fight to keep coal development out of the Eastern Slopes.**

In Spring 2021, we led the call to pressure Alberta's Energy Minister Sonya Savage to cancel 1,800 hectares of new coal leases issued in December 2020, and exposed the fact that a total of 240,000 hectares of leases had been issued in previously restricted areas since the rescission of the Coal Policy. Later that spring, the minister announced she would be temporarily reinstating the 1976 Coal Policy and establishing an independent panel to create recommendations regarding the future of coal development

in the province. During this time, we channelled public pressure to the minister and she subsequently introduced a moratorium on coal exploration in Category 2 lands. This work stopped hundreds of new kilometers of industrial access and shut down the development of dozens of new drill sites in the area.

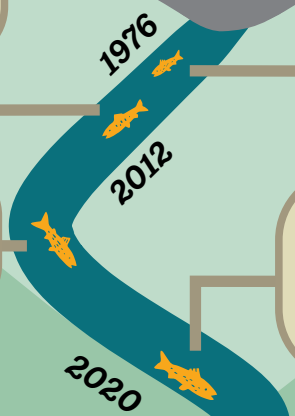


**Over 11,000 letters sent and even more Albertans engaged!**



**1976:** The Government of Alberta implements a four-category land management system that forbids or restricts coal development at varying levels throughout the Eastern Slopes (The 1976 Coal Policy).

**1976-2012:** The Coal Policy significantly reduces coal exploration and development in Alberta's foothills and Rocky Mountains.



**June 2020:** The Government of Alberta rescinds the 1976 Coal Policy, with no public or Indigenous consultation.

**July - Dec 2020:** Applications are approved and leases are granted for 240,000 hectares of sensitive, former Category 2 lands on the Eastern Slopes.

**January 2021 :** The Government of Alberta pauses sales in former Category 2 lands and cancels the 11 recent coal leases – however, these leases account for only 0.2% of the area that has already been leased.

**February 2021 :** The 1976 Coal policy is reinstated, but all leases issued since June 1, 2020, remain in place (other than the 11 cancelled in January). Category 3 and 4 lands remain open for coal exploration and development.

**March 2021:** A Coal Policy Committee is formed to engage stakeholders on development of a new Coal Policy.

**June 2021:** Benga's Grassy Mountain Coal Project denied by the Alberta Energy Regulator as a part of the Joint Review Panel process.

**December 2021 (expected):** The coal committee presents their recommendations for a new coal policy.

**Looking Ahead:** CPAWS is calling for a stop on ALL coal activity in the Eastern Slopes and a new coal policy developed with thorough public consultation that protects community and conservation values.

In June 2021, the Grassy Mountain Joint Review panel, an extensive public hearing, announced that it was rejecting Benga's Grassy Mountain Coal project, finding that it was not in the public interest. CPAWS Southern Alberta has been involved with the Grassy Mountain process since 2015. With the help of lawyers from the Public Interest Law Clinic, we put forward compelling oppositional evidence in the face of this proposal. While the company is applying for permission to appeal the decision, it could set a precedent for the other potential projects in the area.



Also in the summer of 2021, former Environment and Climate Change Canada Minister Johnathan Wilkinson announced that he would be designating the Tent Mountain Coal project for a federal environmental assessment.

Around the same time the minister, in a response to a federal petition authored by Latasha Calf-Robe of the Niitsítapi Water Protectors, announced his intent to automatically designate all new metallurgical coal projects for federal assessment. Work remains to address cumulative impacts and Indigenous and treaty rights from a federal perspective. However, the automatic designation of metallurgic coal mines and the statements made by the federal government regarding thermal coal send a strong message — Canada is ready to move past coal.

### What's next?

On a provincial level the regulation of coal mining still remains a major question. The recommendations from the Coal Policy Committee will be an important next step in the coal work. CPAWS Southern Alberta has engaged extensively in this process alongside our many partners. During this process it has become clear that instead of a resource development policy, the province needs a comprehensive policy that will protect the landscape of the Eastern Slopes.

