

Our mission is: To engage the community through activities and awareness to conserve a truly unique naturalized urban park.



THE GIFT OF FLIGHT

Win
2 Tickets to
Anywhere
WestJet Flies!

**WIN ONE ROUND TRIP FLIGHT FOR TWO GUESTS TO ANY
REGULARLY SCHEDULED AND MARKETED WESTJET DESTINATION!***

**TICKETS - \$10 EACH, 5 FOR \$20, 25 FOR \$50 OR 100 FOR \$100!
CONTEST RUNS MAY 1 - JULY 3, 2023**

Show your support for the Friends of Fish Creek and our conservation efforts here in Fish Creek by picking up a raffle ticket this spring. All funds raised through this exciting campaign will be used effectively and efficiently right here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. Help support this breathtaking park that enhances the quality of life for millions of people each year by picking up your Gift of Flight raffle tickets!

All funds raised will support the Friends of Fish Creek conservation and awareness efforts in Fish Creek Provincial Park. **Draw date July 4, 2023**

Must be 18 years of age or older to purchase tickets. Licence #638387

Tickets and complete rules available at www.friendsoffishcreek.org/program/flight

(*No cash value, fees, taxes, surcharges not included, blackout dates and restrictions apply).

Photo courtesy of WestJet.



Also in this Issue:

Page 2: Fish Creek Speaker Series
Quiz Question

Page 3: Learning Naturally Coordinator

Page 4: Annual General Meeting
Fish Creek Community Terrace

Page 5: Queen Elizabeth II Medal

Page 6: Capture Nature Photography Contest
Emerald Award

Page 7: ECO Community Award

Page 8: Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink

Page 9: Volunteer Opportunities

Page 12: Tree Island
Tru Earth

Page 13: Good Grief

Page 15: Calgary Connect

Page 16: Quiz Answer
2023 Executive

Membership Renewal



FISH CREEK SPEAKER SERIES

Through the Fish Creek Speaker Series program, professionals from a variety of fields and areas of expertise share their knowledge and experiences. We are pleased to return to the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre for in person presentations starting this spring, and will offer online presentations through Zoom during the cooler months or if a presenter is not based in Calgary. Presentations are free to Friends of Fish Creek members and \$10.00 for non-members. Youth 16 years of age or younger can attend free of charge. Registration is required. For information please stay tuned to <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/speaker-series/>

The Buzz on Calgary Bumble Bees

Thursday, May 11, 2023 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm, online

Presented by Syd Cannings, Biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service, Prairie Region Environment and Climate Change Canada

Bumble bee populations pose a conservation concern these days, and several species from the Calgary area have been assessed as at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. This talk will provide an introduction to bumble bees and their basic biology, examine bees whose numbers have declined, the reasons for the decline, and what we can do about the situation. Syd Cannings is a Species at Risk Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Whitehorse, Yukon. He is a member of COSEWIC, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, and has led the development of the national recovery strategies and management plans for four species of bumble bees. He has also written several books, including *British Columbia: a Natural History*, and *The New BC Roadside Naturalist*.

Calgary Connect: Maintaining Ecological Connectivity

Thursday, June 8, 2023 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm, Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre

Presented by Nicole Kahal, Conservation Analyst with the Miistakis Institute

What is ecological connectivity and why is it important? What are the challenges to maintaining ecological connectivity in our region? The City of Calgary, in partnership with Miistakis Institute, launched Calgary Captured in 2017, and through this program, Friends volunteers help with wildlife camera monitoring here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. This multi-year wildlife monitoring and citizen science based program is intended to study urban wildlife populations, their movement and behaviour, and enable informed conservation and management decisions that support healthy wildlife populations in our city. Join Nicole Kahal, Conservation Analyst with the Miistakis Institute to learn how Miistakis and partners are using wildlife camera-traps, spatial modeling, and municipal planning to understand how we can protect what's left of the natural connections in the Calgary metropolitan region. *See page 15 for more information about this program.*



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Association des malentendants canadiens



QUIZ QUESTION

How many species of bees live in Alberta?

The correct answer will be announced in the next issue of Voice of the Friends.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM KAYLA!

The Friends are pleased to welcome Kayla Campbell as the new Learning Naturally Coordinator, who came on board at the beginning of the year. The Learning Naturally Coordinator facilitates environmental education and delivers curriculum-based programs for children from economically-disadvantaged Calgary schools through the Learning Naturally program.

Learning Naturally provides over 3000 students between grades K-6 are with an unforgettable field trip here in Fish Creek Provincial Park each year. Many of these students are from families that are new to Canada and their field trip is not only their first visit to Fish Creek but to a real natural setting in this country.

