

our trust

Stories of people and places in the Columbia Basin FALL 2022

Tech expands horizons in Valemount

24

Indigenous youth look to their futures / 14

Wetland corridor stays wild / 20

Building a business and a career / 26

Investment helps seniors stay closer to home / 42

Basin Stories

3 MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

4 ABOUT US

5 SNAPSHOTS

A glimpse of projects from around the region

10 FEATURE STORIES

Stories about the grants, programs and initiatives supporting community efforts

33 BY THE NUMBERS

Key stats achieved in our focus areas

38 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

39 INVESTMENTS

ON THE COVER: Gaia Beeson, a patron of the Valemount Public Library, uses its new equipment.

10 New homes on the way

Sparwood adds much-needed affordable housing

12 A community hub expands

Montrose revitalizes spaces for social connections and sports

14 Indigenous youth take charge of their futures

An aq am workshop tackles serious topics—and fun

16 A recently built hub becomes a new home base

yaqan nu kiy First Nation consolidates its services

18 A commitment to climate

Basin communities become more climate resilient

20 Wetlands get a little help to stay wild

A project supports the complex biodiversity of a wildlife corridor

22 Long-term benefits to ecosystems

Large, multi-year projects focus on the environment

24 Tech expands horizons

New equipment comes to Valemount's library

26 Building a business and a career

Benefits abound when a law firm hires an intern

28 Improving connectivity for a better digital future

Important infrastructure is now in place

30 All hands on deck to prevent wildfire

Invermere dedicates resources to safeguard the community

32 A fresh-air space for seniors

Creston adds an outdoor venue

34 A showcase of food and creativity

Slocan's farmers' market becomes even more of a draw

36 Taking the road of her role models

Indigenous student follows the footsteps of those who inspired her



Share your feedback



When you have finished reading the magazine, let us know your thoughts by taking our survey. All responses will be entered to **win a prize!**

ourtrust.org/magazinesurvey

Columbia Basin trust

Our Trust is published and produced annually by Columbia Basin Trust. If you'd like to reproduce anything you read, contact us at communications@ourtrust.org. Magazine design by marianlowe.com.



Our thoughts

Flexible and responsive. Those are two of the Trust's guiding principles that have overwhelmingly come to the forefront during the past couple of years. With the onset of the pandemic, residents, communities and organizations had to rapidly adapt the ways they worked together. We're grateful we were able to provide uninterrupted support, while shifting between remote work and the office, like so many others.

Working in support of the people of the Basin, we've noted that the results have been remarkable. With the launch of new Trust programs and initiatives,

and refinements to many existing ones, groups in the region have not only overcome challenges, but strengthened and grown. In 2021/22, non-profits, businesses, local governments, First Nations and more undertook nearly 2,400 projects with Trust support. They've shown resiliency and innovation, and an inspiring determination in the face of generational uncertainty.

In 2020, we sought feedback from Basin residents to develop a short-term strategic plan. The new *Columbia Basin Management Plan* details six priorities—community well-being, ecosystem enhancement, high-speed connectivity, housing, local food production and access, and support for business renewal—plus integrated priorities of climate resilience and working with Indigenous Peoples. In recognition of the enduring impacts of the pandemic and the continued relevance of these priorities, we've extended the current plan to the end of 2023.

As for the future, we look forward to reconnecting with people and communities in the coming year. We are planning our next public engagement for the renewal of the *Columbia Basin Management Plan*, which will begin in late fall and continue into 2023. We're eager to hear from you, to help shape the ways Columbia Basin Trust supports the efforts of our region in the future.

We thank you for your perseverance and congratulate you on your achievements—individuals, organizations, communities and the staff and Board of the Trust. We are proud of the successes of the past year and very much look forward to our future.



Johnny Strilaeff and Jocelyn Carver.

We're eager to hear from you, to help shape the ways Columbia Basin Trust supports the efforts of our region in the future.

Jocelyn Carver
Chair, Board of Directors

Johnny Strilaeff
President and Chief Executive Officer

Strengthening the Columbia Basin, now and for future generations

Columbia Basin Trust supports efforts
to improve the social, economic and
environmental well-being of the Basin.

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

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

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

Read (or listen) all about it!

To celebrate and remember how a
group of people came together to
create the Trust—and then how many
others have carried this progress
forward—discover *The Story of People,
Power and a Region
United*. This book about
the Trust's history is
available in hard copy and in
ebook and audio formats.



25years.ourtrust.org

We're renewing our priorities and want to hear from you!

