

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- 29 Basin groups make climate-positive moves
- 36 A lifeline from above
- 40 Edgewood makes good things happen

our trust

Stories of people and places in the Columbia Basin

An aerial photograph of a large dam structure with water cascading over it. To the left of the dam is a large industrial building with a grey roof and several windows. Below the dam, the river flows through a rocky channel. In the bottom right corner, there is a large rectangular reservoir or pool of water. The surrounding area is a mix of green vegetation and rocky terrain.

Investing
in our future

FALL 2024

Columbia Basin Trust Region

The Trust serves the region consisting of all the watersheds that flow into the Columbia River in Canada and gratefully operates in the traditional territories of the Ktunaxa, Lheidli T'enneh, Secwépemc, Sinixt and Syilx Nations.



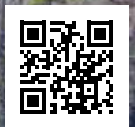
Map Legend

- Incorporated Communities
- First Nations Communities
- ▼ Columbia River Treaty Dams
- Rivers
- ← Direction of Water Flow
- - - - - Canada-USA Border

Hydropower Facilities*

- 1 Arrow Lakes Generating Station
- 2 Brilliant Dam and Generating Station
- 3 Brilliant Expansion Generating Station
- 4 Waneta Expansion Generating Station

* Owned 50/50 by the Trust and Columbia Power Corporation



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Business advisory support helps Invermere auto repair company thrive



Cover Photo:
Brilliant Dam and Brilliant Expansion Generating Stations on the Kootenay River by Adrian Wagner.

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SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

When you have finished reading the magazine, let us know your thoughts by taking our survey. All responses will be entered to WIN A PRIZE!

ourtrust.org/magazinesurvey



Columbia Basin **trust**

This year's issue of *Our Trust* magazine was printed by Warren's Waterless Printing, Canada's first and only waterless printer. It is printed on Enviro 100 paper, which contains 100% post-consumer fibre, is EcoLogo, is processed chlorine-free, and is certified and manufactured in Canada using biogas energy with vegetable-based inks.



OUR PRODUCTION-PROCESS DECISIONS RESULTED IN SAVING:



49 METRIC TONNES OF WOOD
320 TREES



91 M³ WORLD EQ. OF WATER
954 10-MINUTE SHOWERS IN NORTH AMERICA



20,835 KG CO₂
83,030 KM DRIVEN BY CAR



558 GJ
2,578,989 60W LIGHT BULBS FOR ONE HOUR



103 KG NMVOC (Non-methane volatile organic compounds)
102,465 KM DRIVEN BY CAR

about us

THE TRUST CO-OWNS FOUR HYDROPOWER FACILITIES WITH COLUMBIA POWER CORPORATION

ARROW LAKES GENERATING STATION

Located 400 metres downstream from the existing Hugh Keenleyside Dam on Arrow Lakes Reservoir near Castlegar, this \$300-million project makes use of water that would otherwise be spilled. It generates enough power to supply 80,000 homes.

BRILLIANT EXPANSION GENERATING STATION

Located on the east bank of Kootenay River, downstream from Brilliant Dam, this \$245-million project makes use of water that would otherwise be spilled. It generates enough power to supply 55,000 homes.

BRILLIANT DAM AND GENERATING STATION

This dam was purchased from Teck (formerly Cominco) in 1996 for \$130 million, and then \$100 million in upgrades were implemented to extend its lifespan and enhance its capacity. It is located approximately eight kilometres from Castlegar on Kootenay River, and generates enough power to supply 100,000 homes.

WANETA EXPANSION GENERATING STATION

Located immediately downstream of Waneta Dam on Pend d'Oreille River near Trail, this \$900-million expansion was built in partnership with Fortis Inc. Columbia Power and the Trust purchased Fortis' interest in the project in 2019. It generates enough power to supply 65,000 homes.

50% of the income generated from these facilities is used to deliver programs and initiatives that support social, economic and environmental well-being in the Basin, including all of the projects featured in this magazine, and 50 per cent goes to Columbia Power's shareholder, the Province of British Columbia.



Photo: Kootenay River by Adrian Wagner

Strengthening the Columbia Basin now and for future generations

The Trust supports efforts to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the region

FROM PROVIDING resources, to bringing people together, to leading an entire initiative, Columbia Basin Trust is here to support what the people of the Basin want to achieve.

While our range of services, programs, initiatives and financial investments is extensive, our purpose is straightforward: we exist and act for the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Basin—now and for generations to come.

Working together with you and your communities, we remain flexible and use varied approaches to respond to Basin priorities, based on the needs of the situation, the participants involved and how we can be most effective.

To learn more about how the Trust was formed and how we work, watch this five-minute video.



youtu.be/vkkEVkMfJk

The Trust is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors, with each member living in the Basin. Learn more about our Board and read highlights and meeting minutes at: ourtrust.org/board



Columbia Basin Trust Board of Directors.

Left to right: Suzan Hewat, Betty Anne Marino, Krista Turcasso, Codie Morigeau, Owen Torgerson (Vice-Chair), Bill van Yzerloo, Angus Graeme, Don McCormick, Jocelyn Carver (Chair), Ron Oszust, Karen Hamling and Christine Hoechsmann.

Photo: Joy Segovia

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO



Photo: Radium Hot Springs by Stacked Films

IT IS WITH immense pride that we present this year's edition of *Our Trust* magazine, offering a glimpse into the remarkable achievements of the people in the Columbia Basin. By combining a strong commitment to community, innovative ideas, hard work, and a broad range of support, the results are truly amazing.

This spring, we launched our renewed Columbia Basin Management Plan, which will guide our activities from 2024 to 2034. Your input was invaluable, and our focus on health and resilience reflects the enduring desire of residents to remain connected to each other, their communities, and the incredible natural environment of this region. See a great visual summary of this on page 6.

We'll continue to reach out to you as we develop new programs and initiatives. In this vein, expect to see Trust staff out and about in communities. For an example of this outreach in support of rural locations, read the article about Edgewood on page 40.

As we close the book on the former Columbia Basin Management Plan 2020-23, we're reminded of the extraordinary work of Basin residents, non-profits, businesses, local governments and First Nations in completing more than 10,300 projects across the region. Congratulations to everyone involved in this feat! For

more impressive details of what we've accomplished together, visit page 8.

Our investments, particularly in hydropower generation, have generally performed well, significantly contributing to our financial support. This year, we addressed a critical equipment failure at one of our facilities, underscoring the importance of our strong maintenance programs. We remain dedicated to ensuring the stability and reliability of our revenue streams, allowing us to continue supporting the Basin effectively. See the financial overview on page 25.

"Gratitude" is our overarching sentiment. It's the people of the Basin that have helped shape the Trust, and in turn, we've worked together to make this region such a wonderful place to live. We hope to continue this legacy of collaboration and achievement as we invest in our future.

Thank you to the Trust's committed team of staff and Board members. And on behalf of Columbia Basin Trust, thank you to everyone in the Basin. We hope to connect with you soon.

Jocelyn Carver

Chair, Board of Directors

Johnny Strilaeff

President and Chief Executive Officer

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Be True to Our Foundation

Integrate Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples

Aim for Balance and Recognize Interconnection

Support Residents' Efforts

OUR VALUES

Stewardship

Engagement

Respect

Accountability

Empowerment

Transparency

OUR ROLES

Investor and Steward

Partner

Learner

Funder

Convener and Information Resource

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

our focus: health and resilience

Just like the river that connects the Basin, health and resilience connects the work we do as described in the four focus areas of the renewed Columbia Basin Management Plan.





organization

Ensure the prudent management of our assets and investments so that the organization continues to be self-sufficient and so that future generations benefit from at least the same level of support as current residents.

relationships

Deepen our relationships with Basin communities, Indigenous Peoples and all those connected to the Columbia River system.



communities

Help Basin communities take action to continue to be incredible and vibrant places.

Support residents and communities to make the Basin more resilient to climate change and to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.