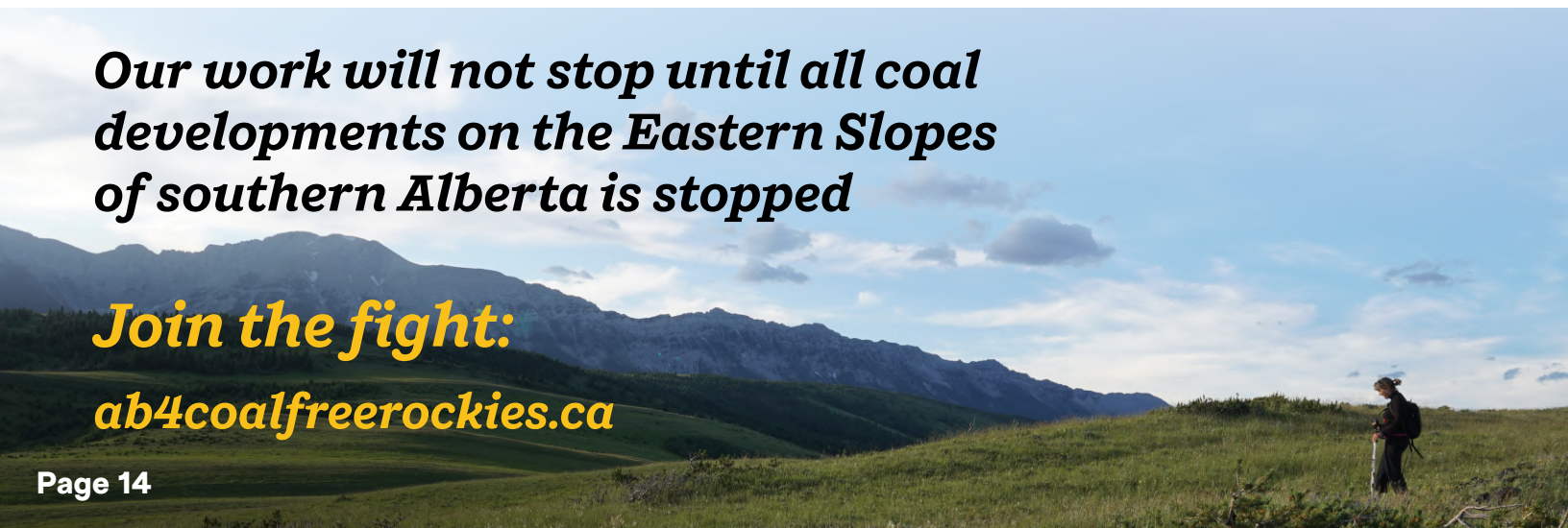


Our key recommendations for the new policy include:

1. No further coal exploration or development will be permitted, including expansions of existing operations.
2. Existing thermal and metallurgical coal mining operations will be permitted to reach the end of their lives but must meet all provincial and federal guidelines and regulations for the duration of operations, post-closure and post-reclamation.
3. Timely and effective remediation of lands disturbed by coal exploration and mining activities must be completed by the companies.
4. Comprehensive land-use planning must be conducted across the Eastern Slopes to address the impacts of all other land-uses and activities in the region as soon as possible.

***Our work will not stop until all coal developments on the Eastern Slopes of southern Alberta is stopped***

***Join the fight:***  
***ab4coalfreerockies.ca***





# Protect Diverse Forests



At first glance, you may look at the forests in Alberta's foothills and see an endless expanse of trees. But behind the scenes, a complicated harmony of ecological processes is taking place, connecting the diversity of life found within. The policies and legislation intended to responsibly steward these areas often fall short of protecting the ecological processes that make these forests so important.

That's why we developed the Alberta Forest Stewards project.

This project was intended to bring clarity to issues such as carbon sequestration, fire risk, and hydrological processes within our forests. These processes are key for maintaining healthy forests and healthy forest communities. Healthy forests help connect wildlife, support healthy watersheds, fight against climate change, and provide us with recreation opportunities.

However, industry driven misinformation has misled the conversation, resulting in management practices that are failing us and our forest landscapes. This project puts accessible, science-based information written in plain language in the hands of Albertans interested in the protection of our forests.



***The Forest Steward Handbooks give you insight into the complex inner workings of forests and how they interact with the forces around them including water, carbon, and fire. Each booklet features beautiful illustrations to help guide your learning.***

***Head over to our website to read through the handbooks and start your journey as a CPAWS forest steward.***

***Become a CPAWS forest steward.***  
***[www.cpaaws-southernalberta.org/forest-stewards](http://www.cpaaws-southernalberta.org/forest-stewards)***



# *There are so many ways to connect with nature!*

We believe that conservation and education go hand in hand. In order to inspire the future stewards of our province, they must first understand what makes Alberta's landscape so special. Our award-winning environmental education programs have been delivered to Calgary and surrounding areas since 1997, reaching over 158,000 Albertans. We vary our activities to allow effective learning for everyone, from in-class programs to hands-on outdoor activities, such as guided hikes and snowshoeing.