Students arrive by school bus and spend the day exploring the area around the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre, conducting investigations and activities related to the Alberta Program of Studies.



“As the coordinator, I get to introduce them to Fish Creek Provincial Park and the local ecosystem,” Kayla said, “One of my favourite parts of the job so far has been

sparkling students' interest and enthusiasm for the small wonders of nature they might normally not notice. I had one group of grade two students who heard a woodpecker hammering at a tree, and then silently tracked it through the woods until they spotted the bird!”

Kayla brings to her role as Learning Naturally Coordinator a wealth of educational achievements and real-world teaching experience. She earned a Masters of Science Degree from Simon Fraser University, as well



as a Bachelor of Education from Queen’s University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Alberta. She has worked as an instructor with Timbernook, a substitute teacher and classroom teacher, a Parks Canada Interpretive Coordinator, as well as both an Environmental Educator and Parks Interpreter with Alberta Parks.

Kayla works out of the Fish Creek Environmental Learning at Shannon Terrace and will benefit from support and guidance from Roland Kirzinger, Formal and Environmental Education Coordinator. We trust that with Kayla’s direction and expertise this essential program will continue to encourage a lifelong love and appreciation of nature for thousands of children each year.

If you would like to support the Learning Naturally program here in Fish Creek, please see page 8 of this newsletter for information on the Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink matching campaign—taking place until August 31.



FRIENDS OF FISH CREEK ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

7:00 - 8:30 pm, Registration opens at 6:30 pm

Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre, Shannon Terrace
(13931 Woodpath Road Southwest, Calgary, AB, T2W 5M1)

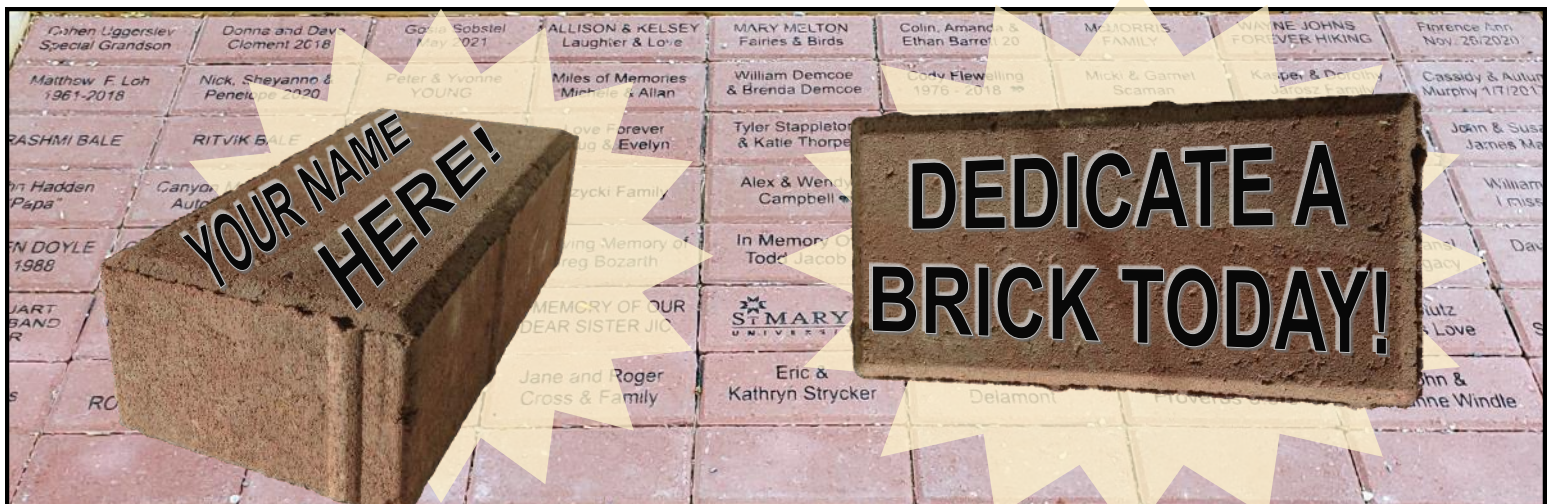


The Friends would like to thank all of our members, volunteers, donors, community partners and other supporters for helping to make 2022 a truly memorable year. The Annual General Meeting presents an opportunity to meet with Friends staff, Board of Directors, members, and volunteers as well as learn about the year that has come to a close and hear about our exciting plans for 2023, already underway. ***At this year's AGM we will bid a fond farewell to Phil Greer, the Friends of Fish Creek Treasurer for over 17 years. Henry Villanueva will also be resigning from the Board after many years of service. We will also welcome new volunteers to our Board of Directors.***

This event is free to all community members, however only current 2023 members are eligible to vote.