Our current *Columbia Basin Management Plan*
is ending December 2023. To renew it, we'll be
undertaking an extensive public input process
from fall 2022 to fall 2023, including in-person
community meetings, virtual meetings and
symposia in the New Year. We're eager to get
back into communities and to hear from you! To
stay tuned, sign up to our monthly newsletter.



ourtrust.org/newsletter

Our directors

The Trust is governed by a Board of
Directors composed of 12 members
who live in the Basin. Learn more
about our Board and read highlights
and meeting minutes:

ourtrust.org/board



Columbia Basin Trust Board of Directors.
Left to right: Betty Anne Marino, Don McCormick, Carol
Andrews, Bill van Yzerloo, Krista Turcasso, Owen
Torgerson, Jocelyn Carver (Chair), Corky Evans, Ron
Oszust, David Raven (Vice-Chair), Codie Morigeau.
Missing: Aimee Watson.

Snapshots

A glimpse of community-led projects supported by the Trust

Creating connections in the fresh air

Where can we get together? That's the question that plagued Fauquier residents when the pandemic hit and its community hall had to close. In response, the **Fauquier Community Club Society built an outdoor, timber-frame pavilion** near the hall, complete with a unisex, accessible washroom and storage space. The pavilion is now available to the public for activities like picnics, fundraisers, garage sales and live music—and is just one example of how communities throughout the Basin have used Trust support to add gathering places or make their current ones more welcoming and usable.



Basin Stories

Read the full stories
stories.ourtrust.org



Various performers and participants celebrate the grand opening of the Fauquier pavilion.



Focusing on food—and goals

Get Dirty! That's the tagline of the **Revelstoke Local Food Initiative**, which offers programs that encourage local food production, celebrate local food producers and support the local food-based economy. To help it continue to grow into the future, the initiative reached out to the Trust, which **helps non-profits improve organizational efficiency and navigate operational challenges**, from human resources to governance. "The program has helped us focus on our goals," says Executive Director Kelsey Gasparini, "showing us how we can positively affect our community and flourish in that role."

Heritage buildings stand strong

Built in 1912 in downtown Nelson, the **Annable building** has **been restored** to its former glory, complete with a decorative and protective cornice, close-to-the-original paint colours, refurbished doors and a historically appropriate awning. Owner **Nelson CARES** did this with support from the Trust and Heritage BC, making the building a source of pride for its seven stores and the tenants of its 46 affordable rental units. The organization also developed a **statement of significance and conservation plan for another heritage home** it owns—the emergency shelter on Vernon Street—which are now leading to some repair work. These projects help the organization better serve its clients, promoting community well-being while preserving history for future generations.



Annable Block building.

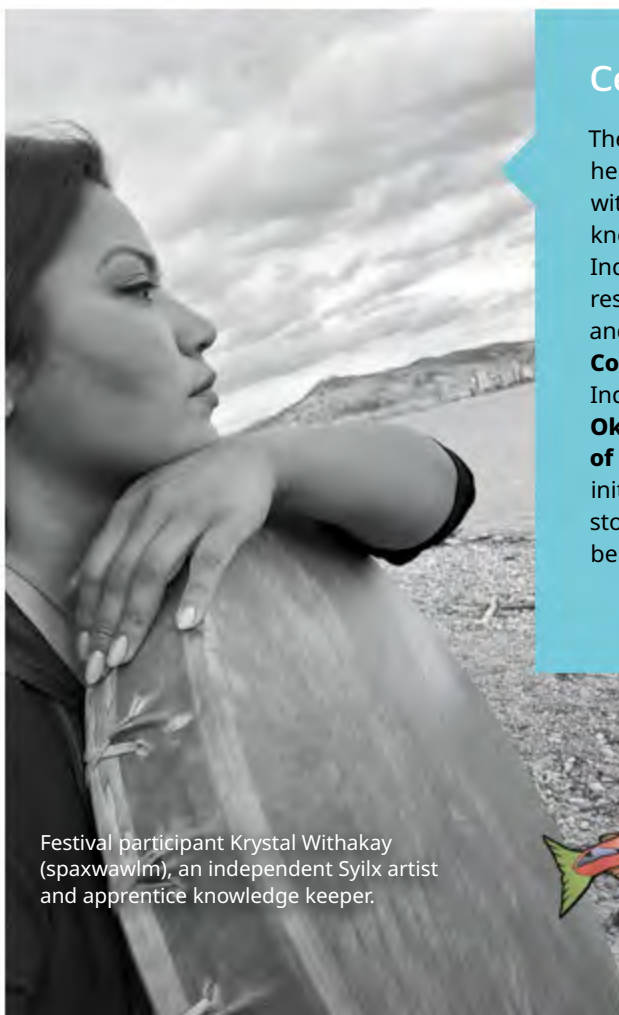


Vernon Street building.



Celebrating salmon and calling them home

The second annual **Bringing the Salmon Home Festival** was held online in May 2022. An impressive 1,000 people engaged with 50 presenters and hosts on topics like integrating Indigenous knowledge and western science to reintroduce salmon, how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can fulfil their shared responsibilities to salmon, and traditional ways to harvest salmon and prepare them as food. **Bringing the Salmon Home: The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative** is the Indigenous-led collaboration of the **Ktunaxa Nation, Syilx Okanagan Nation, Secwépemc Nation and governments of Canada and British Columbia**, supported by the Trust. The initiative continues the Indigenous Nations' efforts to return salmon stocks for Indigenous food and social and ceremonial needs, and to benefit the region's residents and ecosystems as a whole.



