



# Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley

*Ecological Integrity  
Through Education, Research and Outreach  
Celebrating 20 years  
1997-2017*

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2017 Annual Report

## Engaging Communities

The Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley began as a small non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing our understanding of the ecological integrity of this region. Now, twenty years later, we are a thriving charitable organization with multi-partner, award-winning programs and the provider of an engaging and accessible public Resource Centre devoted to a healthy, diverse and sustainable natural environment.

The Biosphere Institute encourages thoughtful decision-making based on local and regional ecosystem information. We ensure that information is available to citizens and decision-makers for the long-term benefit of the Bow Valley watershed. We continue our efforts to assist individuals, businesses and other organizations to use resources in a more thoughtful, responsible and sustainable manner.

Our biennial community monitoring reports have provided critical forums for extensive multi-stakeholder discussions and planning on social, environmental, and economic conditions in the community. Thank you to the participants and researchers who ensure that this information exists so that, together, we can make the best decisions for the Bow Valley and its residents.



We are excited to report that during our 20 years, we have received local awards, as well as six national and two international awards for our innovation in programming and successful local engagement. Highlights of 2017 programs include our *Sustainable Action Canmore* and our *Next Steps Programs* which help individuals and businesses achieve awareness and take sustainable actions. We continue to provide action-based workshops including *Worm Composting*, *Wildlife EduKits*, and *Youth Movie-Making Workshops*. The *WildSmart Program* continues to flourish as a program of the Biosphere Institute. To date, our *Aquatic Habitat Restoration Programs* have helped remove over eight tonnes of garbage and invasive plants. We continue to bring education programs to local schools, camps, and public events and expand our social media to promote our community Resource Centre, library, and outreach programs.

Thank you to our board, staff, volunteers and community members for our outstanding years of community engagement through our award-winning programs! We look forward to continuing to help achieve sustainable solutions to the complex challenges faced by the Bow Valley, its residents and its visitors.

Sincerely,



E. Melanie Watt  
Executive Director



Karen Hanna  
Chair

## Our Goals

- to facilitate, encourage and coordinate ecological, economic and social research pertinent to the region's ecosystem;
- to support and implement outreach and education programs that assist individuals, businesses and other organizations to learn about and adopt ecologically sustainable behaviours; and
- to facilitate information sharing and analysis in support of collaborative solutions to ecological issues.

## Recognition



- In 2017, the Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) PromoScience Program expanded its support of the Biosphere Institute's program to include *Science Odyssey* and *Science Literacy Week*, two week long events celebrating hands-on Bow Valley science. In recognition of our twentieth anniversary, we received a national Organizational Resilience award from [Green Communities](#)

[Canada](#) (GCC) adding to our previous collection of local, national and international awards for the Institute's innovation in programming and successful local engagement.

## Highlights

- *Sustainable Action Canmore (SAC) 2017* is a partnership with the Town of Canmore, built on the previous SAC door-to-door community engagement program. The 2017 program moved the community towards sustainability through community education and engagement to achieve awareness and active participation of the semi-permanent and permanent populations (individuals, schools and youth) and businesses. This included community booths, workshops, movie screenings, media, and a light bulb swap. The program continued to engage local households through regular sustainability tip emails and action based workshops.