This year we introduced our new Young Citizen Scientists program and rentable kits! We were also very excited to launch our new bioDIVERSITY project aimed at promoting diverse voices, framing nature as a positive space for all, and removing barriers against participating in nature education and taking eco-action.

**8,500**  
*individuals*  
*engaged*

**250**  
*programs*  
*delivered*

**SEVEN**  
*new virtual*  
*programs*

**in 2020**





# Book a program for your students

From science to social studies curriculum, CPAWS Southern Alberta programs fit in directly with the topics that you and your students are learning in the classroom. Our fun and interactive programs are perfect ways to get students excited about nature! Indoors, in nature, in the community, virtually, or with rentable program kits, CPAWS is here to get your students learning about curriculum while connecting to Alberta's landscape.

**Thank you CPAWS for the best day EVER! I loved it! I wish I could do the same thing all over again a million times!!**

- Grade 4 Student, Livingstone School,  
Lundbreck, AB



Photo: Erika Jensen-Mann



## Engage your community group

Our programs focus on improving environmental literacy. However, depending on our group, we strive to bring in other elements into our programs. When presenting to new Canadian groups, we work to incorporate English language learning into the program. For teachers and educators, we work to help teachers better communicate environmental literacy with their students, and how to motivate their students to take action. We look forward to working with your community group!

## Bring Nature Home

Bring Nature Home is a unique educational toolkit that helps students engage in environmental education in the comfort of their own home. This toolkit includes some of CPAWS Southern Alberta's very own tried and tested games and activities for K-12 students, as well as other online resources to support learning.

Bring Nature Home also provides resources for teachers who are looking for ways to incorporate environmental themes into their students' learning.



***To learn more about our education programs, book a program, or access our online resources, head over to:  
[www.cpaws-southernalberta.org/education](http://www.cpaws-southernalberta.org/education)***

# *We all belong in nature*

**By Jaclyn Angotti, Education Director**

**Ever wonder why the world just feels better on a sunny day — or even a rainy day for that matter, if you're outside?**

Or why the brightest “light bulb moments” happen when you’re simply watching the clouds go by? Recent research confirms that our well-being is entwined with our connection to nature. We are part of an intricate web of life that includes humans, plants, animals, water, and the land itself. It is crucial to our well-being that we have a sense of belonging within this web of life.

So, how can you capture the benefits of nature for yourself, your loved ones, and your community? How can you help others to feel like they belong in nature? Here are a three tips to get you started.

## **1. Touch, Taste, Smell, See, or Listen to Nature**

Sensory connection to nature can decrease stress, lower heart rate and blood pressure, boost immune function, and so much more! Plus, it just feels great! You don’t have to go far in order to reap these rewards. Nature can be your houseplants, photos, your pets, the clouds in the sky, your lunch, a collection of nature sounds from your favourite streaming service, a nearby green space, or a local park. Wherever you are, nature is. Find simple ways for you and your loved ones to connect to nature with your senses everyday.



*CPAWS Southern Alberta at a new Canadian program enjoying all the benefits of nature and more!*



## 2. Socialize in Nature

Social relationships can be essential to how we experience nature. By spending time with others in nature, we strengthen our sense of belong in nature and in our community. Sense of belonging is crucial to our holistic well-being. Help others feel that they belong by planning outdoor events for your community, such as a multi-cultural picnic or a learn-to-hike day. Plan opportunities for youth to play and explore nature together, as well as to spend time outdoors with adult mentors and elders.

## 3. Seek out Cultural Teachings

Culture evolved with nature. We can learn many important lessons about ourselves, nature, and environmentalism through cultural teachings. Look to mentors and elders in your community who can share these teachings with you. Help plan cultural events in the outdoors. Seek out opportunities for teachings from the original caretakers of this land — the Indigenous Nations of Treaty 7. By developing a deeper connection with culture — our own and our neighbours — we strengthen our feelings of belonging, identity, and sense of place. Environmental teachings rooted in culture can nurture emotional connection to land and an understanding of the interconnectedness of culture and nature.