To register or for more information please visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/event/agm>

ELC painting by Sylvia Prochownik



FISH CREEK COMMUNITY TERRACE PHASE 3 BRICKS AVAILABLE - RESERVE YOURS BEFORE JUNE 1

Dedicate a brick within the Fish Creek Community Terrace to help support the Friends and our conservation efforts here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. A brick would also make an amazing gift for anyone you know who enjoys visiting this unique and ecologically diverse urban park. If you have a small business near the park, consider dedicating a brick for your company. Bricks are only \$250 each and you will receive a tax receipt for your contribution. There are limited spaces available in the Fish Creek Community Terrace so make sure to dedicate your brick today! For more information, please contact the Friends of Fish Creek or visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/brick>

QUEEN ELIZABETH II COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL

NIC BLANCHET, FRIENDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

CHRIS LALONDE, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



The Queen Elizabeth II commemorative award is a medal in honour of the late Queen's 70th Anniversary. In 2023 this prestigious distinction was awarded to 7,000 residents of Alberta who have made a significant contribution to this province or country. The Friends of Fish Creek are pleased to announce that Nic Blanchet, Friends of Fish Creek Executive Director,

received a Queen Elizabeth II commemorative medal for his hard work and commitment here in Fish Creek. Special thanks to our friend Richard Gotfried MLA Calgary Fish Creek for nominating Nic for this award.

During his time with the Friends, and for many years before that, Nic has demonstrated exceptional qualities and outstanding service to our province in the field of environmental conservation and stewardship.

Nic is originally from the UK, and had served in the British Military during the Falklands Crisis of the early 1980s. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Ecology and Anthropology, and a Masters degree in Science from Oxford Brookes University in England. Upon arriving in Calgary, Nic held an internship with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, then was the Manager of Land Securement and Manager of Science and Conservation Planning at NCC.

Nic has worked as Executive Director of the Friends of Fish Creek since 2012 and in that time he has helped to elevate the Friends into a financially sustainable and exemplary charitable organization. As the Executive Director of a small yet far-reaching non-profit, he manages to balance the needs and priorities of staff members, the Board of Directors, and our partners in Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism. Nic is very skilled at



Nic Blanchet - Friends of Fish Creek Executive Director (centre) with Larry Wasyliv - President of the Bow Valley Ranche Historical Society, and Rob Lennard - BVR Historical Education and Outreach Program Coordinator, at the Queen Elizabeth II award ceremony, on February 2 at the Bow Valley Ranche Restaurant. Left, the Queen Elizabeth II commemorative medal.

making new contacts within the community to help increase our reach, and he is an engaging and effective spokesperson for both the Friends and the park.

Over the past 11 years he has made substantial improvements to the organization, which have helped staff to perform tasks more efficiently and expand on our programs and services that benefit the community. In recent years Nic spearheaded the Enhanced Partnership program with Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism. In 2020, we received a Provincial grant for \$480,000 and in 2023 we are set to receive an additional \$750,000. These funds will be used in the areas of Ecology & Conservation, Visitor Information, Public Engagement & Communication, Enforcement Support and Formal Education right here in Fish Creek Provincial Park.

Congratulations to Nic and all recipients of this prestigious award!



CAPTURE NATURE

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST RUNS MAY 1 - JULY 31

The Friends' Capture Nature photo contest is a fun and creative opportunity for park users to engage with their natural surroundings, and search and explore for the best images of the year. Take your cameras out now and start capturing the wonder of nature in Fish Creek Provincial Park. This contest is also part of the Friends' Social Enterprise program with all proceeds contributing to our ongoing stewardship and education projects in Fish Creek.

The themes for the 2023 contest are Winter Wonderland, The Elements, and As Above So Below. Registration opens May 1, 2023 and all images must be taken in Fish Creek Provincial Park.

For more information visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/capturenature>

Special thanks to the Apothecary in Inglewood and for providing contest prizes.