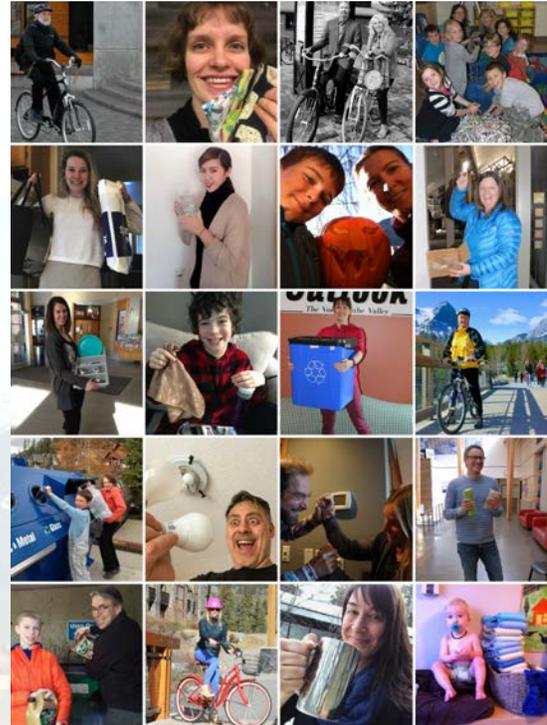




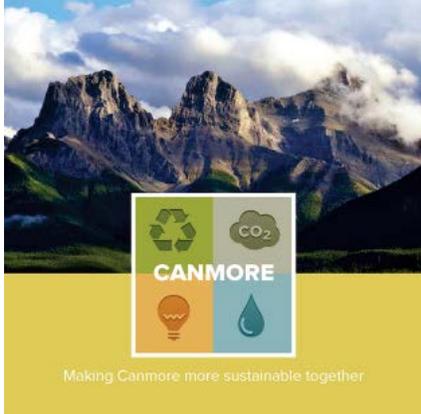
- In 2017, the Biosphere Institute's Light Bulb Swap helped save 12 tonnes of eCO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually. Thirty-nine residents swapped out a total of 193 old incandescent bulbs for energy efficient bulbs.

- Our website and social media continue to be improved and expanded to better engage the community through the promotion

of our Community Resource Centre, library, and outreach programs. This includes the successful engagement of many more people through our *Small Steps Program*. ([www.biosphereinstitute.org](http://www.biosphereinstitute.org)) to cumulatively make the region more sustainable. *Small Steps* are visually displayed and shared through social media networks to inspire further sustainable actions. To date, more than 1,450 people have been showcased taking sustainable steps in the Bow Valley. This campaign inspires, facilitates, challenges, and engages residents (permanent and semi-permanent), groups and businesses to take *Small Steps*



- Our new Next Steps program is a series of interactive, drop-in Cafés that expand on our highly successful Small Steps campaign. Cafés focus on removing barriers to action by helping community members take bigger sustainable actions e.g. installing rain barrels and solar panels, making their homes more energy efficient, reducing waste and using alternative forms of transportation.



- In 2017, our *Sustainable Action Canmore Booklet* continued to be distributed to local realtors, property management companies, and other local businesses. The booklet, developed in conjunction with local realtors, helps those new to town learn how to live more sustainably in Canmore.

- The *Wrigglers & Waste Composting Workshops* are provided for classrooms, children's camps, businesses and local residents. Participants build their own fully-functioning worm composters during the workshops and then immediately put them to use in their homes or classrooms. These indoor composters provide a safe and legal alternative for those who want to compost food waste safely without attracting wildlife. To date, 50 workshops have helped divert 10.5 tonnes of waste from the landfill per year.



- The Biosphere Institute's *Youth Movie-Making Program* began nine years ago and now includes more than two dozen movie shorts that engage and educate the "Digital Generation" with practical, age-appropriate environmental actions (i.e. saving energy, reducing waste, reducing water use, and protecting our



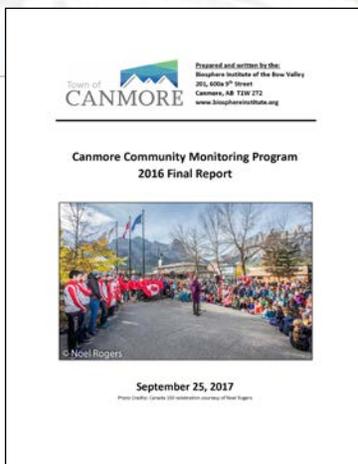
waterways). Local students, working with the Biosphere Institute, help develop and act in their own short videos. They create digital educational material to share and promote both in person and through social media and social networking technologies (such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and our [YouTube channel](#)).

- In 2017, our Bison EduKit was created and successfully launched in schools. The Bison EduKit joins the Bear, Wolf, Cougar and Elk *Wildlife EduKits* available on loan from the Biosphere Institute for teachers and other group leaders throughout Alberta. These kits provide a wealth of resources and a rare opportunity for youth to engage in active, hands-on wildlife learning opportunities and better understand environmental



stewardship. These traveling trunks, weighing up to 35 kg, are filled with pelts, fur swatches, skulls, scat replicas, and books relevant to animals and their place in the ecosystem. Our Water EduKit is also available for classroom use. To date our various EduKits have been used by 155 classroom groups comprising 5,148 Bow Valley youth.

- The Biosphere Institute's project *Riparian Rehabilitation: Invasive Species Removal and Restoration in the Bow Valley* included removing invasive weeds and garbage from sites to help restore aquatic habitat throughout the Bow Valley. Through several aquatic restoration projects over the years, 785 volunteers have helped remove over eight tonnes of invasive weeds and waste including fishing line, hooks, bottles, metal and plastics from the water and shoreline of local ponds and lakes.