Developing a sense of belonging in nature with our communities enables each of us to connect to nature and seek nature for our well-being. It inspires us to live in reciprocity within the web of life — to be grateful for the gifts that nature provides us and to give back to nature through stewardship and environmental action. All of nature's gifts for our well-being can be unlocked by one simple act: Getting outside — by yourself and with your community — for yourself and for your community.

**Now get outside. Connect. Be well.**





# How youth environmental action will save the world

By Vanessa Bilan ,  
Educator & Hiking Guide

## Youth environmental action has grown over the years and reached unprecedented heights.

From doing small eco-actions at home to bringing the environmental issues they care about to government, youth around the globe are seizing their power and capitalizing on the opportunities of social media and globalization to make a difference.

Although youth environmental action is still growing, one of its high points was Greta Thunberg's speech at the UN Climate Change COP24 Conference in 2018. Today, hundreds of environmental movements are headed by youth and the next generation is putting pressure on governments to face the consequences their actions have wrought not only on the earth, but on future generations as well.

CPAWS has been encouraging youth environmental action for over 20 years with our programs. With our team of educators and expert partnerships, we have inspired achievement, fostered discussion, and co-developed community eco-projects.

Mayoral petitions, community cleanups, schoolyard gardens, and species-at-risk campaigns are all examples of the many amazing actions submitted to the CPAWS Action Challenge. Over the last 20 years, numerous groups have received support, recognition, and financial funding from CPAWS in celebration of their environmental achievements.

## Supporting youth in environmental action is important because engagement in civic activism promotes a sense of personal pride, increases confidence and competence, reduces youth apathy, and encourages stewardship.

Youth who are members of low-income and BIPOC communities are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. It is important to support all youth and empower them to challenge the social and eco-justice issues so they may become community leaders.



**Q: Why do you protect nature?**

**A: "Because it keeps me alive."**

Looking towards the future, CPAWS is changing our approach to supporting environmental action by restructuring our Action Challenge to meet the needs of youth from diverse backgrounds. By highlighting actions that are relevant to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) youth and showcasing BIPOC environmental leaders, ChangeMakers, our new eco-action youth program will support the needs and interests of a more diverse group of youth.

Stay tuned for more updates on how you can help create the next generation of changemakers!





# *Oki (hello),*

It is time for reflection as our Indigenous-Led Nature Walks come to an end for the season. Throughout the walks, we hosted several elders and guests within Treaty 7. Bringing their perspectives on conservation were Tobias Provost, Latasha Calf Robe, Ariel Crawler, Elder Pete Weasel Moccasin, and William Singer.

Latasha and Ariel connected with participants on the walk as both water protectors and mothers. They left participants with direction to continue their parts in taking care of the environment. Their willingness to share traditional knowledge stories in their way of life (Blackfoot and Stoney Nakoda) was an amazing gift.

Tobias and Pete shared in-depth Blackfoot creation stories that were connected to Nose Hill Park in Calgary and the Indian Battle Park area in Lethbridge. Lastly, William shared his expertise as a traditional botanist. With a Blackfoot perspective, he discussed food security and sovereignty, Blackfoot science and physics, watershed health, and grassland restoration.

Participants connected through laughter and the teaching of Blackfoot words. Elders reminded participants that we are all continuously learning, which allowed non-Indigenous guests to move away from the fear of failure in learning from Indigenous perspectives.

We were awed by the respect and gratitude that was expressed by those who attended. These walks served as a source of support for Indigenous community connections. In reflection, the Indigenous-Led Nature Walks successfully brought Indigenous voices to life while following Indigenous protocol, protecting the Indigenous knowledge being shared, and facilitating a secure environment that fostered experiential learning.

We look forward to continuing these walks and invite you to come learn, grow, and share respect for our Indigenous communities.

## *Reflecting on our teachings*

**By Sierra Shade,  
Indigenous Event  
Consultant**



# What's the secret to being an environmentalist?

By Hira Shah, Communications Manager

## When I say “environmentalist” – what image comes to mind?

Maybe you imagine someone recycling. Someone driving an electric vehicle. Or groups advocating for climate solutions outside city hall. There are so many ways to make positive changes for Alberta's landscape. These changes make a huge difference and should be widely celebrated! But this image gives us only part of the picture of what environmentalism really is.