Photo courtesy of Peter Kim



FRIENDS OF FISH CREEK SHORTLISTED FOR 2023 EMERALD AWARD

The Friends of Fish Creek are honoured to have been shortlisted for a 2023 Alberta Emerald Award in the category of Wildlife & Biodiversity. This nomination is in recognition of the 2022 Sikome Beaver Coexistence project in which skilled volunteers worked to install a water flow control device near Sikome Aquatic Facility. This was part of our larger Beaver Coexistence project designed to help raise awareness about the ecological benefit that beavers have on the park and help reduce some of the impact they have on park infrastructure like pathways. Thank you to the Alberta Emerald Foundation and we look forward to keeping our members up to date on these exciting proceedings. The winners will be announced on June 7 at the Emerald Awards celebration. For more information please visit

<https://emeraldfoundation.ca/32nd-annual-emerald-awards>



2023 ECO COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

SIKOME BEAVER COEXISTENCE PROJECT WINS 2023 ECO AWARD



On January 19 and 20, the ECO IMPACT awards ceremony took place and the Friends of Fish Creek were honoured to accept the award in the category of Community Impact. Since 2017 the ECO Awards have been celebrating Canada's

After the success of large scale Beaver Coexistence projects near Bebo Grove and Marshall Springs, the Sikome project was initiated and coordinated by lead volunteers Rose and Will Ratcliffe, and Himanshu Sangale. On August 8, 2022, a dedicated team of Friends of Fish Creek volunteers, and passionate youth from WILD Outside, a conservation-based, youth volunteer organization, installed a water flow control device near Sikome. We were honoured to be nominated for the ECO Award for this project and are very grateful to have won this year in the Community Impact category.

professionals who contribute to the environmental sustainability of this country. This award is in recognition of the Friends' Sikome Beaver Coexistence project that took place in August of last year, in which dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers built and installed a flow control device at a storm pond near Sikome in the east end of Fish Creek Provincial Park.

Special thanks to Dylan Barnes for nominating this project with Eco Canada and to Himanshu for developing the excellent video outlining the Sikome Beaver Coexistence project.

Beavers, or ecosystem engineers as they are sometimes called, are important members of the park's wildlife community. They have a very positive impact on the environmental sustainability of natural areas, like Fish Creek, through water retention and by providing habitat for other park wildlife. The impact of their activity can sometimes have undesirable effects on park infrastructure and the Friends have been developing and implementing strategies to mitigate these effects while also raising awareness about the good work that beavers do.

Thank you to all volunteers, supporters and community partners who helped with the Beaver Coexistence project in recent years, and a thank you to everyone who voted!

Take a look at the video here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWM6q4-dgE4>



SHAW BIRDIES FOR KIDS PRESENTED BY ALTALINK



Friends of Fish Creek
Provincial Park Society



**MAKE YOUR
DONATION
GO FURTHER.**

Support Outdoor Education in Fish Creek and Your Donation Will Be Matched Up to 50 %

The Friends of Fish Creek are honoured that our Learning Naturally program has once again been chosen as one of over 270 local charities to participate in the Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink program! Birdies for Kids, now in its eighth year, has a profound benefit for charitable organizations that support children's programming. This essential fundraiser runs until August 31 in conjunction with the Shaw Charity Classic Golf Tournament.

Through Learning Naturally, close to 3000 students between grades K-6 from economically-disadvantaged Calgary schools are provided a field trip to Fish Creek Provincial Park. Many of these students are new to Canada, and this unforgettable experience acts as not only their first visit to Fish Creek, but also their first real visit to a natural setting in this country. The lessons imparted on them during their Learning Naturally field trip help to support a lifelong concern for conservation and environmental stewardship.

This essential program does not receive regular funding and its continuation is in jeopardy. It costs only \$10 to support one Learning Naturally field trip for one student, and through Birdies for Kids, your donation will be matched up to 50%!

Please consider making a donation to Learning Naturally through Birdies for Kids, and speak to your employer or co-workers about this amazing opportunity to support outdoor education in Fish Creek.

We would like to once again thank the Greenfield Foundation for supporting Learning Naturally this year with a very generous donation.

Thank you to the Shaw Charity Classic Foundation, the Patron Group, Shaw Communications, Suncor and Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink for hosting this amazing program.

Donate today at <https://bit.ly/3IUUYAw>

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

2023 VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

DYLAN BARNES, CITIZEN SCIENCE & STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR

Spring is upon us again for the 2023 year! With it comes new opportunities for people to get engaged with stewardship work. Through the spring, summer, and fall seasons everything from invasive species control, poplar planting, tree wrapping, and nursery tending requires the dedication of an amazing team. There is always a chance to be out in the field during the summer months and with the opportunities available, there is always room for people of every ability and availability.