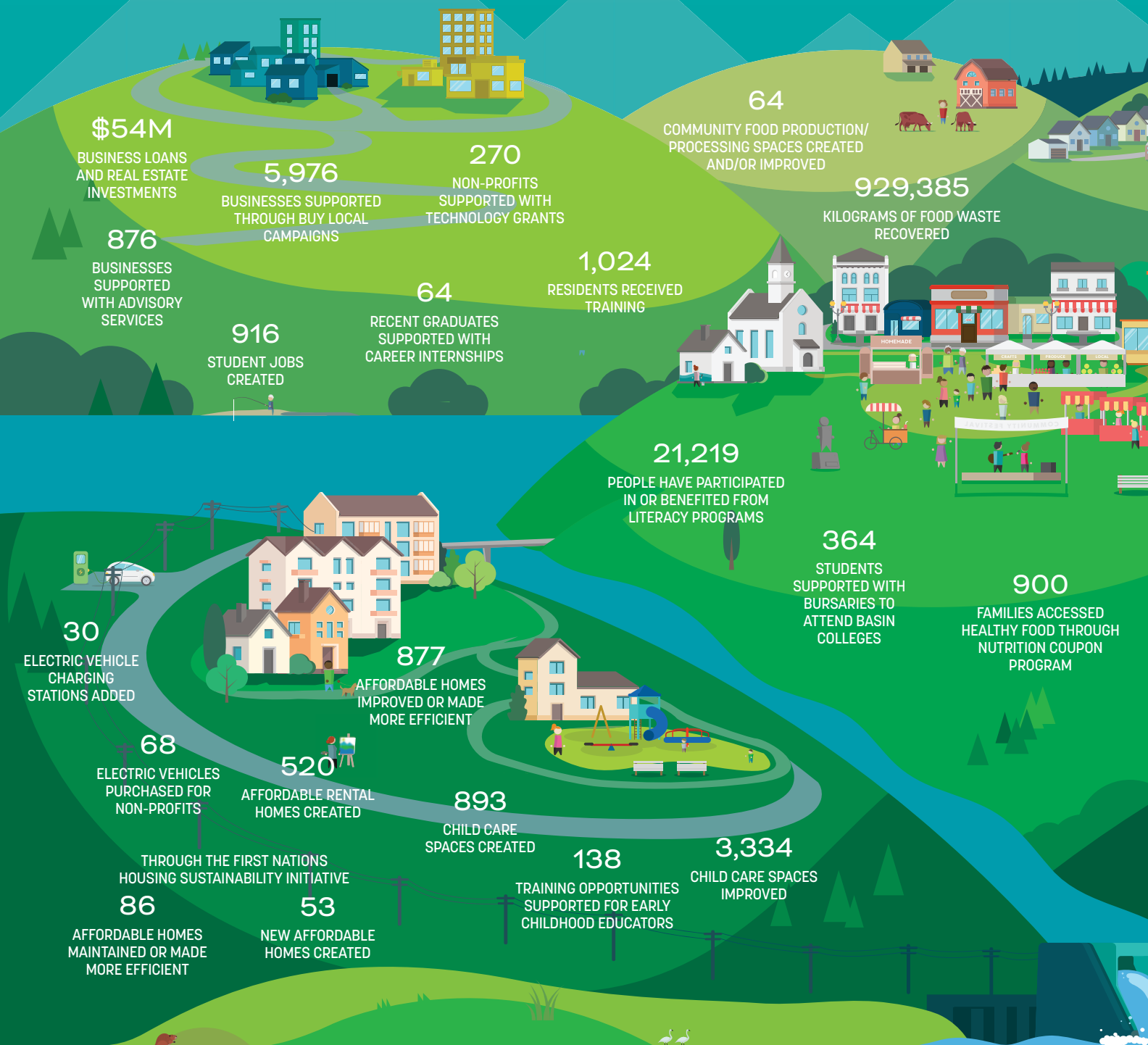
natural environment

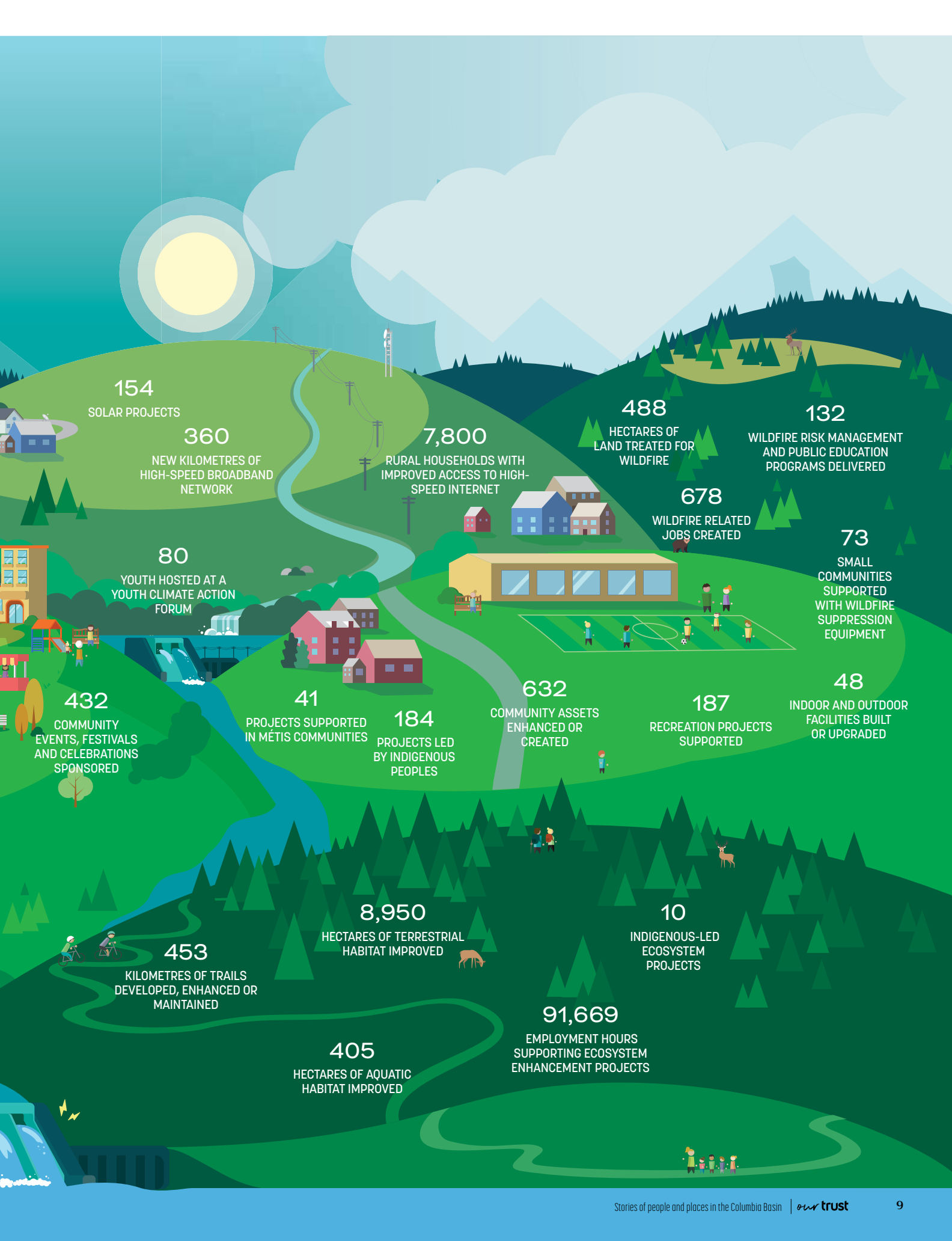
Support community-led efforts to maintain and enhance ecosystems in the Basin, including forests, grasslands, wetlands, riparian areas, bodies of water and the alpine.



Celebrating the region's achievements from 2020-2023

Columbia Basin Trust works together with people, organizations and communities to support their efforts to create a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being, now and for future generations. Over the last four years, the Trust has provided \$320 million in total benefits to the region, including grants, capital investments, new commercial loans and real estate investments, and supported over 10,300 projects. The following graphic highlights some of the positive results seen across the region during this time.





154

SOLAR PROJECTS

360

NEW KILOMETRES OF
HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND
NETWORK

7,800

RURAL HOUSEHOLDS WITH
IMPROVED ACCESS TO HIGH-
SPEED INTERNET

488

HECTARES OF
LAND TREATED FOR
WILDFIRE

132

WILDFIRE RISK MANAGEMENT
AND PUBLIC EDUCATION
PROGRAMS DELIVERED

678

WILDFIRE RELATED
JOBS CREATED

80

YOUTH HOSTED AT A
YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION
FORUM

73

SMALL
COMMUNITIES
SUPPORTED
WITH WILDFIRE
SUPPRESSION
EQUIPMENT

432

COMMUNITY
EVENTS, FESTIVALS
AND CELEBRATIONS
SPONSORED

41

PROJECTS SUPPORTED
IN MÉTIS COMMUNITIES

184

PROJECTS LED
BY INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES

632

COMMUNITY ASSETS
ENHANCED OR
CREATED

187

RECREATION PROJECTS
SUPPORTED

48

INDOOR AND OUTDOOR
FACILITIES BUILT
OR UPGRADED

8,950

HECTARES OF TERRESTRIAL
HABITAT IMPROVED

10

INDIGENOUS-LED
ECOSYSTEM
PROJECTS

453

KILOMETRES OF TRAILS
DEVELOPED, ENHANCED OR
MAINTAINED

91,669

EMPLOYMENT HOURS
SUPPORTING ECOSYSTEM
ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

405

HECTARES OF AQUATIC
HABITAT IMPROVED

YOUTH COME FIRST AT FOUNDRY

A new Cranbrook centre offers an array of services to young people

.....

IT'S A WELCOMING ENTRANCE, with a covered doorway, lovely stone- and woodwork and a large sign reading “tikxawizikimik” in Ktunaxa (“for all things to be connected”). Even more importantly, it’s welcoming inside.

This is Foundry East Kootenay, located in Cranbrook. Indeed, this is a spot where there is an abundance of connections to be made—between youth and the mental- and physical-health resources they need, plus a lot more.

“People are surprised about the extent of all the services,” says Amy Reid, Clinical Operations Manager for Foundry East Kootenay, which is operated by the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Child and Family Service Society (KKCFSS).

The centre recently opened its doors, with construction of its building supported by the Trust. Like other Foundry Centres in the province, it’s an integrated health and social service centre for young people between the ages of 12 and 24.





At the turn of this decade, Colin Sinclair, Chief Executive Officer at KKCFSS, heard about the provincial network and saw the need to bring it to the East Kootenay, too. “Our youth are really struggling,” he says. “I see it in my work every day. Also, I coach quite a bit of hockey, and see it even on the hockey teams. I felt that this was going to be a great asset for youth in our region.”

Whether they live in Cranbrook—where the centre is easily accessible to the middle schools and high school—or as far as Golden, Creston or Elkford, Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth are welcome. An app makes it easy to see what’s available at the centre and book appointments, along with getting some virtual resources. They can also walk right in.

There, the range of options is impressive, delivered by both dedicated employees and a range of partnering organizations. There’s space for a nurse practitioner and doctors, plus sexual health services and substance use supports. There are seven “talking rooms,” where youth can chat with another youth as part of the centre’s peer support services. There’s a kitchen, where they can learn life skills. There’s a cultural room. There’s a place simply to hang out or do homework.

“Just coming into the building and getting food or reading a book, and maybe casually



connecting with somebody,” Reid says, “is a safe entry point so that if they do need further support, they might be willing and feel safe to access some of the providers.”

Partners like the Trust—which supports projects like this that focus on community well-being, Indigenous Peoples and youth—have been vital in getting Foundry East Kootenay on its feet.

The youth themselves are “very excited they have a space,” she says. Adults have also given feedback along the lines of, *What would it have been like to have a space like this when we were growing up? We wish we had had a place like this.*

Although Foundry East Kootenay is now up and running, it won’t remain static. “Youth drive what services and programming we need,” Reid says. “It’s community-driven.” Once the centre gets an idea of which resources get used and what gaps there are, the offerings can be adjusted. “That’s one of the really great parts: how flexible we can be based on the changing and growing needs.” ■

foundrybc.ca/eastkootenay

“Just coming into the building and getting food or reading a book, and maybe casually connecting with somebody, is a safe entry point so that if they do need further support, they might be willing and feel safe to access some of the providers.”