Festival participant Krystal Withakay (spaxwawlm), an independent Syilx artist and apprentice knowledge keeper.



Festival season came back

Grooving to live music...marvelling at wall-sized art...going on a guided wetland wander...or laughing as your kids jump in a bouncy castle. All these once again became possible, thanks to the **return of festivals**. The Trust gave an extra boost in 2022 to 12 hallmark festivals to help them resume after the impact of the pandemic. For example, the **Kootenay Children's Festival** took place in **Cranbrook** and the **Wings Over the Rockies Nature Festival** took place in the **East Kootenay**, both in May. Other festivals supported were the Steamboat Mountain Music Festival in Edgewater, Flats Fest in Canal Flats, Kaslo Jazz Festival and more!



Wings Over the Rockies Nature Festival.



Kootenay Children's Festival.



Basin Stories
Read the full stories
stories.ourtrust.org



Riondel Historic Waterline Trail.



History and hiking combine

With features like the remnants of a turn-of-the-20th-century waterline, log cabin and dam, the four-kilometre **Riondel Historic Waterline Trail** brings both history and recreation to the forefront. With support from the Trust and Regional District of Central Kootenay, the **East Shore Trail and Bike Association restored and enhanced the trail**. This outdoor opportunity helps promote community well-being by enabling residents to maintain healthy lifestyles, all while engaging in the region's heritage.



Children and staff at Little Badger Early Learning.



Basin Stories

Read the full stories
stories.ourtrust.org

Committed to serving children and families

Little Badger Early Learning in ʔakisqnuq First Nation is taking positive steps to ensure it has the staff it needs. It has received **wage subsidies for its Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)**, provided by the Trust and the Province of BC. This tops up their usual wages, making it sustainable for ECEs to enter and stay in this field, and for providers to keep and recruit new staff—all while maintaining reasonable fees for families. Little Badger is also enhancing its workforce so it can increase its capacity for more children; **two employees are receiving the Trust's training wage subsidy**, which provides ECEs and ECE Assistants with a regular hourly wage while they complete or upgrade their qualifications.



Since 2017, the Trust has helped:

- create 922 new child care spaces**
- improve over 2,500 existing spaces**
- certify and train more than 180 ECEs**
- enhance the wages of 234 ECEs**
- support four professional development conferences for ECEs**
- provide advice to more than 100 child care providers.**



A large leap forward in child care

A barren site is being transformed into a place where laughter will ring out and developing brains and bodies will get vital attention from skilled caregivers. **The Village of Fruitvale is building the 37-space Beaver Valley Child Care Centre** in the heart of the community, expected to open in summer 2023. The centre will be operated by the Beaver Valley Nursery School, and has received support from the Province of BC and the Trust. It will help meet the critical need for child care in Fruitvale and area, enabling parents to work and attend school and children to develop the social and emotional skills that lead to future success.

How a local artist showcases the Basin

Why do people live in the Basin? What unites us? What distinguishes us from one another?

Fernie artist **Michael Hepher** explored questions like these in his exhibition **In This Together**, funded through the Trust's arts and culture program, delivered by the Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance. More than 28 paintings and nine prints travelled to five galleries in the region, representing Basin communities, landscapes and ways of life. Access to this grant inspires works like Hepher's that contribute to vibrant arts and culture in the region.



Artist Michael Hepher at his workshop in Fernie.



Coaching for biking and business

Based in **Golden**, **Shred Sisters** helps women learn to master mountain bike manoeuvres like doing a drop, riding a skinny or performing a rear wheel lift. To be able to serve its clients even better, the business **obtained advice** through the Trust. Free, one-to-one, confidential business counselling and assessment services help entrepreneurs make informed decisions based on their unique situations, resources and visions. Shred Sisters, for example, adjusted how it managed its biking coaches, tweaked its business plan and assessed how it wanted to grow—strengthening the business so that it, in turn, could keep empowering women to tackle those trails.



Digital illustration of the upcoming affordable housing in Sparwood.



New homes on the way

Sparwood adds much-needed affordable housing

The concept drawings show a snappy, modern four-storey apartment building. Its multi-peaked roof mimics the mountains above Sparwood and the earthy tones of its exterior nicely complement the surrounding trees and are reflective of the natural resources sector in Sparwood. And in addition to its great looks, it's got a great purpose: to provide locals with homes that are within their budgets.

In Sparwood, "It can be really tricky to find housing," says Katey Taylor, Executive Director of the Elk Valley Family Society, which is constructing the new building. "What is affordable isn't necessarily safe to be living in—or it's affordable but the utilities are ridiculously expensive." Plus, many places are filled by workers who commute from elsewhere. "They take housing out of the market for those who are living in Sparwood."



Over 3,500!

