



Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley

*Ecological Integrity
Through Education, Research and Outreach*

2015 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, eighteen 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.

We are pleased to say that 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.



Highlights of 2015 include our *Sustainable Action Canmore* and our *Small Steps Programs* which help individuals and businesses achieve awareness and take action to make their homes, businesses and their community more sustainable. We provide action-based workshops including *EcoTeams*, *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 2,000 kg of garbage and invasive weeds. We continue to bring education programs to local schools, camps, and public events. Our new *Strategic Marketing Plan* helped us launch a new website and use social media to better 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.

Highlights of 2015

- *Sustainable Action Canmore (SAC) 2015* is a partnership with the Town of Canmore that built on the previous SAC door-to-door community engagement program. The 2015 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, movie screenings, media, and pesticide-free yard pledges. The program continued to engage local households through regular sustainability tip emails and action based workshops.



- In 2015, our *Sustainable Action Canmore Booklet* was 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 Biosphere Institute's *Green Cleaning Workshops* allow local residents to make their own green cleaning products from non-toxic ingredients. The Biosphere Institute provides the materials and recipes, so that participants take home a variety of green cleaning products to try them out.



- 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 safely without attracting wildlife.



- In 2015 the Biosphere Institute ran its second annual *Holiday Gift Bag Making Workshop*. It was a resounding success with many enthusiastic participants who created their own reusable gift bags to help reduce waste from paper gift wrap.

- The *EcoTeam Program* is an action-based sustainability workshop series that the Biosphere Institute hosts in the Bow Valley. Each group of 5-10 households meets seven times. Each session is focused on a different topic including: reducing household garbage, increasing water efficiency, energy efficiency, transportation efficiency, and reducing consumption. In the weeks between each session, participants choose from a series of practical actions and follow a step-by-step approach to create a more sustainable lifestyle. This program enables people to measurably change the way they live.



- 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).



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

www.youtube.com/user/BiosphereInstitute/videos

- Bear, wolf and elk *Wildlife EduKits* have been improved and updated and are now available on loan from the Biosphere Institute for teachers and other group leaders throughout Alberta. We are currently developing cougar and water themed *EduKits*.



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.

- The Biosphere Institute's new 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, more than 210 volunteers helped remove over 2.2 tonnes of invasive weeds and waste including fishing line, hooks, bottles, metal and plastics from the water and 33 ha of shoreline of local ponds and lakes.

- Our new *Strategic Marketing Plan* helped us launch a new website in 2015 and improve social media to better engage the community through the promotion of our Community Resource Centre, library, and outreach programs. This included the successful pilot of our new *Small Steps Program* (www.biosphereinstitute.org).



This campaign inspires, facilitates, challenges, engages, then visually displays and shares through social media networks, personalized *Small Steps* that residents (permanent and semi-permanent), groups and businesses take to create big impacts, cumulatively making the region more sustainable.

- In 2015, the Biosphere Institute completed and presented the 2014 *Canmore Community Monitoring Report* to Town Council and the community. Since the 1st 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 *Bow Valley 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 2015, *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. This year *WildSmart* celebrated the 3rd 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 <http://www.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 2015, 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.





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WildSmart Education and Outreach	Tyler McClure

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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 2015 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 Ecotrust Foundation | • Lafarge Canada Inc. |
| • Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission | • M.D. of Bighorn No. 8 |
| • Alberta Environment and Parks | • RBC Blue Water Project |
| • Banff Canmore Community Foundation | • Rotary Club of Canmore |
| • Bow River Basin Council | • Sage and Shea O'Neill Children's Fund at The Calgary Foundation |
| • Bow Valley Waste Management Commission | • The Calgary Foundation |
| • Coast Canmore Hotel | • TD Friends of the Environment Foundation |
| • Environment Canada: EcoAction Community Funding Program | • Telus |
| • Kananaskis Improvement District | • Town of Banff |
| • Kananaskis Lakes Association | • Town of Canmore |
| | • Twenty 4 Sports |
| | • Valued Individual Donors |

Support the Biosphere Institute

The Biosphere Institute is funded through contributions from the community.

Registered Charitable Number:

88912 8625 RR0001.

To support the Biosphere Institute, please contact:

Suite 201, 600a 9th Street,

Canmore, Alberta T1W 2T2

Phone: (403) 678-3445 x 4

or give online at: www.biosphereinstitute.org

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.