



**OLDMAN
WATERSHED
COUNCIL** | 2020 • 2021
**ANNUAL
REPORT**

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Has it been a year already? What a 'special' year it has been. The global pandemic had us frozen in our tracks for a time and postponed much of the summer fieldwork we had planned. Eventually, we got better at meeting, without actually meeting, and proved very capable of responding to topical concerns as they appeared before us.

The lull in 'on the ground' activities afforded the Board of Directors some time to reflect on governance, policy, and process. This effort will continue and will surely pay dividends in the form of organizational sustainability and a higher level of confidence in our purpose.

I would like to thank you, our members and directors, for your support and patience over this strangest of years. Looking forward, we have much work to do delivering on the backlog of projects. But I am confident that we will rise to the occasion and will have a lot of fun while we are at it.

Doug Kaupp, MBA, P.Eng.
General Manager,
Water and Wastewater, City of Lethbridge



Have you seen the Oldman around Lethbridge?

The City of Lethbridge might just have the most unique storm drain manhole covers in the world! In 2020-21, with Doug's leadership, the City installed 14 custom-made storm drain manhole covers that feature the OWC's Oldman logo and the words "Oldman watershed stormwater". These one-of-a-kind cast iron covers not only allow access to the storm water drainage system for maintenance and repairs, but also remind passersby that storm water flows directly into the Oldman River, untreated.

You can find them around the city on streets and sidewalks near you, with more on the way!



03

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This has been a year like no other. A global pandemic, rising momentum to end racism, and debate over the future of the Eastern Slopes made 2020-21 challenging and exhausting, yet hopeful, and more appreciative of our good fortune in life, like the privilege to work from home when necessary.

Our team has been working from home for over a year now, and it has been a difficult time away from our volunteers, funders, and partners. With few opportunities to catch up and build bonds, I know people are feeling disconnected from each other. As soon as possible we will resume in-person events, and I am very much looking forward to seeing you again!

Some of our projects were postponed when the pandemic hit, but we look forward to resuming those in 2021-22. Despite the challenges, I am very proud of what we accomplished. Looking back, our list of achievements is impressive, and demonstrates how dedicated and capable our small team is. I am also

proud of how our Board of Directors and staff quickly shifted to virtual work-arounds; I firmly believe that our nimbleness is one of our greatest strengths.

Diversity is also our greatest strength, and we aim to do our part to address the systemic racism and injustices that continue to oppress Indigenous People and People of Colour. The OWC strives to be an inclusive, empowering forum for all voices, but I know that we can do more. And I am committed to doing more to ensure racialized voices are amplified, and OWC is a reflection of the diversity of our community.

I am fortunate to hear the voices of our Blackfoot partners, who have taught me so much and who have become role models and friends. I strongly believe that our western societies would be more sustainable if we adopted an Indigenous worldview that prioritizes environmental health. The Blackfoot have thrived on this land for millennia, and know how to respect nature's limits. I would like to thank Mike Bruised Head, Randall Wolf Tail, Api'soomaahka, Harley Bastion, and Kansie Fox for sharing their wisdom with me. You have taught me not only lessons about mother Earth, but also lessons about life.

We learned this year just how much Albertans love the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains as debate erupted over coal mines, water allocation, and recreation. In my nearly 11 years with OWC I have never had so many phone calls, emails, presentation requests, and media interviews in only 3 months. It was encouraging to see that people on all sides care so deeply about the mountains, and I am pleased that we were able to provide neutral, science-based information that was valued by our stakeholders. It means a lot to me that we have earned the trust of our community, and our analysis is being sought.

Trust is our most valuable asset, and as we wrap up another successful fiscal year, I want to thank our funders, volunteers, partners, and especially the Board of Directors, led by our incredible Chair, Doug Kaupp, for putting their trust in me. We made it through a very challenging year together, and I appreciate your support and encouragement.

The ongoing pandemic, systemic racism, and unresolved future of the Eastern Slopes mean next fiscal year will likely present its own difficulties, but I truly believe we can tackle anything we put our minds to. It won't be perfect, but we'll tackle the issues together, and be a stronger community for it.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to seeing you again in-person soon!

Shannon Frank

ABOUT THE OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is a not-for-profit organization in Southern Alberta, Canada. We are one of 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in Alberta, mandated by the provincial government to provide an independent voice for watershed management and health under the province's Water For Life Strategy.

The Council consists of the staff and OWC members who work collaboratively with all stakeholders to improve the Oldman River watershed by:

- **improving and sharing knowledge**
- **building and strengthening stakeholder partnerships**
- **providing a science-based forum for all voices to be heard**
- **promoting and facilitating community and institutional action and stewardship**
- **developing and implementing integrated land and water plans**

The Council is governed by a Board of Directors that is composed of nineteen perspectives from various stakeholder sectors, including four members at large.

The OWC began to form in September 2004, when the Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative merged with the Oldman Basin Advisory Council. When the Province's Water for Life Strategy was released, these two groups combined to provide a diverse partnership knowledgeable in all areas of watershed management, including sustainable water management and land use practices in the Oldman basin.

Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils are mandated to create a State of the Watershed Report and an Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The OWC has accomplished these targets, and is moving through implementation.