—Amy Reid, Clinical Operations Manager at Foundry



PARK PROMOTES FUN IN FAUQUIER

Enjoy your play park. The sign at the entrance to the freshly built playground in Fauquier invites kids in, whether they're drawn to balancing on log beams, scaling a wee climbing wall or leaping from log to log. With Trust support, the Fauquier Community Club installed the park close to the community hall and next to the outdoor pavilion, and even added short trails on the nearby hillside and tucked a cozy bench into the brush. As with all the club's projects, the goal is to unlock the potential of people in the area and sustain a strong rural community. The kids get to play, learn and socialize—all vital to healthy childhood development—while family members also get the chance to get together and enjoy the outdoors while easily monitoring their kids. The project demonstrates one of the many ways the Trust supports Basin communities to take action to continue to be incredible and vibrant places.



Photo: Lee Orr

An abundance of options for Revelstoke youth

Biking. Creating anti-idling signs. Taking part in the lunchtime group "Rainbows & Allies." The Stoke Youth Network steps up strongly in many ways when it comes to giving Revelstoke youth opportunities to engage, experience new things and foster social connections. It also helps them develop their leadership skills and transition successfully to adulthood.

As one of 27 Basin Youth Networks supported by the Trust, the Stoke Youth Network is designed by youth for youth, with youth representation on its steering committee and outreach to local youth to discover what they want.

"The whole root of the Stoke Youth Network is giving a voice to youth—letting them have a say in what happens in their school and community and creating the programs they want to see or need," says Ainslee Arthurs, Coordinator.

Take Shredhers, the biking program for girls in grades six and seven started thanks to the girls' own initiative. Or Rainbows & Allies, formed when youth pointed out they wanted more resources for 2SLGBTQIA+ kids at their school. Or the Environment Club, begun by youth concerned about climate change who wanted to take action locally.

Through youth-driven activities like these, meaningful achievements combine with fun times—and there are longer-term positive effects on the youth, too. "When you provide these opportunities and spaces for youth," Arthurs says, "they find their voices and interests as leaders, problem solvers, advocates and allies."

The network also partners with Revelstoke businesses and organizations, whether it hopes to collaborate on an event, needs space or wants to book transportation. It even offers a fund to help youth overcome financial barriers so that they can participate in sports, arts, recreation and more.

It's no wonder that, in photos of their many activities, the smiles of the youth are so wide!

ourtrust.org/byn



Photos: Ken Knapp Photography



A youth creates impact in New Denver

AWARD CELEBRATES HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO ENHANCE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING—LIKE CASSANDRA QIU

FROM A YOUNG AGE, Cassandra Qiu felt a connection with her close-knit community of New Denver and was inspired to help others and create positive change.

Qiu, 19, was awarded a 2023 Youth Community Service Award from the Trust for her outstanding volunteerism. The Lucerne Elementary Secondary School graduate, now pursuing a Bachelor of Design at the University of British Columbia, is humbled by the recognition.

"I've always struggled with anxiety and imposter syndrome," she says. "I was always a go-getter, but I never imagined I could win something so big. Being a recipient is definitely validating."

Each year, the award supports students at secondary schools around the Basin with \$2,000. Rather than recognizing academic achievement, it celebrates young people who have made significant volunteer contributions that foster community well-being.

Qiu is one of those people. In 2016, at just 11 years old, Qiu felt compelled to help those impacted by the wildfire in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

"These people had nothing to do with me, but I wanted to raise money to help with relief,"

she says. "I was a very empathetic kid and that's always stayed with me; that wildfire event made me realize I can make an impact."

In 2017, she began supporting her local nursing home in various ways, including visiting with her cat to offer pet therapy. Her emotional maturity and can-do attitude led to coordinating initia-

tives that engaged her peers, such as spearheading a fundraising initiative in 2019 to secure a memorial picnic table in honour of her friend Gretchen Perks.

Facilitating a greeting card program involving schoolchildren and elderly residents during the pandemic in 2020 deepened her connection to her community, as did supporting the annual Hike for Hospice fundraiser in 2021, for

which she coordinated youth musical performances along the route.

While her studies dominate her schedule today, she hopes that other youth will follow her lead and volunteer their time.

"We are so capable as young people and we should use our big voices," she says. "Growing up, we are dependent on our schools, our teachers and community members, and there comes a time when we need to give back." ■

ourtrust.org/yкса

"I was always a go-getter, but I never imagined I could win something so big. Being a recipient is definitely validating."

Literacy: It's more than reading and writing

All ages hone a broad range of literacy skills through CBAL

BALFOUR RESIDENTS Gordon and Mary Bruce were looking to improve their technology skills when they first connected with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), which delivers literacy programming across the Basin.

"We really didn't know anything about our devices," says Gordon, 76. "And as President of Balfour Seniors, I was especially interested in learning new skills through CBAL's tech sessions so I could communicate well with members."

For Mary, 73, completing the classes alleviated her insecurities and connecting with her peers put her further at ease.

"I attended the tech sessions in a group setting, which I felt was more advantageous because I learned something from other people's questions," she says. "Being a part of CBAL has woken up parts of my brain that may have been asleep for a while."

Like the Bruces, seniors across the Basin are becoming more tech-savvy and taking their digital literacy to the next level, with new skills for navigating apps, settings and features on items like tablets, cell phones and computers. CBAL's digital programs are also teaching them about connecting through social media, how to navigate online forms and more. Plus, the organization offers book clubs and sessions on topics like managing money and writing memoirs.

"Seniors come to programs with a strong desire to continue learning," says CBAL Executive Director Desneiges Profili. In fact, "Tailoring our literacy programs to different demographics ensures that learners at every stage of life have opportunities to learn and grow."

PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES

To meet their lifelong learning needs, many people in the Basin have turned to CBAL since it was launched in 2001. For over 20 years, this organization has partnered with the Trust, which supports efforts to



improve the well-being of Basin residents and communities.

In addition to seniors connecting with CBAL, so do children and youth, families, immigrants and adults across 70 Basin communities.

For example, programs like Baby Goose empower parents to sing and share rhymes with their children. This provides children with foundational reading skills even before kindergarten, which can increase their opportunities, build self-esteem and provide confidence when it comes to taking on challenges in the future.

School-aged children can practice their reading abilities with CBAL, while adults can work one-on-one with CBAL staff to improve their employment skills.

A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH

Basin residents are quick to fill up CBAL's customized programs, led by literacy outreach coordinators who are responsive to the unique needs of their respective areas, taking a grassroots approach.

From 2022 to 2023, more people than ever engaged in CBAL's programming: 12,471 Basin residents in total, with adults and seniors making up 5,516 of that group and kids accounting for 6,955.

Schools, libraries and other local organizations all work closely with CBAL, whose staff are dedicated to building community connections and ensuring their programs are relevant and easily accessible.

"It's about creating meaningful connections in communities; these connections help to make people feel more comfortable in seeking literacy support," says Profili. "Literacy is a fundamental human right. CBAL is committed to supporting all Basin residents to embrace lifelong learning and to help them develop the skills they need to thrive." ■

ourtrust.org/cbal

**“Being a part of
CBAL has woken up
parts of my brain
that may have been
asleep for a while.”**

- CBAL learner Mary Bruce



Photo: Kenton Doupe

There's no place like a cozy, affordable, energy-wise home

Basin communities build solutions to help meet affordable housing need

TO INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY and quality of affordable housing in the Basin, the Trust is supporting groups throughout the region as they do energy retrofits on existing affordable rental buildings and build new affordable homes.

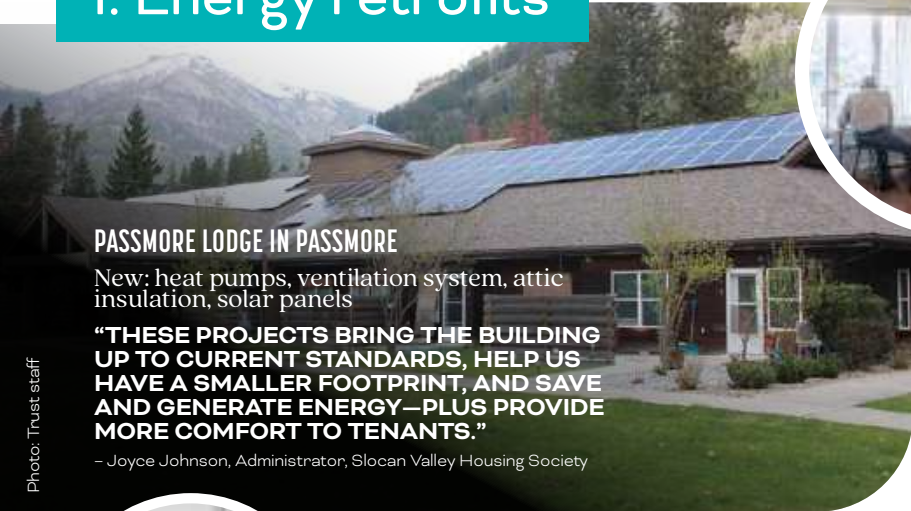
The retrofits are helping to save energy and lower costs, while reducing the impact on the environment and making tenants more comfortable. The new builds are opening doors to additional housing options for Basin residents.

Altogether, these projects are an important step toward creating healthy, resilient communities.

Here's a quick roundup of some of the projects.

ourtrust.org/housing

1: Energy retrofits



PASSMORE LODGE IN PASSMORE

New: heat pumps, ventilation system, attic insulation, solar panels

"THESE PROJECTS BRING THE BUILDING UP TO CURRENT STANDARDS, HELP US HAVE A SMALLER FOOTPRINT, AND SAVE AND GENERATE ENERGY—PLUS PROVIDE MORE COMFORT TO TENANTS."

– Joyce Johnson, Administrator, Slooan Valley Housing Society



ABBEYFIELD HOUSE IN GOLDEN

New: windows, heat pumps, solar panels & more

"THIS HAS HELPED ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY AND VIABILITY OF THE BUILDING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF SENIOR RESIDENTS, AND MORE EFFICIENCY AND ENERGY SAVINGS HELP US MAINTAIN AFFORDABLE RENTS."

– Karen Smedley, President, Abbeyfield House Society St. Paul's Golden



ROTARY VILLA IN NAKUSP

New: heat pumps, domestic hot water systems

"THESE UPGRADES TO OUR BUILDINGS HAVE ENABLED US TO GIVE OUR SENIORS COMFORT AND A REDUCTION IN COST OF LIVING, ALL WHILE DOING OUR PART TO REDUCE OUR IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE."