- In 2017, the Biosphere Institute presented the 2016 edition of the *Canmore Community Monitoring Report* for Town Council and the community. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> edition in 1998, the biennial *Community Monitoring Report* has provided a snapshot of social, environmental, and economic conditions and trends in the community. It provides an essential overview that is used by Town Council, businesses, organizations and individuals.



- The *WildSmart Community Program* has been a program of the Biosphere Institute since 2009. *WildSmart* is a proactive conservation strategy that encourages efforts by communities to reduce negative human-wildlife interactions. To date *WildSmart* activities have included 764 programs and booths, 115,000 in-person contacts, 2,735 people trained with bear spray and 5,319

volunteer wildlife ambassador hours. Its highly successful *WildSmart* speaker series and extensive media and social media presence with tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and a weekly online bear report help educate a widespread public, with individual Facebook posts reaching more than 26,000. Learn more about our programs at [wildsmart.ca](http://wildsmart.ca).

## Biosphere Resource Centre

- The Biosphere Institute's Resource Centre provides information on local and regional ecosystem issues, and houses an extensive bibliographic ecosystem database of more than 7,000 records and a public library of 2,700 regional reports and maps. The library and on-line database continued to expand in 2017, with donations and support from local agencies and residents. Documents and bibliographic references are searchable on-line via our website and available to the public at our Resource Centre.





### Board of Directors and Officers

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Director	Bill Hunt	Resource Conservation Manager, Banff National Park

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Program Associate	Karen Messenger
Program Associate	Julie-Anne Fritz
Program Associate	Beth Spencer
Program Associate	John Cherkas
WildSmart Education and Outreach	Tyler McClaron
WildSmart Education and Outreach	Nick de Ruyter

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## Thank You to Our Partners

Each year we develop partnerships and projects with the funding provided by community members and organizations, as well as by provincial and federal organizations. Your financial support is essential to our ongoing success as a steward of the Bow Valley ecosystem. Your support ensures that the best environmental decisions are made for the long-term benefit of this ecologically sensitive region.

During 2017 the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley:

- Worked closely with local residents and businesses to help them take sustainable actions to reduce waste, water, and energy use and helped them inspire others through our sustainable *Small Steps & Next Steps Programs*.
- Engaged local youth in environmental issues through workshops, movie-screenings and presentations.
- Helped restore aquatic habitat by working with volunteers to remove invasive plants and garbage from sites throughout the Bow Valley.
- Continued to educate residents and visitors on how to avoid human-wildlife conflict through our *WildSmart* program.
- Measured and tracked local social, environmental, and economic trends for the latest edition of the *Canmore Community Monitoring Report*.

The Board of Directors and staff wish to thank those who have generously supported our efforts this past year including:

- Alberta Culture & Tourism
- Alberta Environment and Parks
- Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission
- Alberta Real Estate Foundation
- BioTalent Canada
- Environment Canada: EcoAction Community Funding Program
- J.N. Fyvie Family Fund at the Calgary Foundation
- Kananaskis Improvement District
- Lafarge Canada Inc.
- M.D. of Bighorn No. 8
- Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)
- Rotary Club of Canmore
- Sage and Shea O'Neill Children's Fund at The Calgary Foundation
- The Calgary Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Town of Banff
- Town of Canmore
- Valued Individual Donors

## Support the Biosphere Institute

The Biosphere Institute is funded through contributions from the community.

Registered Charitable Number:

88912 8625 RR0001.

To support the Biosphere Institute, please contact:

Suite 201, 600a 9th Street,

Canmore, Alberta T1W 2T2

Phone: (403) 678-3445 x 4

or give online at: [www.biosphereinstitute.org](http://www.biosphereinstitute.org)

Tax receipts for donations are provided upon request.



*Worm composting*

### Alberta Tax Credit

Reduce your taxable income and help your favourite charity. Alberta has one of the highest charitable tax credits in Canada. For every dollar you donate over \$200 total, you can receive a non-refundable tax credit of 50%. Learn more at:

<http://culture.alberta.ca/grants/charitable-tax-credit>

### *Did you know?*

The Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley welcomes **Legacy Gifts**. Bequests are a simple and powerful way to ensure our work carries on for future generations.