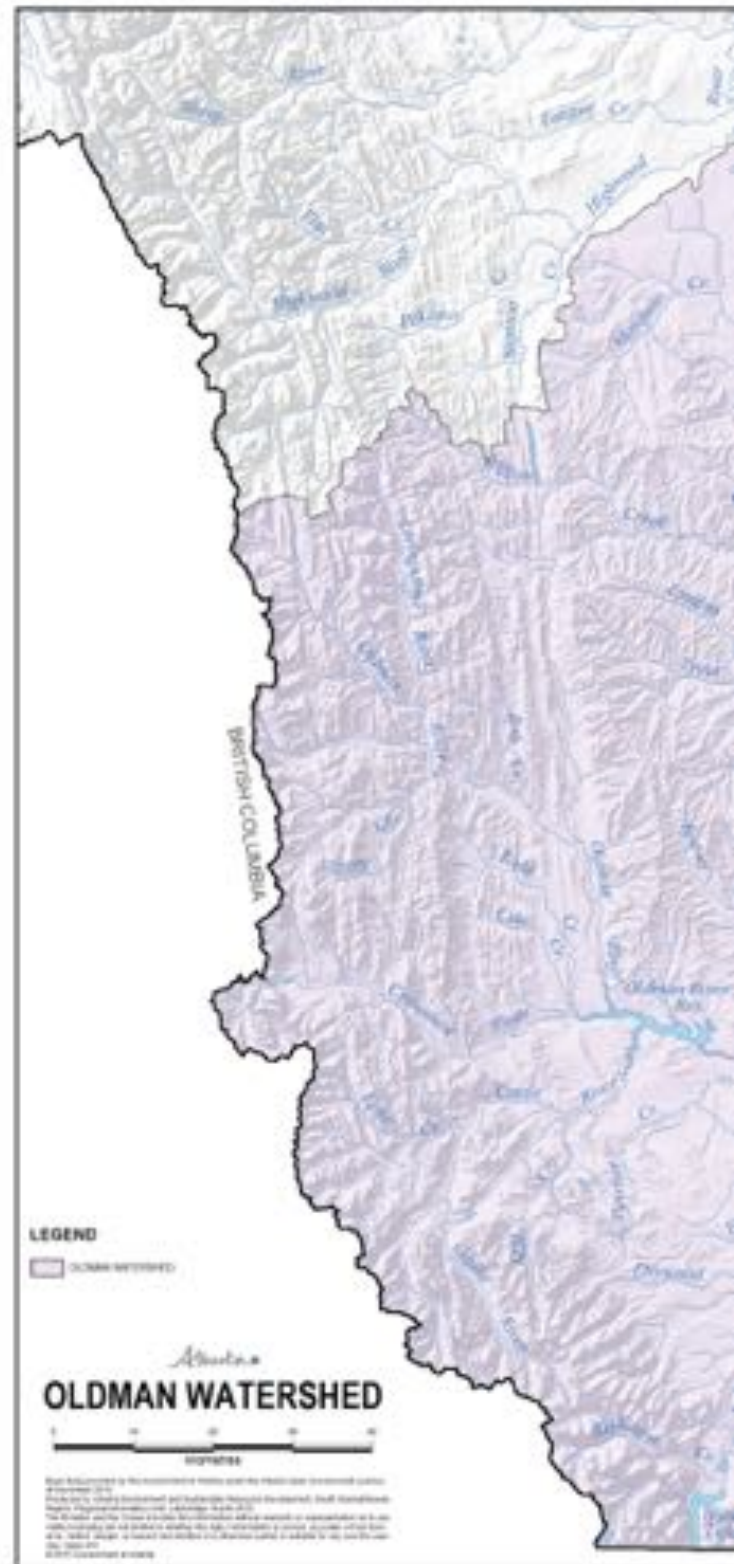
About our Watershed

A watershed is an area of land that drains into a water body, like a creek, river, or lake. Our Oldman watershed is all the land that eventually drains into the Oldman River through its tributaries.

The Oldman watershed is a large, diverse land and water system in Southern Alberta, covering 23,000 km² in southwestern Alberta and 2,100 km² in Montana.

It extends eastward from the forested slopes of the Rocky Mountains, through rangelands in the foothills, dryland and irrigated agricultural plains, to the prairie grasslands.

The Rocky Mountains feed the headwaters of the



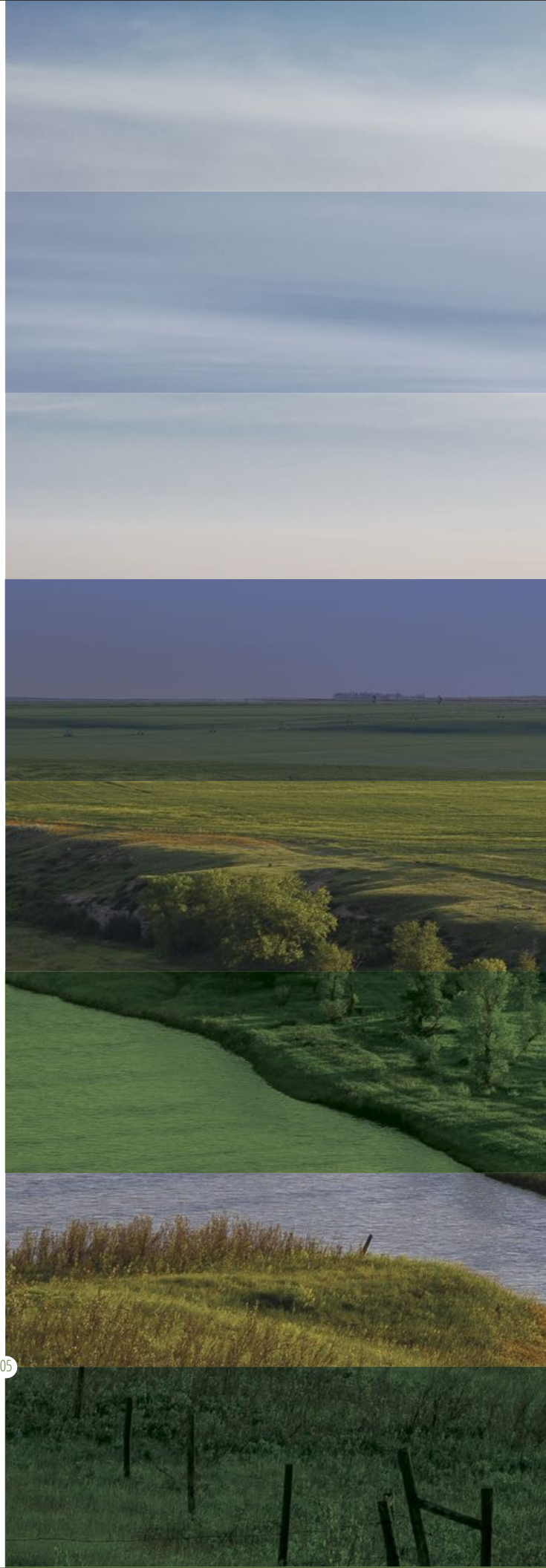
Oldman mainstem and its tributaries (Crowsnest, Livingstone, and Castle Rivers, Willow and Pincher Creeks), while the headwaters of the Belly, Waterton and St. Mary Rivers rise in Montana. The watershed varies greatly, both in terms of the status of the land and water resources and impacts from human activities.