– Kees van der Pol, President, Arrowtarian Senior Citizens Society



LAKEVIEW MANOR IN INVERMERE

New: heat pumps, LED lighting

"EVERY DOLLAR WE CAN SAVE IN OUR OPERATING COSTS CAN OFFSET ANY POTENTIAL UTILITY INCREASES EACH YEAR."

– Al Larratt, President, Lakeview Manor Society



BLUEBELL MANOR IN RIONDEL

New: solar panels

"THIS WILL HELP OFFSET REGULAR OPERATING COSTS, SUPPORT OUR LOW-COST HOUSING MANDATE BY HOLDING DOWN UTILITIES COSTS FOR RESIDENTS, AND PROVIDE A MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FOOTPRINT FOR OUR BUILDING."

– Gerald Panio, Chair, Bluebell Manor Society

ARCHIBALD HOUSE & THE COTTAGE IN CRESTON

New: solar panels

"SINCE THE INSTALLATION OF THE SOLAR PANELS, ELECTRICITY EXPENSES FOR THE TWO RESIDENCES HAS BEEN REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY."

– Michelle Whiteaway, Treasurer, Kootenay Region Association for Community Living



Photo: Andrew Bibby Photography

Photo: Trust staff

Photo: Lee Orr

Photo: Andrew Bibby Photography

Photo: Tracy Connery

Photo: Tracy Connery

2: New homes

Photos: John Campbell



CASTLEGAR

New: four homes

Details:

- Built thanks to generously donated time, money and materials.
- Requires selected families to complete 500 hours of community volunteer work before becoming titled homeowners.
- First Habitat for Humanity project to meet BC Energy Step Code 5.

“WE’RE VERY PROUD OF THE DECREASED CARBON FOOTPRINT AND THE ENERGY COST SAVINGS TO THE HOMEOWNER. THEY’VE SAID THAT HAVING A SAFE AND SECURE HOME OF THEIR OWN IS LIFE-CHANGING; HOME OWNERSHIP WAS A DREAM THEY NEVER THOUGHT WOULD COME TRUE.”

– John Campbell, Chief Operating Officer, Habitat for Humanity Southeast BC



Photos: submitted by yaqan nuk7y staff

YAQAN NU?KIY

New: six homes

Details:

- Provided carpentry mentorships for Band members.
- Meets BC Energy Step Code 5 (the highest level).

“ENERGY BILLS WILL BE LOW; THIS WILL HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON SAVING MONEY AND HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT. THESE SMALL HOMES ARE SUITABLE FOR ELDERS TO YOUNG ADULTS JUST STARTING OUT ON THEIR OWN. THEY WILL PROVIDE HOUSING DIVERSITY FOR YAQAN NU?KIY MEMBERS, SO THEY CAN GROW UP HERE, RAISE A FAMILY AND AGE IN PLACE.”

– Debbie Edge-Partington, Housing Coordinator, yaqan nu?kiy

ROSSLAND

New: Rossland Yards, an apartment with 37 units

Details:

- Affordable rental units for people who live and work in the community, built by the Lower Columbia Affordable Housing Society.
- Includes fibre optic cable for high-speed connectivity.
- Meets BC Energy Step Code 5.

“THIS STATE-OF-THE-ART, ENERGY-EFFICIENT BUILDING IS A TREMENDOUS EXAMPLE OF HOW AFFORDABLE HOUSING SOCIETIES CAN WORK WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND FUNDERS LIKE THE TRUST TO ADDRESS MULTIPLE COMMUNITY NEEDS.”

– Jan Morton, President, Lower Columbia Affordable Housing Society

Photos: Sarah Bourne Photography



Since 2016, the Trust has committed over \$76.9 million to help create almost 1,100 affordable rental homes and upgrade over 1,900 units.

This has resulted in:

- annual energy savings of approximately 5.5 million equivalent kilowatt hours
- annual operating-cost savings of approximately \$605,000. ■

Diligent monitoring helps keep potentially disastrous mussels out

A PROGRAM TARGETS HIGHLY DESTRUCTIVE ZEBRA AND QUAGGA MUSSELS



They may be small, but they're a significant hazard.

"Zebra and quagga mussels represent a serious threat to BC's aquatic ecosystems and substantial economic impacts to sectors such as hydropower, agricultural irrigation, municipal water supplies, tourism and recreational boating." So says Martina Beck, Unit Head of Freshwater Applied Science and Programs with the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

That's why, driving in and out of the Basin, you may have noticed watercraft-inspection stations on the side of the highway. Their goal is simple: to keep these hugely harmful invasive zebra and quagga mussels out of our waterways. And, so far, the Invasive Mussel Defence Program has managed to do just that.

The good news is that there is currently no evidence of either species in BC waterways (whereas they're now in 33 American states and in four Canadian provinces: Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec).

"Unfortunately, though, we can't let our guard down, as many waterways in this region offer suitable conditions for these mussels to survive," says Beck.

And the impacts are shocking. These creatures could clog water intakes, reduce the availability of nutrients essential for aquatic life, and cause beaches and docks to become encrusted with shells. Financially, the estimated annual cost of mitigation is upwards of \$129 million provincially, including a minimum of \$17 million targeting hydro infrastructure.

To help keep them out, the Invasive Mussel Defence Program —delivered by the provincial government for more than a decade and supported by the Trust, Columbia Power, BC Hydro, FortisBC and others—has been diligently inspecting watercrafts (as well as any sporting and recreational equipment that comes into contact with water) at inspection stations across the province—including the Basin. It has also been doing monitoring at lakes and educating

boaters on the vital importance of practicing "clean, drain, dry" on watercraft and equipment after every use.

In 2023, the program completed 20,900 inspections, discovering 14 mussel-fouled watercrafts. Fortunately, the monitoring of all samples from 83 priority waterbodies across the province tested negative for zebra or quagga mussels.

The ability of such a small organism (no bigger than a fingernail) to greatly impact flora, fauna and industry up and down Basin waterways is alarming. However, Basin residents can prevent invasives from hitching a ride on boats or other watercraft by following the "clean, drain, dry" guidelines when moving between water bodies. ■

gov.bc.ca/invasivemussels



Zebra and quagga mussels (ZQM), once established, have the potential to significantly impact the operational efficiency of hydroelectric facilities, including those jointly owned by the Trust and Columbia Power. These mussels attach to various surfaces, including many components of generating stations and dams. Debris screens and water intakes are particularly susceptible to ZQM colonization. The mussels form thick mats by attaching to components and each other, reducing the volume of water flowing through a facility and overall efficiency. This results in decreased power production and increased wear and tear on the equipment. Consequently, annual maintenance time and costs rise dramatically as workers try to remove the mussels. The best strategy to manage ZQM is prevention, as they are extremely difficult to eradicate once established.





Photo: Selkirk College

FORGING A BRIGHT FUTURE

The ancient techniques taught at Selkirk College’s Blacksmithing and Metal Art Program don’t necessarily require ancient tools. With the installation of four new state-of-the-art forges, the program welcomed a modern upgrade. With Trust support, the college replaced older equipment in the blacksmith shop in Nelson with Canadian-made forges that “have changed the program,” according to instructor Kevin Kratz. The new additions meet contemporary safety standards, can heat metal to 1,260°C and can accommodate pattern-welded steel to hammer out intricate pieces like knives and swords. They’re also contributing to building and enhancing the local workforce through post-secondary education. “We are achieving tangible results for our students because of this vital funding,” says Tracy Punched, Dean, School of the Arts. “It strengthens the program and helps ensure viability for current and future students.”

A college gets mobile

COTR delivers accessible education through a classroom on wheels

Accessible post-secondary education is spreading among Basin communities. Instead of transportation bringing students to class, a partnership between the Trust and College of the Rockies (COTR) is bringing classes to students.

In an effort to elevate and diversify the college experience for students, COTR introduced an innovative mobile classroom in 2023. The 25-foot, multi-purpose classroom on wheels addresses barriers to education by bringing communities, students, instructors and residents together for workforce training, recruitment and outreach activities.

For example, the mobile classroom rolled into the Creston community for its annual Blossom Festival in May 2024, a spring celebration of the town’s centennial birthday. The college’s Creston campus hosted the mobile classroom to showcase its many offerings, including providing the opportunity to try out mini-courses and information sessions on how to apply to and prepare for college. The new COTR mascot, Digger the Dog, was even on hand to welcome prospective students.

“Through this significant investment in College of the Rockies, the Trust is supporting the success of our students and communities in the region,” says Paul Vogt, COTR President and CEO. “This exciting expansion of our partnership will boost applied and work-integrated learning, industry engagement and new program development opportunities that support our students and, in turn, our regional economy.”



Photos: Jeff Banman Photography



Photo: Aidan Jones

Promoting safety, independence and calm

Creating a tidy, soothing environment for young children can be essential to their comfort and early development—and that’s exactly what Fernie’s Wild Wapiti Playschool has done. The centre, which opened in June 2023 thanks in part to Trust support, offers

24 spots for children from one to five years old. The playschool enhanced its facility by purchasing essential items that improve safety and independence for children. This included a shoe rack that minimizes tripping hazards and promotes a sense of accomplishment as children manage their own shoes. Additionally, the centre installed three lounge chairs in its preschool cozy corner, creating a tranquil space for children to regulate their emotions, read or interact with staff. Throughout the Basin, Trust programs have helped create more than 1,300 new childcare spaces and improve more than 3,500 existing ones.

Ready to yodel for a long time to come

As part of the world’s largest free-standing cuckoo clock, a new-and-improved Happy Hans is ready to pop out and yodel to the delight of folks in Kimberley’s downtown Platzl. Overseen by the Kimberley Chamber of Commerce, the refurbishment of this fun city feature included doing interior work like adding insulation and upgrading the electrical system and audio equipment, plus having a local artist repaint Happy Hans himself and aspects like the clock face and decorative inlays. These efforts are great examples of how the Trust helps communities achieve their unique aspirations—and maintaining a yodelling clock is certainly unique! The city’s landmark—built in 1972 to help attract tourists to the newly themed Bavarian town—is now preserved well into the future.