If you only have one day to volunteer, we offer many opportunities that require your presence for only a few hours. Included in this type of volunteering is riparian restoration, invasive species control, tree wrapping, poplar planting, and willow staking. To be involved in the effort, sign up on MyImpactPage. If you are a returning volunteer, it is important to adjust your profile to match your unique interests in the available roles. For the best results, consider picking a general interest so that you can be introduced to opportunities related to ones you are interested in. Branch out and explore all the exciting chances to give back to Fish Creek Provincial Park through direct intervention in its wellbeing!

Planting trees is the activity most people probably have in mind when it comes to restoration. We provide the trees and supplies so that our volunteer community can work to add trees to the aging poplar forests in the park. Newly planted trees ensure that in the years to come, wildlife habitat is maintained as older trees die off.

Riparian restoration is a great way to get involved with the local environment and help to protect Fish Creek Provincial Park. Riparian areas are the transitional zones between land and water, and they play a critical role in the health of the ecosystem. Volunteers can help to



Watering Crew volunteers Angel, Bruce and Ward.

restore these areas by fencing and planting trees and other native species at our events.

Watering is possibly one of the most important jobs that one can take on in the park. The summers in Calgary are hot and dry. While this is okay for mature trees, it makes for poor growing conditions for newly planted trees. For this reason, we run an initiative to keep our plants watered through the growing season to ensure that they grow hearty enough to survive after we finish caring for them. If you would like to be a part of our team, consider signing up for watering crew training.

Invasive species control is another critical area where volunteers can make a significant impact. Invasive species can displace native plants, disrupt ecosystems, and cause significant damage to the environment. Volunteers can help by removing these invasive species and preventing their spread at our many weed pulls or weed watching program days.

During the summer, we will continue our work on the ATCO grassland by mowing down invasive grass and managing the area with seed, water, and solarization. There will be plenty of chances to help with this impactful project so consider signing up when you get the emails for this project.

-Cont'd on next page

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED CONT'D

Tree wrapping and planting are excellent ways to help maintain the park's natural beauty and protect its trees from damage. We do it primarily to protect them from beavers in areas where a fallen tree would affect the park infrastructure or bank stabilization. We do not wrap every tree, but we do protect healthy younger trees that have the best chance to contribute to the park.

Finally, willow staking provides a unique opportunity to contribute to the park's health and beauty. Volunteers can help to plant willow stakes along the creek bank,

which will grow into new vegetation and help to stabilize the bank, reducing erosion and improving water quality.

There are many opportunities for people to get involved with stewardship work in Fish Creek Provincial Park this upcoming year. Remember to sign up on *MyImpactPage* and pick a general interest. Volunteers can find opportunities that fit their schedule and interests. From riparian restoration to invasive species control, tree wrapping, and willow staking, there are many ways to contribute to the park's health and beauty.

FRIENDS OF FISH CREEK VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Below is a detailed list of upcoming volunteer programs. Please note that some of these positions are subject to police and vulnerable sector checks when working independently.

Poplar planting/rescue

May - June

Commitment: As little as one day

The Friends of Fish Creek Poplar Forest Stewardship Project addresses the aging population of poplar trees in the park and the limited natural regeneration of the poplar forest in certain areas. As part of this project, native poplar trees will be planted along the riparian areas of Fish Creek. Additionally, poplar trees that have taken root in managed grassland environments within the park will be rescued and relocated to other parts of the park to ensure they are not destroyed by our maintenance efforts and are given a chance to contribute to the natural landscape. Poplar rescues only happen on an as-needed basis.



30th Anniversary poplar planting volunteers.

Beaver Coexistence

April - October

Commitment: Ongoing during active months

The Beaver Coexistence project aims to assist Alberta Parks in managing beaver activity and tree damage in Fish Creek Provincial Park.

A volunteer's role in the project will involve monitoring beaver activity levels, identifying individual trees that require protection, and documenting the presence of dams. You will work with a partner to survey the park, record observations, and report any issues using the ArcGIS Field Maps app.

Additionally, you may have the opportunity to participate in maintenance tasks such as constructing levelers, building tree cages, inspecting beaver ponds, and traversing rough, off-trail terrain. These activities will require physical abilities, such as wading in water and navigating slippery and uneven ground.

-Cont'd on next page

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED CONT'D

Riparian Health Assessments

June - September

Commitment: Ongoing during active months

Volunteers will receive training from the Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish) to evaluate the health of the riparian areas along Fish Creek and aid in planning future restoration projects by Friends of Fish Creek. In the training, you will learn how to identify common native and invasive plant species and use the scoring criteria provided to conduct assessments with a team along the creek over the program activity period.



Rotary Club volunteers helping with Restoration.