In headwater subbasins, water quantity is adequate, quality is fair to good, and riparian ecosystems are generally healthy. However, as the Oldman River flows east, water quality deteriorates and available water supplies diminish, creating challenges for those downstream.



2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- Supported our Indigenous partners by investing and participating in cultural and environmental restoration projects and events, including the Peigan Friends Along the River Fish Rescue where hundreds of fish were returned to the Oldman River from an irrigation canal, and 500 native seeds were collected as part of Naapi's Garden project, for replanting grasslands.
- Headwaters restoration included planting 280 shrubs and 550+ willows, installing hitching rails and 5 educational signs, and re-assessing riparian health at 4 restoration sites along streambanks, together with many partners.
- Launched a brand-new stream biomonitoring program; hosted 1 field training event and sampled 7 sites in the headwaters.
- Headwaters education included engaging over 600 people at 6 public events, presentations, conferences, and webinars.
- Invested in 2 on-farm riparian restoration projects led by agricultural producers.
- Developed a cutting-edge virtual reality experience to instill stewardship behaviours in participants.
- Surveyed 150 consumers about their attitudes and beliefs regarding food production, which will inform a new educational program.
- Responded to community demand for information about coal mining by providing 5 blogs, 4 presentations, 4 letters to government decision makers, and answering 30 requests for information.
- Increased our membership by over 100, and followers on Facebook by over 1%.
- 64 youth submitted project proposals to the Caring for Our Watersheds contest.
- Leveraged Alberta Environment and Parks investment into an additional \$166,182 from non-Government of Alberta sources.
- Leveraged \$182,307 in-kind support from non-Government of Alberta partners and volunteers.
- Released 5 videos and 12 blogs to educate and engage our membership and followers.







Doug Kaupp
City of Lethbridge
Chair



Andrew Hurly
Academia
Vice Chair



Alan Harrold
Irrigation
Treasurer



Maureen Bell
Environment



Mike Swystun
Health



Mike Bruised Head
Indigenous



Randall Wolf Tail
Indigenous



Wade Aebli
Industry



Errol Kutcher
Industry (Alternate)



Erik Cline
Member at Large



Jan Newberry
Member at Large



Jana MacKenzie
Member at Large



Henk De Vlieger
Member at Large



Randy Bullock
Municipal Districts
and Counties



Linda Cerney
Provincial Government



Michael Wagner
Provincial Government



Chad Willms
Provincial Government
(Alternate)



Blair Painter
Towns and Villages



Lori Goater
Wildlife & Habitat



Anne Stevick
Wildlife & Habitat
(Alternate)



John De Groot
(resigned)
Agriculture (Alternate)



Dwayne Rogness
(resigned)
Agriculture

BOARD OF DIRECTORS





Executive Director

Shannon Frank
August 2010 - Present



Education Program Manager

Sofie Forsstrom
November 2015 - Present



Communications Specialist

Jon Martin
October 2018 - Present



Office Manager

Kallie Desruisseaux
October 2018 - Present

OWC STAFF



Office Dog • **Quiche** April 2017 - Present



DONORS & FUNDERS 2020 - 2021

Over \$400,000

Government of Alberta - Environment and Parks

Over \$100,000

Canadian Agricultural Partnership

\$25,000 to \$50,000

City of Lethbridge
RBC Foundation
Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation
Shell Canada

\$10,000 to \$20,000

Alberta Conservation Association
Government of Canada
Alberta Ecotrust Foundation
Edmonton Community Foundation

\$2,000 to \$6,000

Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District
Lethbridge County
Calgary Foundation - J.N. Fyvie Family Fund
Taber Irrigation District
Alberta Beef Producers
MD of Willow Creek
Plains Midstream Canada

\$1,000 and over

Vulcan County
Town of Claresholm
Town of Pincher Creek

Town of Taber
Town of Fort Macleod
Town of Coalhurst
Calgary Foundation - Perlette Fund
Town of Nanton
Terry Kerkhoff