Since 2002, the Trust has helped 30 Basin communities develop, build, upgrade or repair over 3,500 housing units, as people in the region have long stated that affordable housing is a priority. This has been done in partnership with groups like BC Housing, non-profit housing providers, First Nations and local colleges. In addition to providing funding for construction, the Trust supports non-profits and First Nations as they develop their proposals, plus helps them complete energy retrofits.



To tackle this issue, the society already owns a host of affordable rental spaces in Sparwood and Fernie—but there's always a waitlist. With support from the Trust, it developed a plan for this 30-unit addition to its offerings and is now close to moving ahead with construction.

The mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments will be available to families, seniors and people with disabilities from the area. All units will be affordable; some will have the rent geared to the tenants' incomes, while others will be at the lower end of what similar accommodations in the community might cost. For people with disabilities, the rent will be even less. Plus, the society is looking at options like heat pumps and is adding solar panels to make the building energy efficient and keep utility costs sustainable.

Construction began in summer 2022, with move-in targeted for fall 2023. Although many folks can't plan what they'll be doing that far in advance, "We have already started creating a waitlist for those who might be interested," Taylor says. "People are definitely excited about it."

First Nations generate solar energy

Three First Nations in the Basin are adding solar panels to 31 affordable rental housing units. This addition increases energy efficiency while making the homes more comfortable and cost-effective, plus provides training and employment opportunities for First Nations members. The projects are receiving support from the Trust and the New Relationship Trust.

YAQIT ?A-KNUQLIT 12 UNITS



"The addition of these solar panels to our 12 rental units will assist our membership in accessing more affordable power. This project will also engage and recruit membership, as there will be three training opportunities for them to learn and gain knowledge in solar energy systems."

Nasu?kin Heidi Gravelle

YAQAN NU?KIY 6 UNITS



(plus adding fibre-optic cable to 4 units)

"The installation of these solar panels for the new highly efficient small homes will not only provide training opportunities for Lower Kootenay Band members but will also allow these small homes to generate their own renewable energy."

Debbie Edge-Partington,
Housing Coordinator

SHUSWAP BAND 13 UNITS



"The solar panels will be good for the environment and reduce energy costs to our tiny homes and five new modular homes."

Dolores Nicholas,
Housing Manager



Affordable homes in Yaqit ?a-knuqlit add solar power.





A community hub expands

Montrose revitalizes spaces for social connections and sports activities



People of all ages enjoy an expanded and improved Montrose Park.

Montrose Park is a community hub: children play in the splash park, players dash about on the pickleball court and people can work up a sweat on the exercise equipment or lounge with a bestseller from the book exchange. The park is the community's main location for outdoor social get-togethers—and has recently grown even more impressive.

One way it has grown is literally: it expanded by 2,100 square metres. The land purchase took place in 2021 with support from the Trust. Formerly the grounds of Montrose Elementary School, which closed in 2003, the parcel was later bought by a private owner, who allowed the Village of Montrose to use it in exchange for maintenance like mowing and watering the grass.

"It was gorgeous, but we didn't own all the land," says Mike Walsh, Mayor of Montrose. "I had concerns about what would happen down the road if the owner sold and development happened."

Now the park can hold sizeable gatherings, and organizers can be confident in scheduling large events, knowing that the area is entirely owned by the Village. "If we want to have music in the park or movies in the park, we can do it," says Walsh.

The improvements didn't stop there. The Village also remodelled a building that at one time housed the change rooms for the now-defunct swimming pool, and later was an education centre for younger children. After that it sat pretty much empty—until the idea came up to turn it into a public space.

The inside gained items like an accessible washroom and kitchen, complete with wi-fi. With Trust support, the outside gained a covered stage that—when not busy with events—provides a sheltered surface to enjoy like a patio. Montrose was also supported with Trust grants to resurface its pickleball/multi-sports court, add a rubber surface to the playground and install solar-powered lighting on the park's trails to encourage evening use.

In all these ways, Montrose has been able to create a large, well-equipped and welcoming space ideal for gathering and moving.

"It's the heart of our community," Walsh says. "It's just beautiful."



ourtrust.org/community



*"It's the heart of our community.
It's just beautiful."*

MIKE WALSH, MAYOR, MONTROSE

People in the region have told the Trust that social connections are important for individual and community well-being, along with active and healthy lifestyles. Because of this, the Trust has helped many communities create outdoor public spaces or make existing ones more inviting and useable, plus supported efforts to increase opportunities for outdoor recreation.





Ivan Nikolov, Youth Recreation Coordinator, ʔaqám.

Indigenous youth go the distance to take charge of their futures

An ʔaqám workshop tackles
serious topics—and fun



Future activities to engage ʔaqám youth
might include rock climbing.



A boy wins a prize for excelling at jumping jacks. While hypnotized, a girl belts out a Tina Turner song. Tidbits like these sound like a riot, but amusement wasn't the only thing on the agenda during the Going M.I.L.E.S. workshop for youth in the community of ʔaḡam. Rather, weaved through the entertaining activities, topics focused on Motivating, Inspiring, Leading, Empowering and transforming the youth to Succeed.