Watering Crew

May - September

Commitment: Ongoing during active months

The watering crew contributes to the success of our restoration and poplar plantings by spreading water on our planted trees and riparian plants both inside and outside of restoration sites. Your team will take water from rain barrels located near where watering is needed and water our plantings to help them survive the summer. There will also be an opportunity for members of the watering crew to join our Truck Crew volunteers who will lead filling up the on-site water storage tanks.

Mapping, Monitoring, and Maintenance

April - October

Commitment: Ongoing during active months

Volunteering will consist of three key components. Updating data and associating it with geographical locations informs future efforts towards restoration while telling us about how we did in the past. A volunteer team will ideally take part in all three activities as the need arises.

Mapping:

Teams will work to input numbered trees, fences, and new restoration sites as data on ArcGIS Field Maps. This

data informs future efforts towards restoration while telling us about how we did in the past.

Monitoring:

Photos will be taken at restoration sites and entered into ArcGIS Field Maps. Sites will be inspected for damaged fences, water boxes and overall maintenance needs. Observations of invasive species and plant condition can also be entered into ArcGIS Field Maps.

Maintenance:

Fences will be mended when needed, Waterboxx parts replaced as needed. Maintenance may also include pruning the native species we have planted or replacing them with new plants if some have not survived at certain events.

Riparian Restoration

September - October

Commitment: As little as one day

Volunteers taking part in riparian restoration will be engaged in various manual labor activities in the park to help us construct restoration sites. A volunteer can sign up for part one or part two depending on preference. Part one includes constructing the fence that surrounds the restoration site, and part two includes the planting of vegetation in the newly fenced area including watering the newly planted vegetation.

-Cont'd on next page

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED CONT'D

Willow Harvest and Staking

October

Commitment: As little as one day

Volunteers will help us gather live willow cuttings to create stakes that will then be planted in the park in our restoration sites. A single harvest event is followed by as many separate staking events as needed to finish the restoration sites. Once planted these stakes lay dormant until the following spring before sprouting into new willow plants.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Added by Chris Lalonde, Communications Manager

Community Engagement Volunteers:

Fish Creek Ambassador, Pathway Ambassador and/or

Community Event volunteer

Commitment: Varies

Community Engagement volunteers work in the Bow Valley Ranch Visitor Centre, out in the park and/or at community events. They provide information about Fish Creek Provincial Park and the Friends programs, and gather information and data about how people use the park. Please note that this can be an indoor or outdoor volunteer role.

Park Watch

Year-round

Commitment: Two 2-hour shifts/month

Park Watch Stewards provide a visible presence that encourages responsible park use while providing user education and reporting important observations. Providing assistance and information to park visitors, especially those who may be new to Fish Creek or the city, is one of the most rewarding ways to create awareness and encourage environmental stewardship.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Friends of Fish Creek. If you are an existing volunteer please sign into MyImpactPage to see upcoming volunteer opportunities. If you have not yet volunteered with the Friends, please visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/volunteering-basics>



We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Tree Island Steel for supporting our conservation and stewardship activities here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. For the second consecutive year they have provided us with stucco wire at a 65% discount from the retail cost. We recently picked up 123 rolls of the wire to be used for tree-wrapping, fencing off restoration sites, and wrapping newly planted poplars to protect them from beavers. It is because of amazing partnerships like the one with Tree Island Steel, and the hard work of our volunteers, that the Friends are able to accomplish so much here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. Thank you to Tree Island and special thanks to lead volunteer Ron Deshayes for securing this contribution.



The Friends are pleased to partner with Tru Earth, a Canadian company that focuses on creating eco-friendly household goods. Tru Earth's products are designed to function the same - or better - than traditional products, but without all the plastic and other chemicals that are harmful for the planet. Order your Tru Earth household products today and the Friends of Fish Creek will earn at least 20% of every sale made through this exciting ongoing fundraiser. Check out Tru Earth and make a purchase to support the Friends of Fish Creek today. Visit the Friends' Tru Earth page at <http://tru-earth.sjv.io/FriendsOfFishCreek>

GOOD GRIEF AND THE WALK OF LIFE

DR. SONYA JAKUBEC, FACULTY OF HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION, MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

So many moments along life's journey are connected to parks like Fish Creek; special, familiar, comforting places where we experience the seasons of our lives – the wedding ceremonies, babies' first steps on the grass, children's birthday parties, family reunions, and also formal and informal memorials.



Thank you to all Good Grief volunteer companions for making this program possible.