Under \$1,000

Town of Picture Butte
Magrath Irrigation District
Alberta Irrigation Districts Association
MD of Ranchland No. 66
Janice Newberry
Raymond Irrigation District
Town of Stavely
United Irrigation District
Rosemary Jones
Virginia Grinevitch
Shannon Frank
Andrew Hurly
Kirsten Hironaka
Village of Cowley
Village of Hill Spring
James Fujikawa
Elspeth Nickle
Graeme Greenlee
Heather Sinton
Jason Josey
Knud Petersen
Ted Nanninga
Donna J Stevenson
Patricia McBride
Cheryl Fujikawa
Curtis Goodman
CanadaHelps.org



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation

IN-KIND DONATIONS FROM APRIL 1, 2020 - MARCH 31, 2021

Description	Person	Organization	Value (\$)
Board member	Doug Kaupp	City of Lethbridge	\$3,570
Board member	Andy Hurly	University of Lethbridge	\$2,975
Board member	Alan Harrold	Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District	\$2,380
Board member	Erik Cline		\$2,975
Board member	Mike Bruised Head	Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association	\$2,975
Board member	Dwayne Rogness	Lethbridge County	\$1,190
Board member	Linda Cerney	Alberta Environment and Parks	\$3,570
Board member	Chad Willms	Alberta Environment and Parks	\$1,785
Board member	Errol Kutcher	Spray Lakes Sawmills	\$3,570
Board member	Jana MacKenzie		\$2,975
Board member	Lori Goater	Southern Alberta Group for the Environment	\$2,975
Board member	Maureen Bell	Water Conservation Trust of Canada	\$3,570
Board member	Henk DeVlieger		\$1,785
Board member	Jan Newberry		\$2,380
Board member	Randall Wolf Tail	Piikani Public Works	\$1,190
Board member	John De Groot	Hays Stock Grazing Association	\$595
Board member	Wade Aebli	Montem Resources	\$1,785
Board member	Randy Bullock	Cardston County	\$1,190
Board member	Blair Painter	Municipality of Crowsnest Pass	\$595
Board member	Mike Wagner	Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	\$1,190
Board member	Mike Swystun	Alberta Health Services	\$595
Agriculture Literacy Survey Participants	anonymous		\$6,114
Agriculture Literacy Video Participant	Ryan Kasko	Kasko Cattle Co. Ltd.	\$170
Agriculture Literacy Video Participant	Rob Van Dieman	Van Diemen Poultry Farm Ltd.	\$170
Agriculture Literacy Video Participant	Cor Van Raay	Cor Van Raay Farms	\$170
Agriculture Literacy Video Participant	Norine Ambrose	Cows & Fish	\$170
Agriculture Literacy Video Participant	Dwayne Rogness	Lethbridge County	\$170
Agriculture Literacy Video Participant	Gary Secrist	Lethbridge County	\$170
Headwaters Education and Restoration Project		Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative	\$21,080
Headwaters Education and Restoration Project		Living Lakes Canada	\$20,068
Headwaters Education and Restoration Project		World Wildlife Fund-Canada	\$67
Headwaters Education and Restoration Project		University of Guelph	\$2,340
Headwaters Education and Restoration Project		Cows & Fish and Blackfoot Confederacy	\$35,795

Description	Person	Organization	Value (\$)
Indigenous Partnerships		Kainai Nation and Piikani Nation	\$2,210
Watershed Legacy Program Team			\$2,040
	Anne Stevick	Rancher	
	Troy Ormann	Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	
	Carla Preachuk	MD of Willow Creek	
	Dwayne Rogness	Lethbridge County	
	Mike Uchikura	Alberta Conservation Association	
	Richard Burke	Trout Unlimited Canada - Oldman Chapter	
	Katheryn Taylor	MULITSAR	
	Kristi Stebanuk	Cows and Fish	
	Jamie Puchinger	Farming Smarter	
Watershed Legacy Program grant recipient		Taber Irrigation District	\$51,113
TOTAL			\$187,662

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES

	2020-2021	2019-2020
Administration and Office Space	\$194,138	\$179,628
Headwaters Restoration and Education	\$127,504	\$179,888
Communications	\$112,799	\$89,285
Indigenous Partnerships	\$33,666	\$42,287
Watershed Legacy Program	\$21,820	\$18,348
Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers	\$19,198	-
Youth Education	-	\$16,570
	\$509,125	\$526,006

For detailed financial information, please see Audited Financial Statements.



INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

The Oldman watershed is a part of Treaty 7, and the traditional territory of the Blackfoot People. The Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) includes 4 Nations: Kainai-Blood Tribe, Siksika, Peigan-Piikani and Aamskapi Pikuni.

Our Indigenous partners continue to teach us how to live lightly on the land, and we are honoured to learn from their wisdom and traditional ways of knowing. The traditions and culture of the Blackfoot are rooted in respect for the Earth, and there is much we can learn about sustainability from their time-tested experience living on this land for time immemorial.

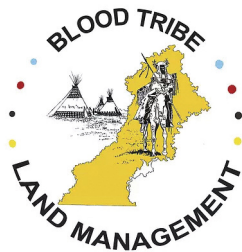
In 2020-21, the OWC was proud to invest \$22,800 in local Indigenous-led projects that are supporting cultural and environmental restoration. Our partners on Kainai Nation and Piikani Nation are leaders in demonstrating how to braid traditional ecological knowledge and western scientific knowledge together.

We are honoured to be a small part of the many valuable initiatives being undertaken by our Blackfoot partners, and share these highlights from 2020-21:

- OWC toured Naapi's Garden project on Kainai Nation to learn about culturally important Blackfoot plants, and how they are being used to restore grasslands, and feed the iinnii (buffalo).

