



# Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley

*Ecological Integrity  
Through Education, Research and Outreach*

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2016 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, nineteen 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.



In 2016, we were honoured to be selected for NSERC's PromoScience Program and to receive two national awards: Green Communities Canada *Youth Engagement Award* and their *Green Community of the Year Award* for our innovation in programming and successful local engagement. Highlights of 2016 programs include our *Sustainable Action Canmore* and our *Small Steps Programs* which help individuals and businesses achieve awareness and take sustainable actions. We provide action-based workshops including *Worm Composting*, *Wildlife EduKits*, *Green Cleaning*, 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 4,800 kg of garbage and invasive weeds. 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 an outstanding year 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 2016, the Biosphere Institute was selected for the Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) PromoScience Program for three years. The Institute also won two national awards: [Green Communities Canada](#) (GCC) selected the Biosphere Institute as the winner of the 2016 GCC Youth Engagement Award and the 2016 GCC Green Community of the Year Award for the Institute's innovation in programming and successful local engagement.

## Highlights of 2016

- *Sustainable Action Canmore (SAC) 2016* is a partnership with the Town of Canmore, built on the previous SAC door-to-door community engagement program. The 2016 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 2016, the Biosphere Institute's Light Bulb Swap helped save 25 tonnes of eCO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually. Forty six Canmore residents swapped out a total of 373 old incandescent bulbs for energy efficient bulbs. These swaps will result in collective savings of 28,000 kWh/year of energy.



Our website and social media were improved and expanded in 2016 to better engage the community through the promotion of our Community Resource Centre, library, and outreach programs. This included the successful engagement of many more people through our *Small Steps Program*.

This campaign inspires, facilitates, challenges, and engages residents

(permanent and semi-permanent), groups and businesses to take *Small Steps* ([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 in the region.



In 2016, 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: Bow Valley Safe 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.



- The Biosphere Institute's *Youth Movie-Making Program* continues to 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).

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, and our YouTube channel).

[www.youtube.com/user/BiosphereInstitute/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/BiosphereInstitute/videos)

- The Biosphere Institute's new Mobile Water EduKit was developed and then launched in 2016. The Water EduKit provides demonstration activities to educate youth about protecting and preserving water in our urban environment. Twelve Water EduKit workshops were presented to 162 Bow Valley students and teachers in 2016.



- In 2016, our newly created Cougar EduKit was successfully launched in schools. The Cougar EduKit joins the Bear, Wolf 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. In 2016, Wildlife

EduKits were used by 52 classroom groups comprising 1,383 Bow Valley students.

- 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 since 2012, 500 volunteers helped remove over 4,800 kgs of invasive weeds and waste including fishing line, hooks, bottles, metal and plastics from the water and more than 33 ha of shoreline of local ponds and lakes.

- In 2016, the Biosphere Institute began preparing 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. In 2016, *WildSmart* activities included wildlife awareness and bear spray talks, children and youth programs, a *WildSmart* speaker series, volunteer programming, and an

extensive social media communication presence with tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and a weekly online bear report. In 2016 *WildSmart* celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Bear Day event with AB Parks on the second Saturday of April; Bear Day is a proclaimed Day in the Town of Canmore. 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 2016, 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

Chair	Karen Hanna	Lawyer
Vice-Chair	Mark Storie	Kananaskis Regional Director, Alberta Environment and Parks
Treasurer	Dene Cooper	Reeve, M.D. of Bighorn
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Director	John Borrowman	Mayor, Town of Canmore
Director	Chip Olver	Councillor, Town of Banff
Director	Kristy Davison	Editor-in-Chief, Highline Magazine
Director	Vivian Ceilin	Healthcare Executive
Director	Bill Hunt	Resource Conservation Manager, Banff National Park

## Staff

Executive Director	E. Melanie Watt
Program Associate	Bruce Gleig
Program Associate	Karen Messenger
Program Associate	Julie-Anne Fritz
Program Associate	Beth Spencer
Program Associate	John Cherkas
WildSmart Education and Outreach	Tyler McClure

## Contact Us

Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley  
 Suite 201, 600a 9th Street  
 Canmore, Alberta  
 T1W 2T2  
 Phone: (403) 678-3445  
 Fax: (403) 678-5730  
 Email: [resource@biosphereinstitute.org](mailto:resource@biosphereinstitute.org)  
[www.biosphereinstitute.org](http://www.biosphereinstitute.org)



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## Thank You to Our Partners

Each year we develop partnerships and projects with the funding provided by community members, 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 2016 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 Program*.
- 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 the *Bow Valley 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:

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|---|---|
| • Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission                              | • RBC Blue Water Project  |
| • Alberta Environment and Parks                                     | • Sage and Shea O'Neill Children's Fund at The Calgary Foundation |
| • Banff Canmore Community Foundation                                | • The Calgary Foundation  |
| • Environment Canada: EcoAction Community Funding Program           | • TD Friends of the Environment Foundation                        |
| • Grizzly Paw Brewing Company                                       | • Telus   |
| • Kananaskis Lakes Association                                      | • Town of Banff   |
| • Lafarge Canada Inc.   | • Town of Canmore   |
| • M.D. of Bighorn No. 8   | • Valued Individual Donors  |
| • Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) |   |

## 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.