Photo: Nicole Leclair Photography



VALEMOUNT’S NEW BUS KEEPS THE COMMUNITY ROLLING

Valemount residents are merrily on the move in their new community shuttle bus, which is used by a range of groups to whisk passengers away on camping adventures and to sports games, concerts, farmers’ markets and other activities in the region. The Ford E450 24-seater was purchased by the Valemount Community Bus Society with support from the Trust’s ReDi Grants, a program where residents have input on which projects to fund and provides communities with the resources they need to achieve their own unique aspirations and increase community well-being. Replacing the old bus, which had air conditioning but lacked heating—a definite issue during Valemount’s frigid winters—was a must when the society realized the bus wasn’t going to pass its commercial vehicle inspection. Now, the new bus boasts spacious seating, winter tires, rear storage, air conditioning and a heating system that provides a comfortable journey.

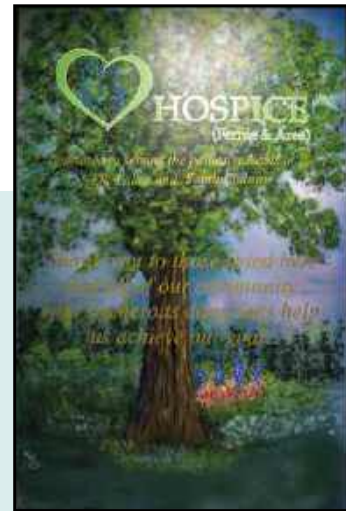


Photos: Ruby Hogge



Ski hill upgrades increase winter fun in Salmo

Weather permitting, the Salmo Ski Hill has been a fun playground for winter recreation since 1962, kept affordable thanks to factors like many volunteer staff. However, it was ready for some sprucing up. Since undergoing improvements supported by the Trust in January 2023, including energy retrofits, the family-friendly hill now boasts freshly renovated facilities with a new roof, insulation, windows and doors; upgraded plumbing and electrical systems; wheelchair-accessible bathrooms; and a covered deck, amongst other items. The project focused on increasing accessibility and enhancing energy efficiency to keep the price of lift tickets affordable—affecting factors like overall community well-being while reducing the hill's contributions to climate change. “Salmo Ski Hill brings economy into our community, as well as sport and physical fitness opportunities,” says Margaret MacDonald, Treasurer. “The affordability ensures kids throughout the region can enjoy winter sport.”



Elk Valley Hospice leads with heart

Where do Elk Valley residents coping with end-of-life and bereavement experiences turn for companionship and support? The answer is the Elk Valley Hospice, which believes no one has to grieve or die alone. With guidance from the Trust's Non-Profit Advisors Program—intended to improve the capacity and sustainability of non-profit organizations in the Basin—the hospice developed a strategic plan that focused on items like boosting its financial sustainability, increasing community awareness, improving volunteer retention and recruitment, providing more community education opportunities and improving Board governance. It has already seen positive results in terms of spreading awareness and engaging with people, while also developing ways to grow effectively into the future. “When focusing on the business side of the non-profit, it's easy to lose track of the bigger purpose of what we're trying to achieve,” says Coordinator Jade Elford. “But with the program's guidance, our biggest takeaway was to lead with the heart.”

The Bucks claim their stompin' grounds

Cranbrook becomes home to a community-minded hockey club

ON A COLD winter day, there's one sure way to bring up your heart rate and generate some heat: bundle into an arena with thousands of other fans and cheer on your local hockey team. In Cranbrook, this scene is currently possible thanks to the Cranbrook Bucks.

This BC Hockey League team was established shortly after the previous club, the Kootenay Ice, announced in 2019 that it was moving to Winnipeg. Nathan Lieuwen, a former player of the Kootenay Ice, stepped in with partners Scott Niedermayer, Adam Cracknell, Craig Shostak, and Steve King. With support from Columbia Basin Trust, they established the new Cranbrook Bucks.

"My partners and I really believe that Cranbrook is a hockey town, and that there are true hockey fans here that really care about their community," says Lieuwen, Majority Owner and President. "We found ourselves in the unique position to bring a club here, so we went

to work immediately."

Lieuwen himself is committed to the city. Originally from Abbotsford, he moved to Cranbrook at age 16 to play for the Kootenay Ice. He met his wife there, and then they left for Lieuwen to pursue professional hockey with the National Hockey League, a career that was unfortunately cut short due to injuries. Cranbrook, though, was where they continued to spend summers, and where he and his family decided to settle down.

"We love the community," he says. "We love the geography. We're very fortunate to have the community that we have here. It's such a nice size and the East Kootenay as a whole has been a good fit for us."

It's also a great fit for the club.

The start, however, was a little rough. With financing in hand, including from the Trust, the club was able to take essential steps like signing up players and hiring a head coach and general manager. But by the time the first game rolled around, the pandemic had thoroughly hit.

"I watched our first official game in a pod season in Penticton," says Lieuwen. "It was special, but also super bizarre. Obviously our bread and butter is having people come together and watch, which is something they couldn't do efficiently for quite a long time."

By the next season, though, the world had opened up enough for the team to have its home opener before a real-life crowd. "It had been a long time coming, and extended because of everything that

was happening in the world. But it was a very special moment and it was great to see Cranbrook rally around this team."

The rallying has continued ever since. Sure, there are ups and downs as the team wins...or doesn't. But between folks streaming into the arena and local businesses lending support, "It's been a very positive reaction from the community."

This all-for-one sentiment is also why Lieuwen felt the Trust was a great organization to partner with. "They also saw the vision for this," he says. "They also want Cranbrook to succeed, not just in the economic sense but in the social sense as well."

Based out of what Lieuwen describes as a "beautiful building" (Western Financial Place), the club also integrates itself into the community in other ways. "We've become quite diverse. We offer the hockey school; we've done that since the beginning to try to help with the younger generation of talent in the area. And now more recently we started a hockey academy, as we saw a big gap in the need for development for kids around the ages of 15/16/17." In addition, the club runs the food and beverage facilities in the building.

It's a community-minded path that Lieuwen and the club intend to keep following. "We don't have any plans of going anywhere else. Hopefully we can continue to grow this thing into something even bigger than it is today." ■

ourtrust.org/investments



Photo: Tyler Zhao Photography



“My partners and I really believe that Cranbrook is a hockey town, and that there are true hockey fans here that really care about their community.”

—Nathan Lieuwen, Majority Owner and President of the Cranbrook Bucks



Photos: Trever Chawley



CRAFTING A GOLDEN BREWERY

Whitetooth Brewing taps into innovation to brew a bright future

WHEN LIFE gives you lemons, make lemonade—or, in this case, brew beer. This proverb exemplifies Whitetooth Brewing Co.'s can-do spirit. Established in Golden in 2016 by Kent Donaldson and Mark Nagao, the microbrewery is renowned for its Belgian-inspired and West Coast-influenced ales.

For many people in Golden, a visit to the local brewery is a ritual. For Donaldson, it's a life-style-turned-business. And although it's been a tough time for independent breweries, financing from the Trust in 2024 has helped Whitetooth Brewing grow and has given the owners peace of mind.

"It's challenging for all craft breweries in Canada right now. You've seen consumer purchasing power shrink and supply chain costs escalate," Donaldson says. "We've developed a really good business relationship with the Trust; they understand that we're trying to make something good happen here in Golden."

Facing distribution setbacks, the microbrewery recently came up with an in-house solution; it purchased a delivery van and developed a co-op with another brewery to share the load of shipping products throughout the Kootenay/Columbia regions.

"I think the takeaway is to do it yourself rather than depend on outside services," Donaldson



says. "That way you have control over timing and expenditures; it allows you to react to changing business conditions."

Initial support from the Trust in 2019 allowed them to buy top-notch canning equipment to amp up their craft. In 2021, the business then benefited from the Trust's business advisory support. Since then, revenue has grown 46 per cent, and today the brewery is thriving with a solid 17-person team.

"We've got skilled staff on hand to keep the canning line running smoothly, and we now apply labelling in-house," he says. "It's easier to package on our own timelines instead of having to rely on a big company to do it. Plus, it's more economical."

A seasoned entrepreneur who is now used to the industry's ebbs and flows, Donaldson remains focused on growing Whitetooth Brewing into a profitable regional business. He's looking forward to hosting more beer enthusiasts in the expanded tasting room, which has doubled in size to accommodate 100 people, as well as on the sunny patio during the summer high season." ■

ourtrust.org/investments

BENEFITS OF THE TRUST 2023/24

\$80.8M
total benefits

\$96M
in revenue

\$53.1M in grants
and initiatives

2,800+ projects
supported

\$6.2M in
capital projects

\$13M in new
business loans

64 active programs
and initiatives

\$8.5M in new real
estate investments

\$2.1B total book
value of assets

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Basin communities and residents benefit from the Trust's steadfast investments.

RETURN ON INVESTMENTS

8.25%
power projects

5.34%
private placements

10%
market securities

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Trust provided \$80.8 million for over 2,800 projects to support the efforts of Basin communities, businesses and residents in 2023/24.

This includes \$53.1 million in grants, \$8.5 million in real estate investments, \$13 million in new business loans, and \$6.2 million in capital investments related to broadband infrastructure and economic programs.

The Trust revenues exceeded targets and totaled \$96 million thanks to the performance of its investments, including the hydropower facilities it jointly owns with Columbia Power Corporation.

ourtrust.org/annualreport2024





A BEEKEEPER SWEETENS HER SKILLS

Business advisory services educate entrepreneurs, including this Creston apiarist

HOW TO HIRE good employees. How to lead them well. How to read your financials. In addition to helping keep about 400 colonies of bees healthy and productive, and producing award-winning honey, these are some of the topics that Amanda Goodman Lee has been brushing up on lately.

“It’s impossible to learn everything at once,” says the co-owner of Honey Bee Zen Apiaries in Creston. “And as your business grows and grows and grows, it’s always changing.”

Recently, participating in a free learning series has enabled her to expand her skills, offered through the Trust.

Honey Bee Zen Apiaries is one of the largest producers of natural raw honey in the Columbia Basin. In addition to raising thousands of bees, it produces honey under the names Honey Bee Zen and Swan Valley, and supplies to about 40 stores. “There’s probably no place where we haven’t got honey in some form or another in the Kootenays,” says Goodman Lee’s husband and partner Jeff Lee.

There’s also beeswax candles and lip balms, beekeeping courses and honey judging, providing pollination units to Creston Valley orchards, and more. In other words, the apiary has lots going on.

To keep on top of it, Goodman Lee has taken multiple offerings through the Trust’s Basin Business Advisors program.