- The Blackfoot Confederacy invited OWC to participate in their Native Trout Recovery Project where we participated in and presented at a workshop, and demonstrated how to stake willows at a planting event at Dutch Creek.
- Together with Kainai Nation staff we completed benthic invertebrate (insects that live on creek bottoms) monitoring training, and are working together on a larger collaborative along the entire Eastern Slopes of Alberta.
- OWC participated in the Peigan Friends Along the River Fish Rescue where hundreds of fish were returned to the Oldman River from an irrigation canal.
- We assisted with organizing the Crown of the Continent Roundtable Conference to showcase Indigenous knowledge and community action, but it was unfortunately canceled due to the pandemic.

Thank you to our partners:



**PIKANI NATION
LANDS DEPARTMENT**

**KAINAI ECOSYSTEM
PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**

Thank you to our funders for making
these partnerships possible:



PROFILING THE WATERSHED

A new project for 2020-21 was our high-tech Profiling the Watershed project. Made possible by the RBC Foundation's Tech for Nature program, the goal of the first year of this multi-year project was to create an interactive, accessible, and forward-thinking virtual reality experience to help inspire and train participants to act as stewards of the watershed. We also captured and documented special areas of the watershed with 360° video and immersive, spherical audio to establish a baseline for tracking the effects of climate change.

While the realities of working safely within health guidelines related to COVID-19 created a few challenges regarding the testing and rollout of the program, due to the nature of using a virtual reality headset and working in close proximity with others, we were able to adapt the project, ultimately making it stronger and more accessible.

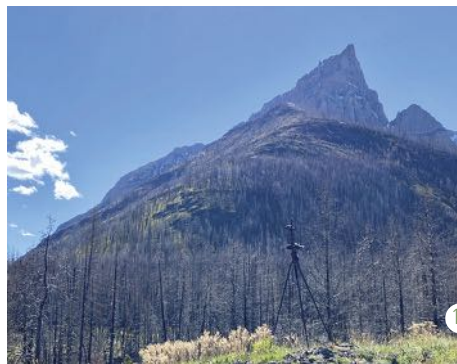
The virtual experience, which will be available to try at future in-person events, takes the user through a short training program where they learn the basics of invasive weed removal, willow planting, and extinguishing campfires. After the training is complete, they are sent to a virtual headwaters site where they put their skills to use. Once all of the

objectives are completed, the player is transported to an interactive scene of a real-world watershed location. The memorable experience provides the user a taste of backcountry restoration work and basis to start their own journey of watershed stewardship.

As our population gets vaccinated and our understanding of COVID-19 increases, we have been able to rethink how some of these experiences can be approached and be most applicable and effective in our current climate. As a result, we have made some modifications to delivery and programming—for this and future years—that will make the experience safer, more accessible, and more inclusive.

The Profiling the Watershed project will continue development and expansion in 2021-22. Watch for it at a future OWC booth or event in the coming year!

Thank you to our project funder



360° and ambisonic audio being captured on location in the watershed.



The OWC VR application transports you to a virtual watershed.



HEADWATERS RESTORATION AND EDUCATION

At a glance:

- Presented at international conference and provincial webinars
- 3 videos + 3 blogs about streambank restoration
- 750+ willows and shrubs planted along streambanks
- 5 signs installed to educate public and protect restored areas
- 50 partners and students engaged in streambank restoration
- 8 field assistants trained in creek monitoring protocol
- 7 streams sampled to monitor restoration sites
- 4 riparian health assessments completed

Education

With the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we shifted our outreach and engagement strategy to be primarily online. We published a 3-part blog and video series outlining the process of planning and implementing a streambank restoration project.

OWC's proposal to the North American Association for Environmental Education national conference was accepted as a 10-minute "Bright Spot" presentation, available on demand to attendees. Since the presentation was pre-recorded (not live), we took the opportunity to film it on location in our headwaters - sharing this beautiful place with practitioners from across North America.

"I watched your bright spot last week on building a bridge with recreationists and it just keeps resonating with me! What a skill you all must have and what an accomplishment! Thank you so much for sharing and inspiration!"

~ Jen, NAAEE conference attendee from Dayton, OH

We also presented as part of a webinar about creek monitoring hosted by fRI Research, and at the Native Trout Workshop Series organized by Cows and Fish.

Restoring Streambanks

Dutch Creek: In August 2020, OWC and Cows and Fish met with Alberta Environment and Parks staff,

who showed us the sites where the government was going to be investing in bridges, road and trail improvements, and access control. In September, OWC and Cows and Fish hosted a planting event with the Blackfoot Confederacy at two sites along Dutch Creek. We planted more than 250 willows at these two sites.

Beaver Creek: OWC partnered with Cows and Fish, who hired a contractor to work on six sites along Beaver Creek in the Porcupine Hills Public Land Use Zone. The contractors used machinery to apply "rough and loose" treatment to decompact the soil. They planted grass seed, native shrubs, willow fascines, and willow stakes. They also installed straw wattles, hitching rails, four "Steer Clear of Ponds and Creeks" signs, and one "Beaver Creek Restoration Project" sign. In October OWC, Cows and Fish, and the Blackfoot Confederacy met to do some willow staking at one of the sites along Beaver Creek. We planted 156 willow stakes, built two silt fences made of willows, and buried 4 willow fascines, which will hopefully grow and trap sediment before it enters the creek.

In October, we were invited by Lethbridge College to help train their Natural Resource Conservation students in willow staking techniques; 30 students took part in this experiential field work, planting willow stakes to stabilize a streambank of the Oldman River.



Willow staking along Dutch Creek with Cows and Fish and the Blackfoot Confederacy. September 2020.



OWC staff Kallie and Sofie making a hole for a willow stake along Dutch Creek. September 2020.