Environmental issues rarely stand alone. Most issues impacting Alberta's landscape also intersect with social and political issues. Just take a look at coal mining in the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains. It's well documented that coal mining will negatively impact the habitat, wildlife, and ecosystem processes in the region. However, it becomes more than just an environmental concern when we learn that coal mining will also affect the water supply of downstream communities, making it a health issue as well. What's more, these impacts will disproportionately threaten certain communities more than others.

The Niitsitapi Water Protectors, an Indigenous-led grassroots group working to protect land and water of the Blackfoot Confederacy, summarized some of the threats that coal mining poses to Indigenous communities. Many of the proposed coal mining projects will restrict access to traditional Indigenous territory, disrupt cultural practices, and risk the health and safety of nearby

Indigenous communities. This is a significant threat to Indigenous peoples who rely on that land and water to sustain their livelihoods.

## The more we dig deeper, the more we see that across our nation, the consequences from environmental degradation are not a shared burden.

We can't simply ignore the fact that environmental degradation disproportionately targets or effects vulnerable communities, especially Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) groups. Leah Thomas, founder of the environmental justice advocacy group Intersectional Environmentalist, defines the term as “an inclusive form of environmentalism advocating for the protection of all people and the planet.”

Being a better environmentalist means looking at the bigger picture. Sometimes, the hidden picture. Let's go back to that image of an “environmentalist” from earlier. Studies have shown that achieving this westernized ideal image of an environmentalist can prove to be much more difficult for BIPOC communities. Unfortunately, not all environmentally favourable behaviours are inclusive. Not all individuals have the same privileges to participate in these behaviours.

As a child, I was proud to consider myself an environmentalist, despite not fitting the traditional image. To me, a BIPOC newcomer to Canada, being an



environmentalist was simply appreciating the natural beauty around me, which was something I wasn't able to do in my home country. I remember constantly being corrected by peers that I couldn't be an environmentalist unless I did this or that. To me, environmentalism wasn't necessarily about doing. It was simply about feeling. It wasn't until much later in my life that I was able to take those feelings and turn them into action.

I don't believe there is a one-size-fits-all answer to being a better environmentalist. But I know that not feeling welcomed by the community is a huge barrier when it

comes to taking action. So maybe the best thing that we can do as environmentalists is to expand our definition of the term. Let's strive to advocate for the planet and for its people. Let's allow for a more inclusive image of an environmentalist so that even more people can see themselves defined as one.

### **So what then is the secret to being an environmentalist?**

Well, if you get that "feeling" when you're outside in nature — you know the one — well then welcome to the club.

***Here at CPAWS we welcome environmentalists from all walks of life. From those who are just learning, to those who have been on this journey for a long time. We welcome those who are nature lovers as well as those who have the ability to contribute time, money, and resources into taking action. We've outlined six of our commitments through our bioDIVERSITY project to ensure that we utilize an intersectional approach in our work.***



**Amplify Indigenous-led conservation efforts to protect Treaty lands for future generations**



**Support the great work being done in conservation by BIPOC-led community organizations**



**Amplify diverse voices and stories in conservation**



**Reduce barriers for individuals and communities that feel unwelcome or excluded from the outdoors**



**Acknowledge and educate on the history of Indigenous erasure in conservation and the outdoors**



**Work towards an inclusive, welcoming, and safe CPAWS Southern Alberta**



## *Our supporters*

**CPAWS Southern Alberta would like to thank all the following organizations for their generous support which has been invaluable in the continuation of our conservation and education programs.**