Over three days in April 2022, about 80 Indigenous youth aged 10 to 18—from ʔaḡam, Cranbrook and Kimberley—dove into issues like youth empowerment, drug and substance abuse, suicide prevention, cyberbullying and developing relationships. The sessions were led by Indigenous youth activists and entertainers Dakota House and Scott Ward.

Ivan Nikolov, ʔaḡam's Youth Recreation Coordinator, helped organize the event, which came about because youth themselves stated they wanted to address such challenges. "Our focus was to work on mental health and youth empowerment by adopting the strategy of prevention, rather than solving problems later on," he said. "I believe we were quite successful because the kids learned a lot of important aspects and they saw real examples of people who had overcome these issues."

Others in the community benefited as well, as parents and the general public were invited to the final hypnosis show. "This was

"I have seen an increased solidarity among kids and increased determination to be successful during P.E. classes. The students started working as a team, rather than being too individual."

IVAN NIKOLOV, YOUTH RECREATION COORDINATOR, ʔAḠAM



Channelling passion into action

Youth across the Basin embraced another opportunity to look toward the future when the Basin Youth Network hosted a Climate Action Forum. In February 2022, 80 youth aged 14 to 18, from around the Basin, connected during the online event to learn about and be inspired by the many opportunities and pathways of getting involved with climate action. Topics included fostering climate dialogues, Indigenous clean energy and how businesses can address climate action.

An outcome of the forum was a workshop held in March 2022 that focused on how food, food production and food waste have effects on climate change, too. The participants brainstormed dozens of ideas on what individuals in a community can do, such as buy local, compost, and reuse or avoid abundant food packaging.

As Forum presenter Leeza Perehudoff said, "One small action can add up to a really big change."



"It was great to learn about how to handle cyberbullying."

PARTICIPANT AT GOING M.I.L.E.S. WORKSHOP

one of the first events that broke the ice in the post-pandemic world, where people gathered together and had a great time."

While the youth loved the lively parts—one participant called the presenters' tricks "awesome"—they also appreciated the deeper messages. As another said, "It was great to learn about how to handle cyberbullying."

The Trust supports ʔaḡam's Youth Network—part of the overall Basin Youth Network, which has helped 28 community networks increase local activities and opportunities for youth, enabling them to learn new skills and engage more with each other and their communities.

Being involved in school physical education programming, Nikolov himself has witnessed positive results thanks to the workshop. "I have seen an increased solidarity among kids and increased determination to be successful during P.E. classes. What makes me even more satisfied is the fact that the students started working as a team, rather than being too individual."

Follow-up activities in the community have further engraved the lessons learned, particularly how youth "can overcome the barriers and achieve what they want to achieve," Nikolov says. This has included a visit from an Indigenous NHL player and involvement in baseball and soccer programs. A future event plans to highlight Indigenous hip-hop.

"I hope that other communities will follow this example and organize something similar, in order to provide the best opportunity for children to be successful in their lives."

ourtrust.org/byn



A recently built hub becomes a new home base

yaqan nu?kiy First Nation consolidates its community, administrative and health services

Large windows open to expansive views of the verdant Creston Valley and sunlight streams into the high, vaulted ceilings. The shape of the building's roof was inspired by the sturgeon nose canoe—an important component of yaqan nu?kiy tradition—and other architectural and interior design elements reflect the First Nation's culture.

This is the Wilfred Jacobs Building: a newly opened centre offering community and health services to members of the yaqan nu?kiy First Nation. Heather Suttie, Chief Executive Officer, explains that the building was named “in memory of an esteemed community Elder and leader.”

It was designed to integrate cultural elements, and sustainability and energy efficiency are a priority. Features include an integrated passive solar design, LED lighting, additional insulation and energy-efficient windows.

The Trust helped support the part of the building that enables members to access a wealth of resources: children's

programming; traditional healing services; nutrition classes; membership services; support for housing, employment and post-secondary studies; and much more.