For example, she completed the On-Farm Recruitment and Readiness Series, which helped farmers and food producers plan how to hire, onboard and retain workers for the 2024 season. Topics included items like writing appealing job descriptions and the ins and outs of conducting interviews.

“I got some really valuable information,” she says.

In the Leadership Learning Pathway, she learned how to implement a reliable blueprint so she can guide her team toward desired results. One step, for example, was to place herself in what she dubs the

CEO chair. Before, “I was working too much in my business,” she says, “and not on my business.”

Now, she has an organizational chart and has drafted an employee handbook; roles are clear, and she knows who reports to whom and what tasks belong on which person’s plate.

In addition to online workshops, these programs feature working groups. Here, participants—representing a range of small businesses around the Basin—discuss issues and solutions with each other.

“You realize that you’re not alone,” she says. “The challenges that I’m having are similar to what other small businesses are having. Some people shared their mistakes and helped me learn, and I hope people learned from mine as well.”

Plus, Goodman Lee has benefited from one-on-one time with a business advisor, “where you can really dive down into your business” and get an informed outside perspective.

She also completed the Financial Fundamentals series, which boosted her knowledge on topics like cost of goods sold and gross margins. Whereas reviewing her books used to put a knot in her stomach, she now feels “empowered by having the language that I can speak to my accountant with.”

Altogether, the program has had immense impact. As someone who once said, “I can’t keep up and I’m spread so thin,” she now says, “I feel lighter.” Her vision for the company’s future is stronger. “In these courses, I am really forcing myself out of my comfort zone. And I think as a business owner, we have to.”

Which is why she encourages other business owners to take advantage of such offerings, delivered by the Trust in the aim of helping keep Basin businesses strong as they create local employment and, in the apiary’s case, provide access to locally grown food.

“We are so lucky to have this program available to us.” ■

ourtrust.org/bba

“I WAS WORKING TOO MUCH IN MY BUSINESS, AND NOT ON MY BUSINESS.”

- Amanda Goodman Lee, Co-owner at Honey Bee Zen Apiaries



Cultivating more than food

Running a small-scale organic farm requires attracting and retaining dependable seasonal staff year after year. With support from a Trust wage subsidy, Revelstoke's Terra Firma Farms has been able to supplement its employees' wages—one of the many ways primary food producers like this have helped to increase Basin residents' access to locally grown, healthy food, all while supporting employment and keeping their small businesses strong. "This program has been invaluable," says co-owner Terra Park. By enabling the farm to offer a competitive wage, "It has played a pivotal role in expanding the capacity of our farm, empowering us to focus on growing nutritious food for our community while also helping us maintain affordable prices." ■

ourtrust.org/wagesubsidies



Photos: Keri Knapp Photography

Local Action, Basin Impact



Changes in environmental conditions affect all facets of life, but together we are making a difference as we work toward a more climate-resilient Basin.

1,272

Total number of projects supported



155,341,871
Energy Saved

(equivalent kWh)

Equivalent to powering 13,075 homes for one year.



5,164,697
Energy Produced

(equivalent kWh)

Enough for powering 435 homes for one year.

Greenhouse Emissions Reduced

Equivalent to removing 1,932 gas-powered cars off the road for one year.

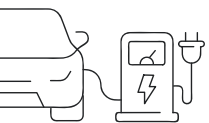
8,246,425kg

Total Trust Funds Committed to Climate Projects: **\$111,749,814**

Total Funds Attracted **\$287,752,891**



154 Solar Projects



68

ELECTRIC VEHICLES ACQUIRED

32

CHARGING STATIONS INSTALLED



273

Energy retrofit projects

1,800,420kg

of food waste diverted from the landfill

Land Treated for Wildfire:

488 ha

Equivalent to 910 football fields

Basin groups make climate-positive moves

Building resilience to face the future with confidence

THERE ARE an abundance of ways to prepare for the changing climate. This might mean a food producer taking stock of upcoming challenges and opportunities and deciding how to shift its practices. Or a community working to prepare residents for a wildfire. Or an organization undertaking measures to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions.

Groups of all sizes are acting now to make the Basin more resilient to climate change while mitigating and adapting to its impacts.

Check out some of these efforts, supported by the Trust.

A smart ride

In the ʔaḡam community, you'll see two fewer carbon-emitting trucks on the road. To reduce its emissions, ʔaḡam has replaced two gas vehicles with two electric trucks, along with installing two charging stations powered through a building with a solar array.

"ʔaḡam strongly desires to mitigate its impact on the environment and preserve the world we live in. Contributing toward our Ka knihwi-tiyaḡa (strategic plan) goals, this project was an exciting opportunity to make an immediate impact in the fight against climate change. This directly affects the environment and ensures that electric vehicles are seen as a realistic and achievable solution."

— Ivan Winter, Director of Finances, ʔaḡam



Ready in an emergency

Grohman Creek is located a beautiful boat ride away from Nelson. With road access to this community extremely limited, the Grohman Creek Docking Society has assessed the risk of wildfire, created an emergency plan and evacuation guide, and provided training to residents when it comes to following FireSmart guidelines and being prepared for wildfire.

“Since we are geographically isolated, our community needs to take ownership of emergency response efforts. It was inspiring to see residents coming together to help each other be prepared for wildfire threats in our area, as well as other emergency events.”

– Jeff Muldoon, President, Grohman Creek Docking Society



Photo: Stacked Films



Photo: Tyler Zhao Photography

A farm modifies its methods

Located in Wycliffe, Apple Quill Farm grows crops as diverse as raspberries, garlic, beets and tomatoes, sold on-site and at nearby farmers' markets. It's installing a solar array, in-ground radiant tube heating system, thermal curtain and seasonal tunnel with a shade cloth.

“With a changing climate and unpredictable summer heat waves, consistent local produce throughout the year is food security at its best. In the cooler season, more effectively warming and maintaining the growing environment increases plant growth, reduces plant stress and lengthens our growing season. Plus, going solar aligns with our values and reduces our carbon footprint.”

– Marie-Eve Fradette, Owner, Apple Quill Farm

Photo: Webster Film & Photo

Upgrades on a busy hall

From a farmers' market to exercises classes, the Baynes Lake Community Hall acts as a community hub. To be more climate-friendly when it comes to heating and cooling, plus make the hall more fire-resilient, the Baynes Lake Community Society is upgrading its windows and exterior doors and installing fire-resistant siding.

“The hall and grounds serve as an anchor in the community, positively influencing health and social well-being. Replacing the aging building envelope will make our infrastructure more resilient, ensuring the facility is viable going forward while reducing both heating and cooling costs, as well as greenhouse gas emissions.”

– Treanne See, Member, Baynes Lake Community Society ■



Affordable rental housing in the Basin is also taking steps to become more energy efficient. See page 16.

Photos: Tyler Zhao Photography

READY, SET, PREVENT

Communities take proactive measures to minimize risk of wildfires

WILDFIRE. While it plays an important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems, it can pose a threat to communities. Effective preparation is essential. Organizations throughout the Basin are implementing a variety of strategies to manage wildfire risk. These proactive measures aim to prevent wildfires when possible and respond effectively to contain and extinguish them quickly, thereby minimizing damage and enhancing community resilience.

Supported by the Trust, communities have created community protection plans, reduced wildfire fuels on lands that border communities, trained wildfire fighters and purchased essential equipment.



SHUSWAP BAND

Shuswap Band reduced wildfire fuels on 52 hectares of land during a project supported by the Trust and the Province of BC that concluded at the end of 2022, with activities like thinning, pruning, chipping and hauling. During the planning and treatment, the project supported 10 jobs. By protecting critical resources like creeks, minimizing forest fuels like common juniper and using FireSmart theories—plus developing a solid team equipped with the proper training and proper tools—the Band has greatly reduced the wildfire threat in the area.

“Residents directly adjacent to and in proximity of this wildland–urban interface unit have enthusiastically provided positive feedback on the project, as it has successfully reduced the threat of wildfire for homeowners, communities and Shuswap Band. The Band has been leading local fuel–management programs and mitigation projects for about 13 years now, and the workers, equipment and tools for conducting this work are now in place.”

— Sierra Stump, Director of Lands & Public Works, Shuswap Band





Photos: Trust staff

HILLS

Surrounded by forests, the community of Hills is very aware of what a major wildfire could mean for it and its residents. This is why, in 2021 and 2022, the Hills Emergency Services Society contracted the development of a fuel management prescription and implemented it on Hills' community parkland, as well as had a FireSmart representative conduct property assessments. Supported by the Trust and the Province of BC, the project created nearly a dozen short-term wildfire-mitigation jobs, with training provided to these workers and to firefighting volunteers from Hills, New Denver, Burton and Edgewood.

"The on-the-ground work in the treated area has become an easily accessible showcase for what a fuel-managed (or 'FireSmart-ed') area looks like. The project has also built capacity and skills within the area by offering certified courses to volunteers from Hills and surrounding communities, increasing understanding of wildfire behaviour and the responses to it."

— Richard Allin, Treasurer, Hills Emergency Services Society



RADIUM HOT SPRINGS

In spring 2024, the volunteer firefighters of the Radium Hot Springs Fire Department were able to train with an additional resource: a structure protection unit purchased with Trust support. Used to store wildfire-fighting items, from hoses to sprinklers, and haul them to where they're required, the trailer helps residents rest assured that the department is well equipped to protect them and their community from wildfire.

"The benefits of a trailer versus the old engine are more accessibility and easier access to equipment. Several members of the team can now go into the trailer at the same time, get what they need and quickly return to the site. Using a truck and trailer will allow us to better protect Radium, as we can set up sprinkler protection where it's needed most."

— Trevor Carr, Fire Chief, Radium Hot Springs Fire Department ■

ECOSYSTEM ENHANCEMENT

What can be done to ensure a healthy and resilient natural environment? Here are three examples of major on-the-ground environmental enhancement initiatives that are maintaining and improving ecological health and native biodiversity in a variety of ecosystems.



Photo: Webster Film & Photo

Yaq'it ʔa'knuqʔi'it First Nation is working to restore the northern portion of Shottanana Lake.

A wetland gets vital attention

Yaq'it ʔa'knuqʔi'it First Nation helps heal the land

"We hold a covenant with the Creator to be the caretakers and stewards of Yaq'it ʔa'knuqʔi'it lands," says Nasuʔkin (Chief) Heidi Gravelle of Yaq'it ʔa'knuqʔi'it First Nation. "With that we have an obligation to restore, protect and be the voices of our lands."