What might it be like for parks to be inclusive, not just to all people of all ages and abilities, but welcoming of all of life's journey – the big moments, but also the unglamorous, daily walk of life - including the dying and death, the goodbyes, mourning and grief? What might this look like in our society that seeks ways to navigate ecological loss and grief as well as our human grief with compassion, understanding and support? What might grief-friendly activities in parks bring to our communities?

These questions and the core value of providing Albertans a lifetime of nature-based experiences, provided the context for a 2015 background study on the place of parks and nature at end of life led by Dr. Sonya Jakubec with colleagues at Mount Royal University (MRU), Alberta Health Services and Alberta Parks. This research provided a foundation for interventions to advance palliative and grief/memorializing experiences in parks with recommendations such as:

- Increasing park access for people in palliative care/ caregivers
- Creating cross-sector communication tools

- Encouraging grief experiences in parks/nature (e.g. walking programs)

It is from here that *Good Grief* began in 2017 as a partnership with MRU, the Friends and an engaged community of volunteers. *Good Grief* offers a series of gentle walks to small groups of people who are experiencing grief, loss or any significant life transition. Not a

counselling or therapy program, our intention is that participants find support in their journey by moving and connecting with the environment around them, alongside others walking a similar path. Many participants continue walking after completing the program, return to volunteer for *Good Grief*, and participate in a spinoff evening walking group that has sustained for close to five years now!

Good Grief runs regularly for 6-8 week sessions year round. Noticing the changes in the seasons and landscape as well as in themselves, small groups of 12-15 people take part in short, gentle walks of up to 2km with minimal slope to ensure these outings are accessible to everyone. Each walk is approximately 1.5 hours, with time for rest and reflection throughout. Volunteer Grief/Park Companions accompany the group to lead the walk on the designated route, ensure participant safety, support the experience through park and nature connections, actively listen with those who wish to share, and encourage people to connect with one another. Most importantly, the supported walks provide a container, in the aliveness of the outdoors, for grief to have a place and to move, by simply putting one foot in front of the other. *-Cont'd on next page*

GOOD GRIEF CONT'D

Evaluation and discoveries from the first series found that walkers indicated participants were grateful for the “push” to get outside and be with others, felt refreshed and more connected (to nature and others), and appreciated the dedicated time for grief as a place they could “take their grief out in the world”, to both connect and disconnect from their grief.



Recommendations were for more times and longer walks, additional reflection time along the walks (with journaling or nature sketching opportunities), and expanding the opportunity to other city parks and communities.

With many inquiries about *Good Grief* from parks and health organizations within the city of Calgary and Bow Valley, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer, St. Albert and Medicine Hat as well as with organizations in Ontario and BC, the approach is now being extended, adapted and built upon in new ways. The Friends team are supporting these communities to build their unique programs and to collaborate with arts groups, poets and others reflecting on grief and nature. Nothing is more natural than grief and loss, and for the Friends and communities beyond Fish Creek, *Good Grief's* approach is part of creating more compassionate, grief-friendly communities – facing the walk of life, together!

Bob Bowman, Good Grief Lead Volunteer

When my wife passed away in 2015, there were a million things going around in my head, not all going in an orderly clockwise direction. The Friends of Fish Creek with guidance from Mount Royal University started a program to use the healing power of movement and getting out of a hermit type of existence, combined with the power of group activities, along with the soothing,

cleansing power of observing the tranquility and pristine characteristics of nature.

After the formal program finished, a bunch of people decided to continue the walks on our own - walking at least once a week in all kinds of weather. We go out to other social activities such as plays and movies. We also celebrate birthdays, as to try and hide your birth date is futile.

That has been going on for five years or so, survived COVID, and has grown into a large group. It is amazing how the people in the group have melded into a tightly knit group all started by one common denominator, the ability to handle grief on your own terms.

Also, it is amazing how this group formed a structure on its own of organizers and participants who are able to pick up and lead when required. In our group individuals seem to find each other and form a bond through their mutual management of grief.

Rose Ratliffe, Good Grief Companion

Everybody has or will experience loss and grief in life, but our society often does not give people space to be open about their grief. *Good Grief* combines that space with the simple pleasure of moving in nature.

Being a companion has been a great privilege as I have been able to walk with participants and fellow companions who have been so welcoming, open and compassionate. It is a very easy group to join with a broad mix of interests and topics to chat about, or just a chance to be with others in nature and not talk at all. It's hard to capture it in words but is clearly important for everyone involved.