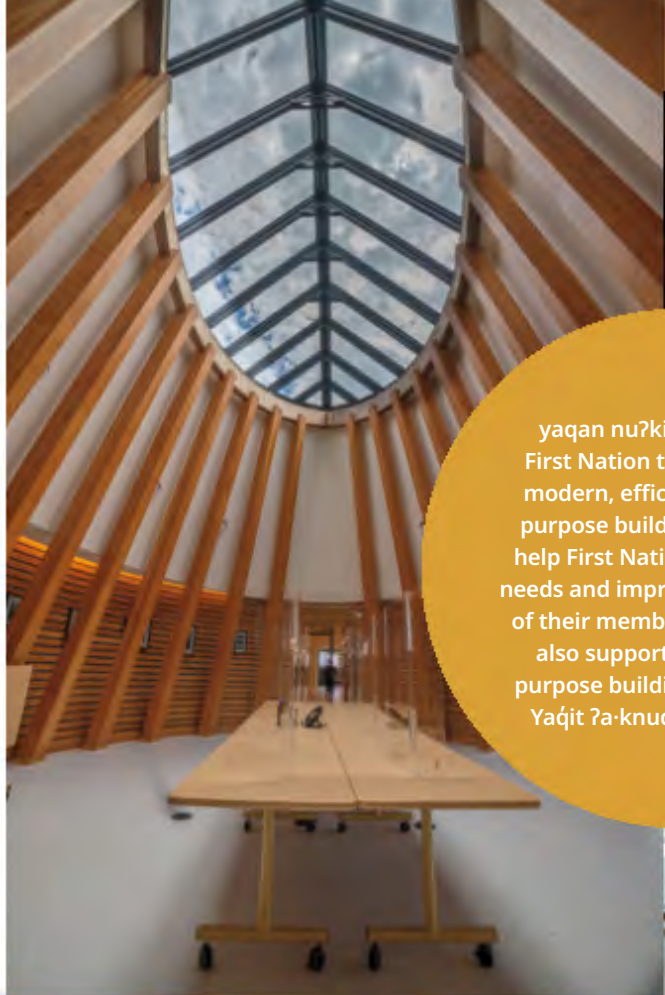
Also, “The new building offers a private, well-equipped clinic for band members,” says Suttie, built with support from the First Nations Health Authority. With a full-time nurse and other part-time medical professionals, services include trauma counselling, addiction support services, diabetes support, foot care, home support and medical travel support. “Our priority is to indigenize and personalize medical care.”

Outside, there is also a community market garden and farm, aimed at enhancing both individual health and local food sovereignty.

By having key services together—community services, administration and health—yaqan nu?kiy members now have easier access to staff and services and an enhanced opportunity to be involved in community matters.

Presenters and community members celebrate the opening of the Wilfred Jacobs Building.

yaqan nu?kiy isn't the only First Nation to boast a recent, modern, efficient community-purpose building. In its aim to help First Nations address their needs and improve the well-being of their members, the Trust has also supported community-purpose buildings in ʔakisq̓nuk, Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓i't and ʔaq̓am.



A commitment to *climate*

Basin communities become more climate resilient

People living in the Basin care deeply about the environment and the impacts of climate change. To address the issue, people, organizations and communities in the Basin are exploring solutions through a variety of methods, with support from the Trust. In addition to the projects featured here, the Trust is also helping local governments and First Nations focus on aspects like doing energy retrofits for community-use buildings or obtaining the resources they need if disasters like wildfires strike.

9

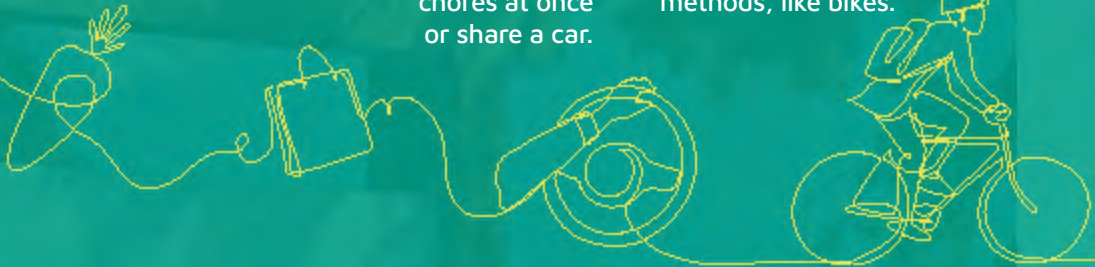
climate-friendly
ideas suggested
by Basin residents

1.
Grow your
own food.

2.
When buying food,
choose local.

3.
Drive less,
carpool,
complete several
chores at once
or share a car.

4.
Consider more
enviro-friendly
transportation
methods, like bikes.



FOOD ON THE MOVE

The Cranbrook Food Bank picks up and delivers 136,000 kilograms per year of food recovered from local grocers. To move it and other items around, it is purchasing a plug-in hybrid vehicle. This cuts emissions and costs, all while feeding people and keeping food from rotting.



CLEAN ENERGY AND RETROFITS

The Community Energy Association (CEA) is working to highlight clean energy and energy-efficient options for Basin homeowners, in partnership with the City of Rossland. CEA is also hosting training opportunities for tradespeople, contractors and post-secondary students to support growing interest for building retrofits Basin-wide.

TOP-NOTCH CLIMATE INFO

Columbia Basin Climate Source is a one-stop destination for information about climate change, climate change impacts and climate action. How long will the growing season be in 20 years? Why is a 1°C increase in temperature such a big deal? Answers for these questions and more are at basinclimatesource.ca.



5.

Save energy through actions like turning off lights and using appliances less.



6.

Consider home retrofits like solar panels and heat pumps to use less energy and save money in the long term.



7.