Evaluating Success

Four riparian health assessments were completed this season by our partners, Cows and Fish, at restoration sites along Pasque and Dutch Creek.

New this year, we developed a stream biomonitoring program to complement riparian monitoring at our restoration sites in the headwaters. OWC hosted a CABIN field certification training session with Living Lakes Canada in the Crowsnest Pass in September, in which staff from partner watershed councils, Blood Tribe Land Management, and a neighbouring watershed stewardship group were trained in both CABIN (Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network) and STREAM (Sequencing the Rivers for Environmental Assessment and Monitoring) sampling protocols.

From September to November, OWC sampled 7 restoration sites in the headwaters, sending samples of benthic macroinvertebrates for both DNA metabarcoding (University of Guelph) and taxonomic analysis. These data will provide an important baseline of aquatic health against which to measure improvements over time.

OWC has also been hosting online meetings with Living Lakes Canada, Environment Canada, First Nations, and watershed stewardship groups from across Alberta to support the development of community-based stream biomonitoring projects along the entire Eastern Slopes of the Rockies. Stay tuned for updates on this work in the coming year!

Funders and Partners:

Government of Alberta
 Alberta Conservation Association
 Government of Canada
 Shell Canada
 Living Lakes Canada
 University of Guelph
 World Wildlife Fund Canada
 Blackfoot Confederacy
 Cows and Fish



CABIN / STREAM field certification course provided by Living Lakes Canada. Crowsnest Pass, September 2020.



Sofie, Shannon, and Kallie holding OWC's very first STREAM sample collected for DNA metabarcoding analysis. South Racehorse Creek, September 2020.

INFORMING THE COAL MINING DEBATE

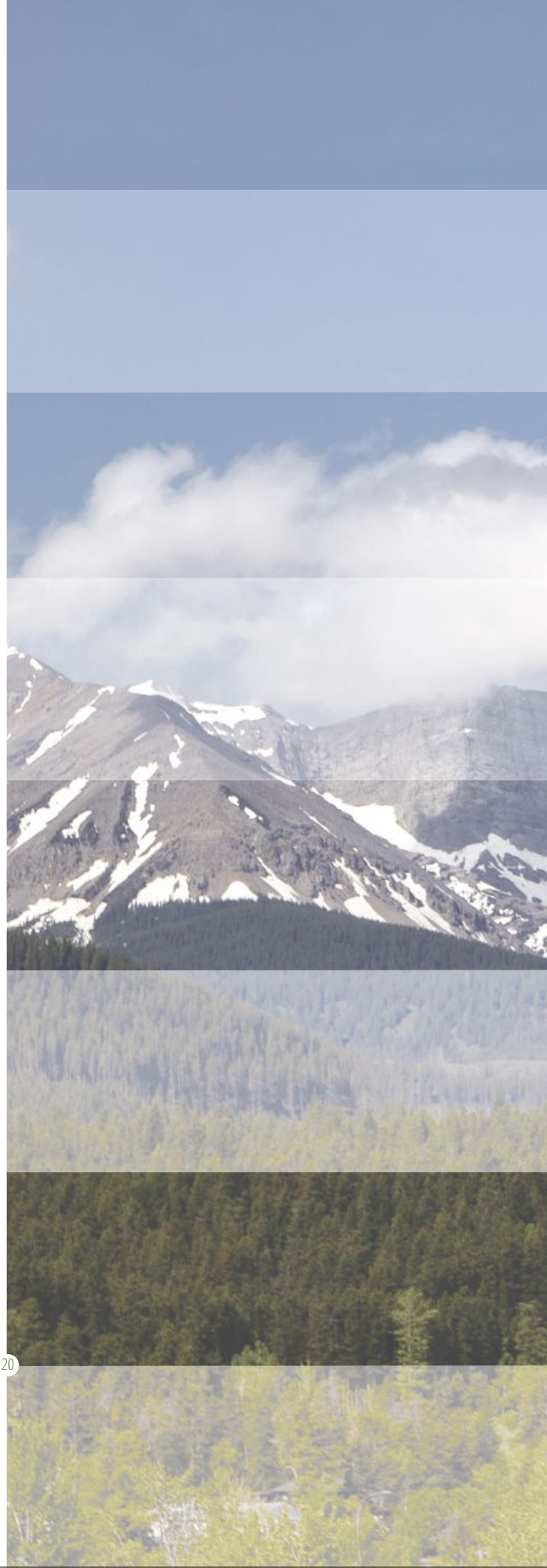


The OWC regularly participates in government consultation processes, and provides feedback on a variety of legislation and policy issues, but this year was like no other.

As the debate grew about coal mining along the Eastern Slopes, the OWC stepped up to provide timely, unbiased, scientific information to the community and to decision makers. We fulfilled our role to remain neutral and support people to formulate their own informed opinions.

The OWC thoroughly researched and analyzed each topic in order to provide 4 detailed letters to government decision makers about the Grassy Mountain Coal Project, Mineral Mining Strategy, Oldman River Basin Water Allocation Order, and the Tent Mountain Coal Project. We also participated in the public hearings held by the Joint Review Panel of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, and Alberta Energy Regulator for the Grassy Mountain Coal Project.

To support education and community engagement, we also released 5 detailed blogs on our website, gave 4 public presentations, were quoted in 10 media articles, and responded to at least 30 direct requests for information.





WATERSHED LEGACY PROGRAM

Farmers and ranchers have an important responsibility as stewards of our watershed, and the OWC is proud to support them in this vital role. We have been supporting rural watershed enhancement projects since 2009, and since then we have invested in 70

education and restoration projects. These grassroots, producer-led projects have improved the health of streambanks, fish and wildlife habitat, and water quality, which benefits all of us.