WILDLIFE MONITORING IN FISH CREEK AND BEYOND

Nicole Kahal, Conservation Analyst, Miistakis Institute

Have you come across a wildlife camera-trap in Fish Creek Provincial Park? Over 20 cameras have been up in the park since 2017, with Friends of Fish Creek volunteers maintaining the cameras and collecting the data! The project, called Calgary Captured, is a collaborative effort between the Friends, Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society and Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

Key findings from the wildlife cameras so far show that wildlife species diversity is highest in large parks along the Elbow and Bow Rivers. In fact, Fish Creek had the most species found on camera of any area monitored. While deer and coyote were recorded in every park monitored in Calgary, species such as cougar, moose and black bear are found primarily in areas close to the city boundary, where connectivity between natural spaces is still intact. We also found many areas, especially within Fish Creek, that would benefit from people keeping their dogs on-leash. Off-leash dogs often stray off trail and can disturb habitat and wildlife.

The camera-traps, including those in Fish Creek, are continuing to gather information on how our natural spaces in Calgary are connected, and how wildlife respond to road mitigation structures, such as the bridge span over the Bow River. These results will inform strategies on how to best protect ecological connectivity, and recommendations on future investment in wildlife-road mitigation infrastructure.

While the Calgary Captured camera-trap data have allowed us to validate the use of wildlife corridors mapped in the City of Calgary’s ecological network, we recognize a big piece is missing: the rest of the Calgary

metropolitan region!

Miistakis and partners are now working with neighboring jurisdictions of City of Calgary, Rocky



View County, Foothills County and Tsuut’ina Nation to extend the ecological network to a regional scale. To do this, we are working with a team from the University of Toronto to model the network, and the jurisdictions will advise on its development. To ensure that the regional ecological network includes requirements from both a terrestrial and aquatic perspective, amphibian core habitat in the region will be identified using amphibian eDNA. eDNA, or environmental DNA, allows a small water sample to be analyzed for the presence of amphibian species. This will extend the amphibian knowledge within Calgary that was gained through the Call of the Wetland citizen science project (2017-19), through the rest of the region.

Calgary Captured, which started as a project to document which species occurred in what parks in Calgary and raise awareness for urban wildlife, has expanded to learn more about how we can protect our ecological integrity at a regional scale. We look forward to sharing new camera results summer 2023, and project progress as we move forward in the larger initiative.

Calgary Connect is a collaborative partnership with the Miistakis Institute, The City of Calgary, Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society, Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society and Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism. Learn more at the June Fish Creek Speaker Series— *see page 2 for more information.*



Miistakis Institute



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

QUIZ ANSWER - WINTER ISSUE

In what year did the Friends of Fish Creek begin managing the Learning Naturally program?

Answer: In 2010 the Friends of Fish Creek began managing the Learning Naturally program. Up until 2009 Learning Naturally was supported by the Marigold Foundation and following that, TD Friends of the Environment contributed \$140,000 to the program in the form of a four year sponsorship running from 2010 to 2013. TD renewed their support for many more years after that. In recent years the Learning Naturally program has benefitted immensely from personal donations, a donation from the Greenfield Foundation and the Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink program. *See page 8 for more information.*

STAFF

Executive Director

Nic Blanchet

Communications Manager

Chris Lalonde

Team Lead - Ecology & Conservation

Emma Stroud

Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator

Dylan Barnes

Visitor Services Coordinator

Kumiko Kamiike

Staff contact information available at
<https://friendsoffishcreek.org/contact-2>

2023 EXECUTIVE

Chair -	Bob Morrin
Vice-Chair -	David Mitchell
Treasurer -	Phil Greer
Governance Chair -	Henry Villanueva
Secretary -	Kari Horn
Director at Large -	Christina Steed
Director at Large -	Neil Groeneveld
Director at Large -	Michael McCreadie
Park Liaison -	Andrew Schoepf

Learn more about our Board of Directors
 on the new web page
<https://friendsoffishcreek.org/board>

Membership Form -

The Friends of Fish Creek, PO Box 2780 Stn M Calgary, AB T2P 2M7
 403-238-3841 info@friendsoffishcreek.org www.friendsoffishcreek.org

For info about the Park Protector program visit www.friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup

Name: _____ Phone: _____

email: _____ Address and postal code: _____

Please send me information about leaving a gift in my will

Membership: Individual \$35.00 Family \$45.00

Senior (+60 years of age) Individual \$25.00 Family \$30.00

Donation: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other:\$ _____

To pay online: www.friendsoffishcreek.org/membership or donate on CanadaHelps.org

Please Fill out: Membership \$ _____ Donation \$ _____ Total \$ _____

(Charitable Registration #891199747 RR0001)

Signature of donor or member: _____

Applicants must be 18 years of age or older to become members. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more or if requested.