Reduce consumption and waste by buying fewer items and purchasing products with minimal packaging.



8.

Recycle and compost.



9.

Reuse and repurpose: for example, wear second-hand clothes or use old barrels to catch rain.



DIVERTING ORGANICS

Households in Kimberley and Nelson can benefit from new organics diversion programs. In addition, the Regional District of Central Kootenay is implementing a collection service in rural areas and small towns. Projects like these decrease food in landfills, reducing greenhouse gas emissions while addressing concerns about conflicts between residents and wildlife.

8,484 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced through projects in eight communities since 2021.

ECO-FRIENDLY TRANSPORT

Kootenay Car Share is buying two low-speed electric vehicles that community members will be able to borrow. The mini-cars seat four passengers, have a maximum speed of 40 kilometres/hour and can go a distance of 90 kilometres—perfect for in-city needs. Also, since 2021 nine other non-profits have replaced fossil-fuel vehicles with electric vehicles through Trust support.



Wetlands get a little help to stay wild

A project supports the complex biodiversity of a wildlife corridor



Wendy King, President, Slocan Lake Stewardship Society.



Like many people, Wendy King enjoys riding her bike on the rail trail that runs from Rosebery on Slocan Lake to Summit Lake. By late summer, however, it can be safer to avoid the wetland section: “The bears are abundant and love the riparian zones for foraging and preparing for winter,” she says.

They’re not the only ones that adore this place. Referred to as the Bonanza Biodiversity Corridor, this 23-kilometre wetland and wildlife corridor is home to a vast range of species, including grizzlies, beavers, moose, western toads, Kokanee salmon and great blue herons, not to mention old-growth western red cedar and rare lichens, mosses and mollusks. “We have over 55 species at risk in the corridor,” King says. “It’s pretty wild and very unique in biodiversity for the Kootenays.”

To safeguard this space and the plants and animals that rely on it, the Slocan Lake Stewardship Society has completed a three-year project to restore three wetlands in the corridor, supported by the Trust and the Kootenay Connect initiative funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada.


One of the key issues was the old railway bed, built over a century ago. Running the length of the valley, it created barriers that cut off pockets of wetlands from each other. The project focused on reconnecting and enhancing these aquatic habitats—all while ensuring that trail users could continue to enjoy this spectacular location.

“To be fully functioning, wetlands need to be moving,” says King, President of the society. “In periods of high water, like freshets in the spring, when everything’s melting, the water needs to flow from one wetland section to another without having the rail trail impede these natural flows.”

For two of the restoration sites, the solution was to add swales: dips across the trail, filled with rocks, that better permit water to pass—and sometimes fish and western toads. The occasional pedestrian walkway was added above for humans. “Trail users can enjoy the trail and, at the same time, nature is rewarded with improved water flows.”



Since 2017, the Trust has supported 25 large-scale, multi-year projects to enhance ecosystems.



Left to right: Members of the Trust's Environmental Advisory Committee: Marty Williams, Erik Leslie and Wendy King (also President, Slocan Lake Stewardship Society); Decker Butzner, Director, Slocan Lake Stewardship Society; and Trust staff Krista Watts and Katie Kendall.

“In one year, we’ve seen the amphibian population explode in one of the wetlands.”

WENDY KING, PRESIDENT, SLOCAN LAKE STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

Another important step was to add vegetation. “We planted over 2,000 shrubs and trees in an area that had been cleared and disturbed. In almost two years now, we’ve seen amazing growth and the survivability is really good.” By shading the creek, these plants help stop evaporation, keep the water cool and improve spawning habitat for rainbow trout.

Stream banks also needed to be stabilized, plus the creek required contouring where it had started to run straight alongside the trail. “For healthy habitats, water retention and filtering, you need a meandering creek,” King says. “That’s very important.” To encourage this, the group sharpened the ends of

cedar logs and rammed them into the banks, submerging them into the water for a natural habitat enhancement.

These efforts—including additional activities like constructing ponds and mounds and removing ineffective culverts—are already having effects. That’s why the project was a great match for support from the Trust, which works to help groups in the region maintain and improve ecological health in the Basin’s ecosystems. Hands-on work like this, at a large scale, across entire landscapes, aims to create lasting effects. (To see all projects to date, turn to page 22.)

For Bonanza, “In one year, we’ve seen the amphibian population explode in one of the wetlands,” King says. The benefits also extend beyond the wetlands, as they bring a substantial amount of nutrients and cold water into Slocan Lake.

The group will now continue to monitor the sections and adjust if necessary. “We really are just coaxing nature to be the best it can be.”



Long-term benefits to *ecosystems*

Large, multi-year projects focus on the environment

The Columbia Basin offers spectacular landscapes that are important to humans and critical to the flora and fauna that live in them. Ecosystem resilience is a priority of people in the Basin, and therefore the Trust. Since 2017, with Trust support, a range of groups have implemented large-scale, long-term, on-the-ground projects to maintain and improve ecological health and native biodiversity in a variety of ecosystems (like in the Bonanza Biodiversity Corridor, seen on page 20). Here's a summary of the projects to date.