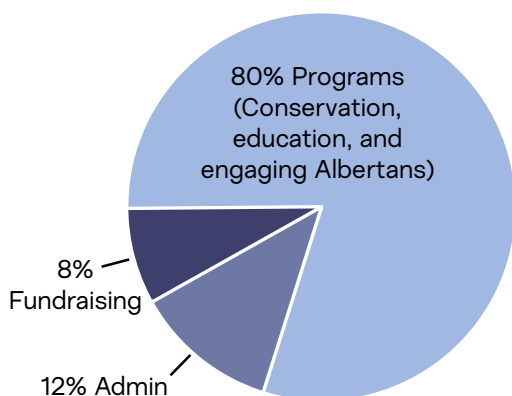


# Statement of Financial Position

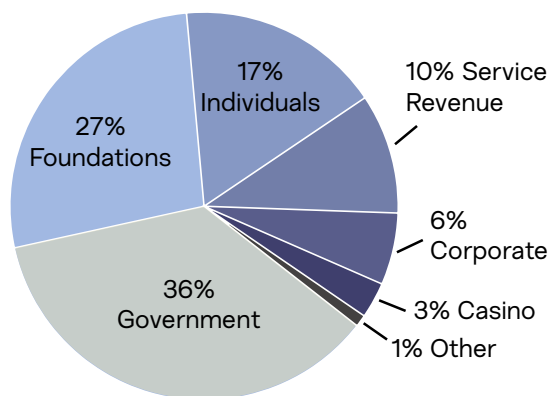
Year Ended March 31, 2021

	2021	2020
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 715,611	\$ 591,138
Accounts receivable	27,984	42,419
Goods and services tax recoverable	4,664	5,943
Prepaid expenses	3,650	4,524
Due from CPAWS National	93,807	10,099
	845,716	654,123
<b>CAPITAL ASSETS</b>		
	10,924	8,810
	\$ 856,640	\$ 662,933
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 82,636	\$ 23,193
Deferred contributions	208,077	220,568
	290,713	243,761
<b>DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS RELATED TO CAPITAL ASSETS</b>		
	2,479	3,211
	293,192	246,972
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS</b>	8,445	5,599
<b>UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS</b>	375,003	230,362
<b>INTERNALLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS</b>	180,000	180,000
	563,448	415,961
	<b>\$ 856,640</b>	<b>\$ 662,933</b>

*How your donations support us*



*How we're funded*



CPAWS Southern Alberta is unique amongst non-profits and strongly positioned with a healthy range of diverse funding sources to match our range of programming. With support from industry, foundations, government, and individuals we have been able to build a healthy operating reserve. Having a reserve helps us to weather storms like the current pandemic, while maintaining program quality, delivery, and campaign initiatives. A reserve allows us to be nimble and able to react to needs and opportunities as they arise, rather than being completely dependent on project specific funding. If there's work that needs doing, we can do it.

With the current challenges we're facing, and looking into 2022, we've identified the need to strengthen our reach across southern Alberta, expanding our conservation and education programs to continue protecting southern Alberta's landscapes and natural heritage. Although an operational reserve provides some security and flexibility, CPAWS can't do this without your generous support.

We hope you'll renew your support and continue to stand with us in protecting Alberta's majestic and valuable wilderness. With your help, we can do this work together.

# Walk with us towards a healthy & resilient Alberta

**None of it is possible without you.**

Here at CPAWS Southern Alberta, your support means everything to us. From fuelling our day-to-day work, to inspiring us to continue fighting for our shared goal of an ecologically resilient Alberta for future generations, the role that you play is invaluable. Looking back at some of our recent wins such as protecting the Defend Alberta Parks campaign or engaging over 150,000 Albertans in environmental education, none of it would have been possible without you as part of the CPAWS Southern Alberta family. So from the bottom of our hearts, we want to say thank you.

**Thank you for your continued commitment to giving back to nature.**

We still have a ways to go towards protecting Alberta's natural spaces. We need your support now more than ever to continue fighting for thriving and wild landscapes. Learn more about how you can support our work, and help us do even more for southern Alberta.



## ***VOLUNTEER WITH US***

We're always looking for people passionate about conservation to join our volunteer team. Apply on our website today!

## ***GIVE A GIFT***

As a non-profit, our work is funded in part by people just like you. Consider giving a one time or monthly donation to keep our work going.

## ***TAKE ACTION***

Whether it's a phone call, a letter, or a simple share of a social media post, every single action counts. Take action to fight for nature.

## ***JOIN OUR COMMUNITY***

Want to receive updates on our campaigns or alerts on how you can help fight for nature? Sign up for our mailing list today!



An illustration of two people fishing in a river. The person on the left is wearing a yellow hat and waders, leaning forward. The person on the right is wearing a grey shirt and waders, holding a fishing net. The river is surrounded by green trees and mountains in the background under a blue sky with white clouds.

# *Welcome to* **TROUT COUNTRY**

**Alberta's Native Trout**  
are a big part of what makes the  
backcountry in Alberta so incredible.

Learn more about how to  
protect Alberta's native  
trout and their habitat at:  
[AlbertaNativeTrout.com](http://AlbertaNativeTrout.com)





*Making nature our priority  
for all Albertans to enjoy*

Photo: Victor Liu



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