Restoring, protecting and speaking up for the land is at the heart of a five-year project being implemented by the First Nation, focused on the northern portion of Shottanana Lake. Located on its reserve in the southern East Kootenay, the aim is to restore a healthy, functional wetland that supports native wildlife and increases open water habitat for species like ungulates and the at-risk western painted turtle.

"Our lands provide us with an ecosystem where our waters, plants and animals work together to provide us with the sustenance to maintain our ways of life since time immemorial," says Nasuʔkin Gravelle.

This northern portion of the lake is fed by ground-water, so a main objective has been to restore this connection so that surface water can return to this area of the landscape. To this end, excavators and bulldozers have deepened the basin and loosened compacted soils. Also, features that appeal to western painted turtles have been added, such as floating or partially submerged logs that provide places for them to bask.

In addition, the project team has worked on managing invasive plants, including Canada thistle, bull thistle, hound's tongue and downy brome. The next step is to continue invasive plant management efforts, as well as revegetate with annual rye as a cover crop, followed by seeding and planting native vegetation. Finally, the area will be fenced to protect the newly seeded and planted vegetation from the large number of elk that can roam the reserve; this will be removed once the plants are established so that animals can fully enjoy the lake.

As of spring 2024, the project had restored 1.1 hectares of open water, 4.9 hectares of upland planting areas and 0.3 hectares of turtle-nesting habitat. Once completed, the lake will provide a water source for animals like elk and deer, habitat for western painted turtle, nesting habitat for waterfowl, and breeding habitat for things like frogs, toads and salamanders. It will also increase opportunities for hunting and observing wildlife.

Nasuʔkin Gravelle states that, for the ʔakanuxuník people, this project accomplishes a lot. "Our culture is interwoven with our land and water. They thrive together, or die together," she says. "The transformative action of reconciling our land is a pathway to healing, while honouring our culture, our creator and our ancestors. We believe this is a model for future land-reconciliation projects: ʔakanuxuník land stewardship directed by ʔakanuxuník people."

Big Ranch ecosystem enhancement project between Elkford and Sparwood.

A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES ENHANCE A BIG SPACE

Opening forest canopy and promoting vegetation growth are both vital steps in enhancing 296 hectares of forest, grassland and wetland ecosystems at the Big Ranch Conservation Property Complex, to the benefit of Rocky Mountain elk and other species. Big Ranch is owned by The Nature Trust of BC and is located between Elkford and Sparwood.

Now in its final year, the five-year project, led by the Sparwood and District Fish and Wildlife Association, has achieved tasks like removing trees to allow light to reach the understory, fertilizing grasses, creating and enhancing seasonal wetlands, creating wildlife trees, and planting trees in some areas to create visual buffers between humans and wildlife.

More trees will be coming soon, along with treating for invasive weeds, updating the kiosk to educate the public, and installing cameras to monitor the project's results.

"The Big Ranch ecosystem enhancement project has been a great success," says Matt Huryn, Project Lead. "Our club has been able to complete meaningful and impactful work on the local landscape and foster great collaboration and partnerships along the way."

Photos: Kyle Hamilton



Since 2017, the Trust has supported 31 ecosystem enhancement projects with \$16.6 million.

Adding bat condos, like this one, are one of many bat-roosting enhancements happening around the region.



BATS GET NEW ROOM TO ROOST

As of early spring 2024, a team from Wildlife Conservation Society Canada had created 106 BradenBark structures, 47 wildlife trees and a couple of condos—all for the benefit of bats.

Since 2021, the society's project—supported by the Trust and taking place in a wide variety of locations in the Basin thanks to many project partners—has been giving bats places to roost, encouraging their abundance, diversity and resiliency. Twelve species call the Basin home, such as the Yuma myotis and endangered little brown myotis, and fulfill important functions in ecosystems like wetlands and forests, including consuming a significant number of insects.

"Wildlife trees" feature chainsaw cuts that simulate lightning strikes, which loosen bark or create other cavities for bat-roosting habitat. BradenBark is an artificial bark that wraps around young trees or poles and mimics loose bark. And bat condos are going up in areas where bats have been entering a building to roost, but the building is being torn down or closed off.

It's a multi-pronged, novel approach. So far, says Heather Gates, who is leading the project, "Clearly it's successful and it's working for the bats." ■

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Photos: Andrew Bibby Photography

A lifeline from above

Hope Air keeps residents close to heart, and to health care

“Hope Air has allowed me to live where my heart wants to be, without sacrificing quality health care,” says Creston resident Danielle. “Hope Air is an absolute gift.”

This highlights a conundrum that too many residents in the Columbia Basin face. If they require specialized medical services, do they have to move away from their small or rural communities? Or do they have to burden themselves financially to travel far to get the necessary help?

Cue Hope Air!

Hope Air believes all Canadians should have access to the health care they need, no matter where they live, including in the Basin. It has been providing support to Basin residents for nearly 25 years and has assisted patients across the country in need

with over 170,000 travel arrangements since its inception in 1986.

The Trust supports efforts that help Basin residents address community challenges and opportunities. This emphasis has created the ideal runway for both organizations to take flight in a joint effort to help locals in the region, a partnership that started in 2014.

The demand for medically necessary travel has been on an uphill trajectory since the end of the pandemic. In 2023, for example, residents of the Basin used the service at an increased frequency of 176 per cent, totalling 1,860 travel arrangements—and estimates have the partnership poised to assist hundreds of more travel arrangements for Basin residents over the next three years.



Meet Curtis

Meet Curtis, a logger, firefighter and community-minded individual who lives in Jaffray. In 2012, he began to develop horrible headaches and loss of feeling, later confirmed to be from a series of strokes. Unclear as to the cause of the strokes, Curtis' neurological disorder forced him to seek treatment in Vancouver.

“It’s hard. You can’t afford to travel regularly and be away from family. It’s stressful for all of us,” says Curtis.

Then the tight-knit family received another blow with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis for Curtis' wife.

Fortunately, Hope Air was available for both family members, and the flights to treatment have been pivotal for them both.

Meet Catherine

Catherine has put on many kilometres in what has turned out to be a battle against a rare form of sinus cancer.

Originally from Fernie, Catherine's fight began with frequent trips to Calgary for a multitude of procedures. After being told that she could no longer access care in Alberta, she relocated to Cranbrook in 2017 to be closer to a regional hospital and airport, and began taking trips to Vancouver—which quickly began chewing through her savings.

Fortunately, she then heard about Hope Air. In 2023, Hope Air provided her with two flights that eased the challenges involved with her medical journey.

“The biggest thing Hope Air has done for me is that they've taken the stress out of cancer,” says Catherine. “For a cancer patient, it is never a short journey.”



Photo: Tyler Zhao Photography

Meet Danielle

Since the 1980s, Danielle has lived with cervical dystonia, a debilitating condition that causes involuntary muscle contractions. For a while, treatment relieved the symptoms of this Creston resident. But then, in 2008, they returned.

“I needed to reconnect with the Movement Disorders Clinic in Vancouver,” says Danielle. “My disability had forced my exit from the workforce, which severely affected my income.”

Having now flown with Hope Air 25 times, Danielle has grown to greatly appreciate the place she calls home, as much as she cherishes what Hope Air has been able to do for her.

She can't say it enough: “Hope Air has allowed me to live where my heart wants to be, without sacrificing quality health care. Hope Air is an absolute gift.” ■

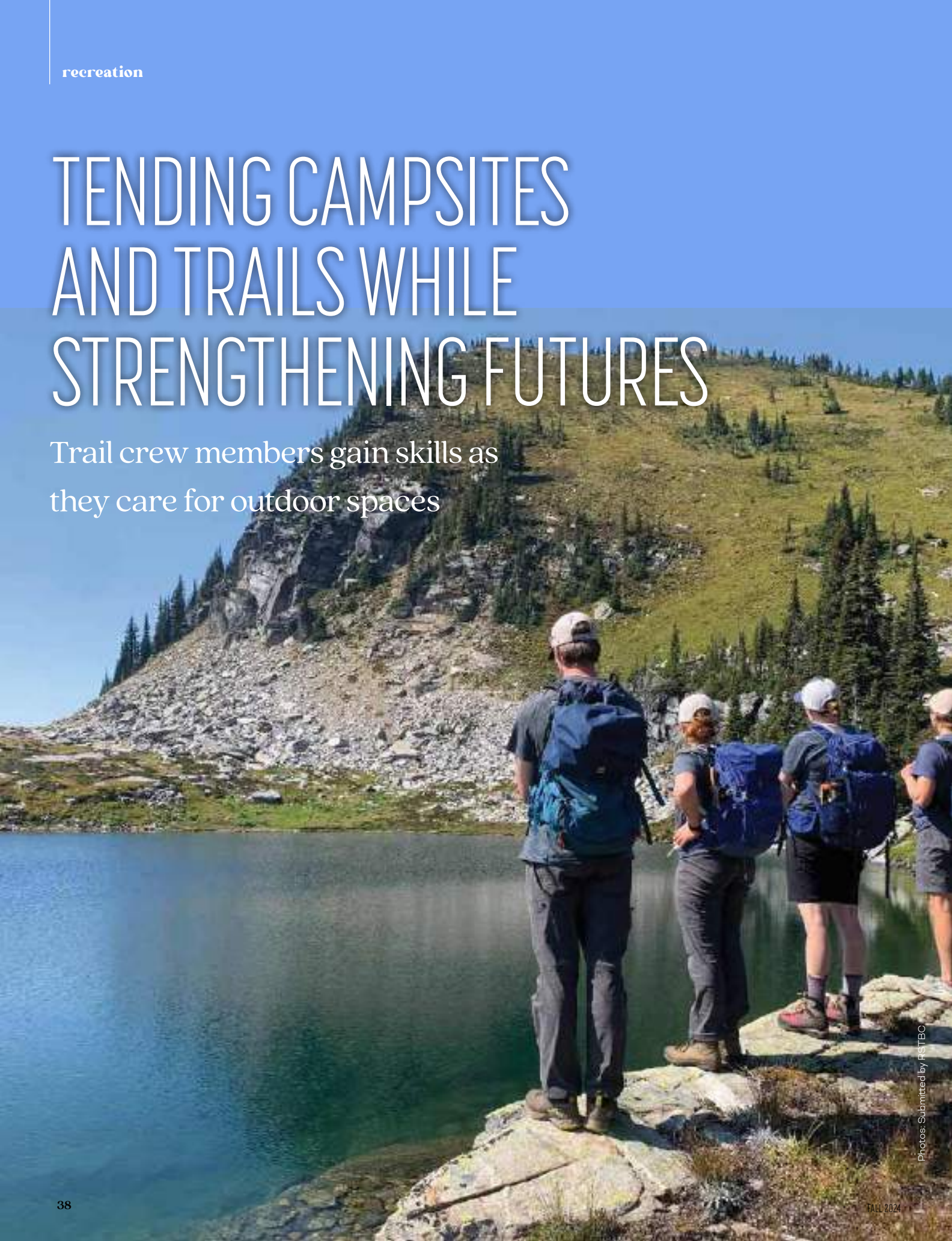
hopeair.ca



Photo: Andrew Bibby Photography

TENDING CAMPSITES AND TRAILS WHILE STRENGTHENING FUTURES

Trail crew members gain skills as they care for outdoor spaces



Photos: Submitted by RSTBC



IN ADDITION TO SUPPORTING TRAIL CREW PROGRAMS, THE TRUST HAS ALSO HELPED RECREATION-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE BASIN DEVELOP, ENHANCE OR MAINTAIN OVER 450 KILOMETRES OF TRAILS SINCE 2020.