Congratulations to our 2020-21 grant recipients!

Steelhorse Ranch, who is installing a bridge over Beaver Mines Creek in the Municipal District of Pincher Creek to keep cattle and equipment out of the creek and improve riparian health.

Timber Ridge Land and Cattle, who are installing off-stream watering troughs to attract cattle away from Nanton and Cross Creeks in the Municipal District of Willow Creek.

Thank you to the WLP Team and all our Funders!

Watershed Legacy Program Team:



Anne Stevick



Watershed Legacy Program Funders:



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation

70 FUNDED PROJECTS



IMPACTS

21



50 km
Riparian Fencing



27
Off-stream Watering
Systems



80
Bison



8,790
Cows



300
Sheep



Removed from water
bodies & riparian areas!



28 Weed Pulls



11 Clean-Ups



1,030 Volunteers



1,977 lbs Garbage
4,015 Bags Weeds
12,750 lbs of Weeds

12 Hectares Wetland Restored

8 Bio-Control Releases

6 Bioengineering Projects

1300 Willows Planted

304 Plans, Assessments, Surveys

380 People Engaged in
Educational Events

2 Cattle Crossings

UNITING RURAL PRODUCERS AND URBAN CONSUMERS

Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers is a three-year project that aims to educate, engage, and inform urban consumers in Southern Alberta about agriculture and watershed stewardship through innovative, interactive, and collaborative communications packages of videos, articles, and events.

We completed the first year of the project in 2020-21, where we delivered public surveys to find out where the knowledge gaps, curiosity, and opportunity exist for helping better equip people with knowledge about where their food comes from. The information we gathered at in-person events and online is compiled and is being used to inform a suite of communications pieces, including two seasons of a web-series, interviews with agricultural producers, and public events.

Like many projects and events centred on in-person, face-to-face communication, we faced a number of challenges stemming from the pandemic. Fortunately, we were able to find solutions to many of these challenges that have subsequently helped make this project more flexible and provide insight that will shape the way we design projects in the future.

Now that year one—which was primarily focused on research—is complete, we look forward to years two and three of the project where we will be developing a series of communications pieces highlighting the important work that is being done to make food production safer, more efficient, and less impactful on the health of our water and watershed. Follow along as we enjoy and discuss food from your favourite bakeries and restaurants with local agricultural producers and experts!



22

Community members complete the agricultural literacy survey.



23

Thank you to our project funders





24



25



26



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SOCIAL NUMBERS ▶▶▶

1,750


670 

Blogs released ▶ 12 

Public Presentations
reaching +868 people ▶ 17 

times in the news
across Canada ▶ 21 

2,249 

3,692 



PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES

Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils Of Alberta (WPACs)

OWC is one of 11 WPACs in Alberta; there is one for each major river. WPACs work in 4 main areas:

1. Convenor and collaborator,
2. Education and literacy,
3. Planning and policy,
4. Monitoring and reporting.

WPACs meet regularly to learn from each other and to maintain a strong provincial voice with the Government of Alberta, and more recently, the Government of Canada. Together we shape the role and future of WPACs as leaders in watershed management, stakeholder engagement, and environmental education.

Thank you to our 10 sister WPACs across Alberta for all that you do to improve watershed health!

Alberta Water Council

Alberta's eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils have a seat on the Alberta Water Council Board of Directors and actively participate on project teams to shape Government of Alberta policy and provide tools for watershed managers.

In 2020-21 the Alberta Water Council focused on 3 projects:

1. Alberta's Water Future, a report identifying risks and opportunities facing water management in Alberta.
2. Alberta Wetland Policy Implementation Review, a report to measure progress toward achieving the intended outcomes, identify challenges and successes with the policy implementation so far, and opportunities for improving policy implementation.
3. Water for Life Strategy Implementation Review, a report to track achievement of the goals of the Strategy, and recommend ways to improve progress.

The OWC provides input and support to the elected Watershed Planning and Advisory Council representatives on project teams and the Board of Directors.

Thank you very much to the 2020-21 volunteers for all the time and energy you put in to bring a watershed perspective to the Alberta Water Council:

Roxane Bretzlaff – Lakeland Industry and Community Association / Beaver River Watershed
Morris Nesdole – Athabasca Watershed Council
Josée Méthot - Red Deer River Watershed Alliance
Marilou Montemayor - South East Alberta Watershed Alliance

South Saskatchewan River Basin Intra-basin Water Coordinating Committee

The OWC participates on this committee to provide advice to the Government of Alberta on managing water during periods of water shortage, and how to best meet the Master Agreement on Apportionment, which shares water between the Prairie Provinces. Thank you to Alan Harrold, Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District, and Doug Kaupp, City of Lethbridge, for serving as our representatives on this vital Committee.

Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association

KEPA's Annual Summit is normally a highlight of the year, where captivating presentations and tours showcase the important work being done by members of the Kainai Nation. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic the KEPA Summit was cancelled in 2020. OWC participates to learn from traditional ecological knowledge, and support our Indigenous partners. Thank you to Mike Bruised Head, Kansie Fox, Api'soomaahka, and everyone who is involved in KEPA for your leadership and dedication to KEPA and the watershed!

Recreation Advisory Group

OWC is a member of the Government of Alberta's Recreation Advisory Group to provide input on recreation management in the headwaters of the Oldman watershed. The group is made up of stakeholders from all sectors, who have important discussions about the implementation of recreation management plans, and park management plans. The group discusses linear features density, designated trail systems, infrastructure needs, restoration plans, and much more. Thank you to Andy Hurly for representing OWC on this important Committee!

Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

The Roundtable is a network of networks, bringing over 100 groups together from all sectors to share information, resources, and best practices. The forum helps protect the headwaters of North America that provide water to millions of people and flow through a large portion of the continent all the way to the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Hudson Bay.

Usually, the primary event for the Roundtable is its annual 3-day conference, where participants learn from their neighbours across the Crown of the Continent, and strengthen their transboundary relationships. OWC was assisting with organizing the 2020 conference in Lethbridge to showcase Indigenous knowledge and local projects, but it was unfortunately cancelled due to the pandemic.

Thank you to Mike Bruised Head for your valuable contributions to the Roundtable and for keeping OWC up to date on the group's projects!

Alberta Energy Regulator Multi-Stakeholder Engagement Advisory Committee

This committee provides input to AER as they work towards 3 new approaches to resource management: cumulative effects management system, area based regulation, and integrated decision approach. This committee is important because it keeps stakeholders informed as these changes progress, and offers opportunities for discussion about how each sector will be impacted.

Thank you to Jim Fujikawa for serving as our watershed council representative on this committee!



Alberta WPACs



Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association



YOUTH EDUCATION

This year was a challenging one for teachers and students due to the COVID-19 pandemic and switching between online and in-person learning. In March 2020 we published a Learning At Home blog replete with watershed-related resources and lesson ideas for educators.

OWC promoted the 2020-21 Caring for our Watersheds - Southern Alberta contest, and judged the top 10 finalist presentations. Sixty-four students from three schools in the Oldman watershed submitted thirty-one project proposals to the contest—four of which placed in the top 10 final competition. Congratulations to students from R.I. Baker Middle School in Coaldale, Magrath Junior Senior High School, and Cardston Junior Senior High School for your winning project proposals!

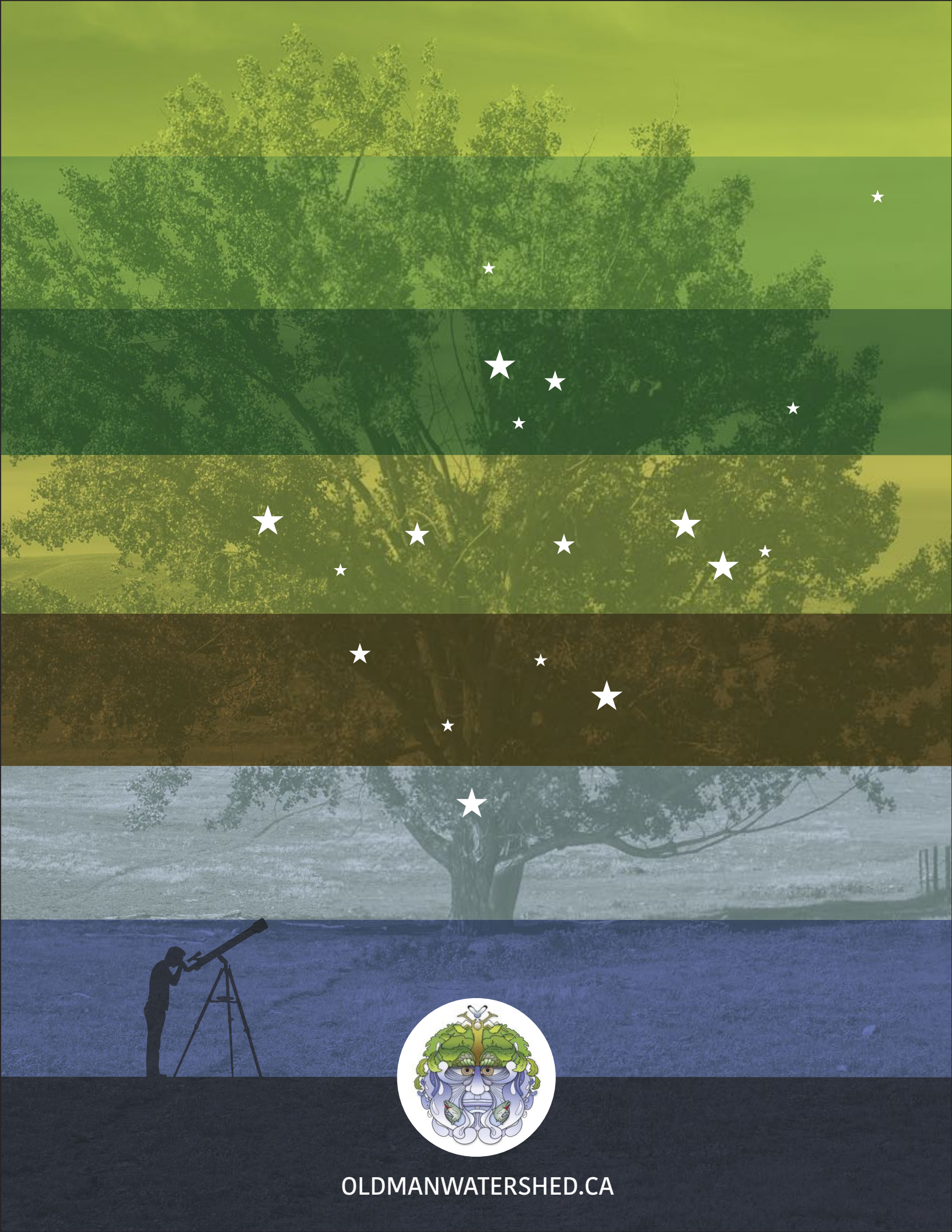




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