IN THE COLUMBIA BASIN, there's no denying the presence of exceptional campsites and trail networks. But what's the secret behind their upkeep and management? Some of it is thanks to the trail crews formed with support from the Trust.

Here are some impressive figures: 116 sites and trails overseen, seven outhouses dug, 54 tables built, nine fire rings added, three kiosks put up, six entrance signs installed and nearly 200 kilometres of trail maintained and inspected—all done by these crews in the year 2023 alone.

As user numbers increase annually, there's been a growing need to improve and upkeep sites and trails. Plus, there's a huge demand to develop the skills of Basin residents through employment opportunities and specialized training—which this program also does.

"We have people in the program who are returning for their fourth and fifth seasons," says Kevin Eskelin, Regional Recreation Manager for the Southern Interior East Region of Recreation Sites and Trails BC, which has partnered with the Trust on the program. "It is a stepping stone for career growth."

Over five years, the program has created 66 jobs in the Basin that have overseen 557 sites and trails. For the 2024 field season, the four crews have three members each, creating 12 seasonal positions.

TRAINING AND TEAMWORK

Crew members gain useful skills and leadership experiences that will forever come in handy, while also having fun camping and making friends.

"Trail building is such a rewarding job, as you get to see the progress of your hard work each day," says Paula Martens, who was a crew leader in Revelstoke in 2023. "Whether this year's crew members ever fill another bucket up with dirt or haul heavy rocks, they have built up new resiliencies to move beyond what is comfortable. I believe we all learned lots this season and grew as workers together to strive to be our best."

Based out of Cranbrook, Nelson, Revelstoke and Invermere, crew members and leaders are hired for about four months of work. Training has a strong emphasis on safety in an outdoor setting, such as the proper use of hand tools, first aid, two-way radio communications and wildlife safety.

"Most of our crew members come from an environmental background, which means they're very capable in the outdoors," says Eskelin. "Our training builds on the skills they already have."

Working alongside local clubs and volunteers, the crews undertake tasks that range from tree planting to the

installation of infrastructure like bridges, boardwalks and tent pads. Remote work is not uncommon, with helicopters and boats often part of the commute.

Brennan Wittig was a crew leader in Nelson in 2023. He says, "To know that the work we did opened up a trail for the public to experience was the true reward of what made it an unforgettable, skill-building, friendship-creating and life-changing season."

THE BIGGER PICTURE

This year is seeing an even stronger focus on collaborative work between crews.

"Our crew members all have unique skillsets that we want to bring together," says Eskelin. "There are multiple benefits of having our crews work together, so we plan on making that happen more this season."

It's an additional goal for an already-successful program. The initiative has garnered positive attention elsewhere in the province and is working as a blueprint to build, with many other recreational groups having its approach.

Eskelin says, "We're proud that the program has become a model." ■



Edgewood makes good things happen

Working closely with the Trust, this rural community moves ahead

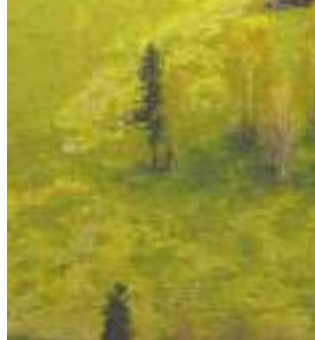
FRIENDLY FACES, farmland and forest. These are three aspects that define the village of Edgewood. Let's also add the fact that residents are willing to go the extra mile when it comes to making the community flourish. It's a remote location, with only about 250 residents—and yet all that the community has been able to achieve is impressive.

The Trust is particularly keen on aiding rural communities in the Basin, like Edgewood, that may need additional resources or capacity to pursue their goals. With the helping hand of the Trust, these communities can see their possibilities swell.

In Edgewood, the targeted partnership between the community and the Trust began in fall 2021, with the first in a string of community consultation meetings. The subject was “the art of the possible.” How did folks envision Edgewood in the future? What actions could move it forward? Discussions and get-togethers continued well after these initial meetings.

Alice McKee, with the Edgewood Community Club and involved in the local farmers' market, was one of the participants. “Everybody was on the same page of wanting the community to thrive,” she says.

Bill Dummett, with the Royal Canadian Legion No. 203 Edgewood, was also there from the beginning.



The new pavilion at the Edgewood farmers' market offers shelter from the weather, amenities like restrooms and a kitchen, and is now equipped with solar panels for sustainable power.



The new Gazebo in Edgewood offers locals and visitors a place to gather.

The in-person attention from Trust staff has been “big-time helpful. It answers a lot of questions. You get a better feel for what’s going on and what can happen.”

And a lot can happen. Several projects have already come out of this collaboration.

The farmers’ market, for example, now has a covered pavilion that provides shelter from the weather, a washroom and a kitchen. The market organizers hadn’t even thought of doing such a grand project, but the conversations with the Trust “got the wheels churning,” says McKee. Combine that with a partnership with the local Legion and the pavilion is now a reality.

The Legion building itself is also currently an emergency readiness centre, available if disasters like wildfires strike. Dummett says the idea also came out of these discussions. “Why not do this?” they thought. Now, with items like a generator and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, it’s ready to welcome users in need.

The examples go on, such as a new gazebo that offers locals and visitors a beautiful view of the lake. Plus, the



The Legion building in Edgewood, which serves as an emergency readiness centre, now boasts energy upgrades like a generator and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

volunteer fire department is providing more wildfire resiliency training to fire department members and adding additional wildfire prevention and protection equipment. As for the Trust’s part, money isn’t the only support it has provided, but also guidance in helping the community to identify its common goals and prepare proposals, with continued aid once a project gets the go-ahead. For the emergency readiness centre, for example, “We definitely felt a lot of support and got a lot of help getting things organized and finding information,” Dummett says. The Trust also helped the volunteer fire department find

information on equipment and training. When constructing the pavilion, McKee says Trust staff “went above and beyond.”

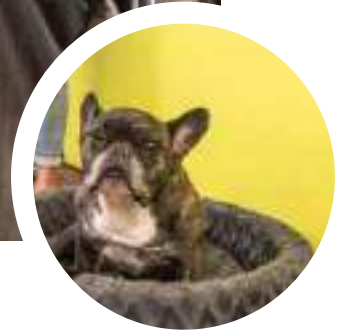
Bill Penner, of the Edgewood Community Club, has been closely involved in projects like the gazebo. “If it wasn’t for Columbia Basin Trust sponsoring projects like these, things wouldn’t get done in our rural communities,” he says. Without this aid, “These communities can’t move forward.”

All three Edgewood residents—Penner, Dummett and McKee—encourage other rural communities to work with the Trust. As McKee says, “You never know.” ■

AN EXPANDED TEAM

Expect to see even more of the Trust in communities in the future. With its new Columbia Basin Management Plan (see page 6), one of its goals is to deepen relationships with these communities so they can achieve their unique visions. To this end, the Trust is expanding its team of Community Liaisons that will meet rural communities “where they are at” and help them make good things happen.

**MEET YOUR
COMMUNITY
LIAISON**
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CLEANLINE AUTOMOTIVE EXPANDS CAPACITY AND OPERATIONS

Business advisory support helps Invermere auto repair company thrive



Husband and wife team Aaron and Steph Van de Kemp launched Cleanline Automotive with an innovative approach to vehicle repair, prioritizing environmental sustainability, next-level customer service and a positive workplace culture. Their booming Invermere-based business has outgrown the location they've rented since 2012, and the Van de Kemps were ready to scale up.

After years of running a successful business while raising three children, mechanic Aaron and marketing professional Steph were exhausted. They realized they needed a better work/life balance and sought the guidance of Columbia Basin Trust's business advisory support.

The program provided Aaron and Steph with customized coaching over nine months, focusing on increasing their capacity without sacrificing their personal lives. The company started the program with four employees and is about to add a sixth, with plans to hire up to three more people once their new facility opens in 2025.

"We've done some business coaching before, but nothing like this," says Aaron. "I worried I wouldn't have time to do the program, but Steph said we didn't have time to not do it. We

were looking to better our business and ourselves."

The business advisory support taught the Van de Kemps how to make use of budgets and key performance indicators to set monthly goals, which led to a significant increase in profit. They refined their hiring procedures and communication system, fostering an uplifting environment with "a more productive communication rhythm."

Not only is their revenue up by 20 per cent since starting the program, but feedback is more positive than ever. "When the company is running well internally, that translates into a better experience for our customers," says Steph.

After working with program coaches on retaining talent by encouraging career longevity and cultivating an inspiring work culture, the Van de Kemps are eager to open their new location and shift into the next gear.

"This program has changed our business and our lives, and the feedback from our staff has been awesome; they've noticed a real improvement in how we operate," says Aaron. "I've also changed my mindset from listening to the limiting beliefs of 'I'm just a mechanic' to really stepping into the role of a business leader." ■

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