- 1 Simpcw First Nation is restoring wetland connectivity.
- 2 The Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada is restoring and enhancing whitebark pine habitat.

“This five-year project is the largest and most ambitious recovery project to date outside of the national parks.”

RANDY MOODY, PRESIDENT, WHITEBARK PINE ECOSYSTEM FOUNDATION OF CANADA (PROJECT #2)

- 3 The Golden District Rod and Gun Club—alongside Ktunaxa Nation Council Guardians and Seven Feathers Contracting & Consulting—is enhancing elk habitat.
- 4 Wildsight Golden is conserving and enhancing habitat for bank and barn swallows, plus tracing migratory behaviour.
- 5 Shuswap Band—alongside partners like the Columbia Wetland Stewardship Partners, the Golden District Rod and Gun Club, Farmland Advantage, the Lake Windermere Farmers Institute, Trout Unlimited Canada and Living Lakes Canada—is restoring watershed habitat and connectivity.
- 6 Shuswap Band—along with its partners the Columbia Wetland Stewardship Partners, Farmland Advantage and the Lake Windermere District Rod and Gun Club—is restoring and enhancing over five kilometres of Shuswap Creek.

- 7 The British Columbia Conservation Foundation is enhancing the Lake Ranch (Von Unruh) Conservation Property, owned by The Nature Trust of BC.

- 8 ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation is restoring and enhancing land to improve critical habitat for wildlife, lower the risk of wildfires and reduce weed infestations.

- 9 Wildlife Conservation Society Canada is undertaking two projects: restoring and enhancing bat roosting habitat and adding three types of bat homes.

- 10 The Slocan Lake Stewardship Society is restoring and enhancing marshes, fens and swamps in the Bonanza Biodiversity Corridor.

- 11 Syilx Okanagan Nation—alongside Sn̓Pink'tn (the Penticton Indian Band)—is enhancing ki?lawna? (grizzly bear) habitat.

- 12 The Slocan Integral Forestry Cooperative is enhancing rare terrestrial habitat through controlled burns, and restoring aquatic habitat.

- 13 The Sparwood and District Fish and Wildlife Association is enhancing elk winter range habitat at the Big Ranch Conservation Property Complex, owned by The Nature Trust of BC.

- 14 The Nature Conservancy of Canada and The Nature Trust of BC are restoring and enhancing the Wycliffe Conservation Complex.

- 15 The Rocky Mountain Naturalists are revegetating shoreline and installing basking habitat for turtles at the Elizabeth Lake bird and wildlife sanctuary.

- 16 ʔaq̓am is thinning forests and using prescribed burns to return forest stands to healthier, more natural conditions and reduce the risk of wildfires.

- 17 The Elk River Watershed Alliance is enhancing a cottonwood forest.

- 18 yaqan nu?kiy is undertaking two projects to revitalize wetland, stream and riparian habitats.

- 19 The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Ktunaxa Nation Council are restoring whitebark pine on the Darkwoods Conservation Property.

- 20 The Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area is restoring wetlands at Six Mile Slough.

- 21 The Kootenay Native Plant Society is increasing the abundance and connectivity of native wildflowers and enhancing habitat for native insect pollinators.

- 22 Syilx Okanagan Nation and the Trail Wildlife Association are improving habitat for rare species and ecosystems.

- 23 The Salmo Watershed Streamkeepers Society is enhancing fish habitat in the Salmo River.

“Species at risk and the whole health of the grassland ecosystem will benefit immensely.”

RICHARD KLAFKI, DIRECTOR, CANADIAN ROCKIES PROGRAM,
NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA (PROJECT #14)

Ecosystems projected to be restored and enhanced:

WETLAND

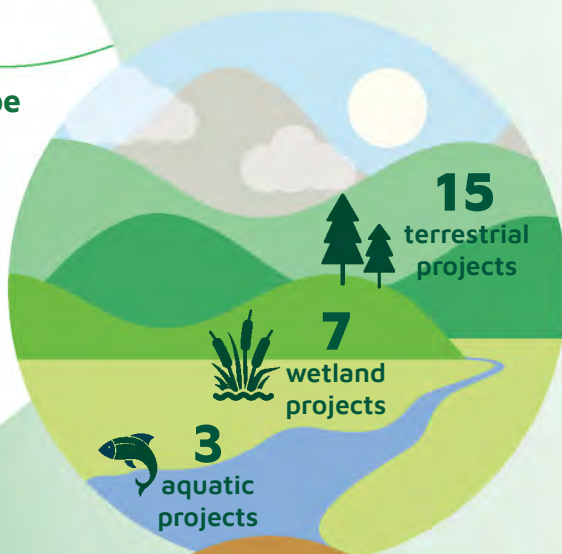
1,700 hectares

AQUATIC

5,250 square metres

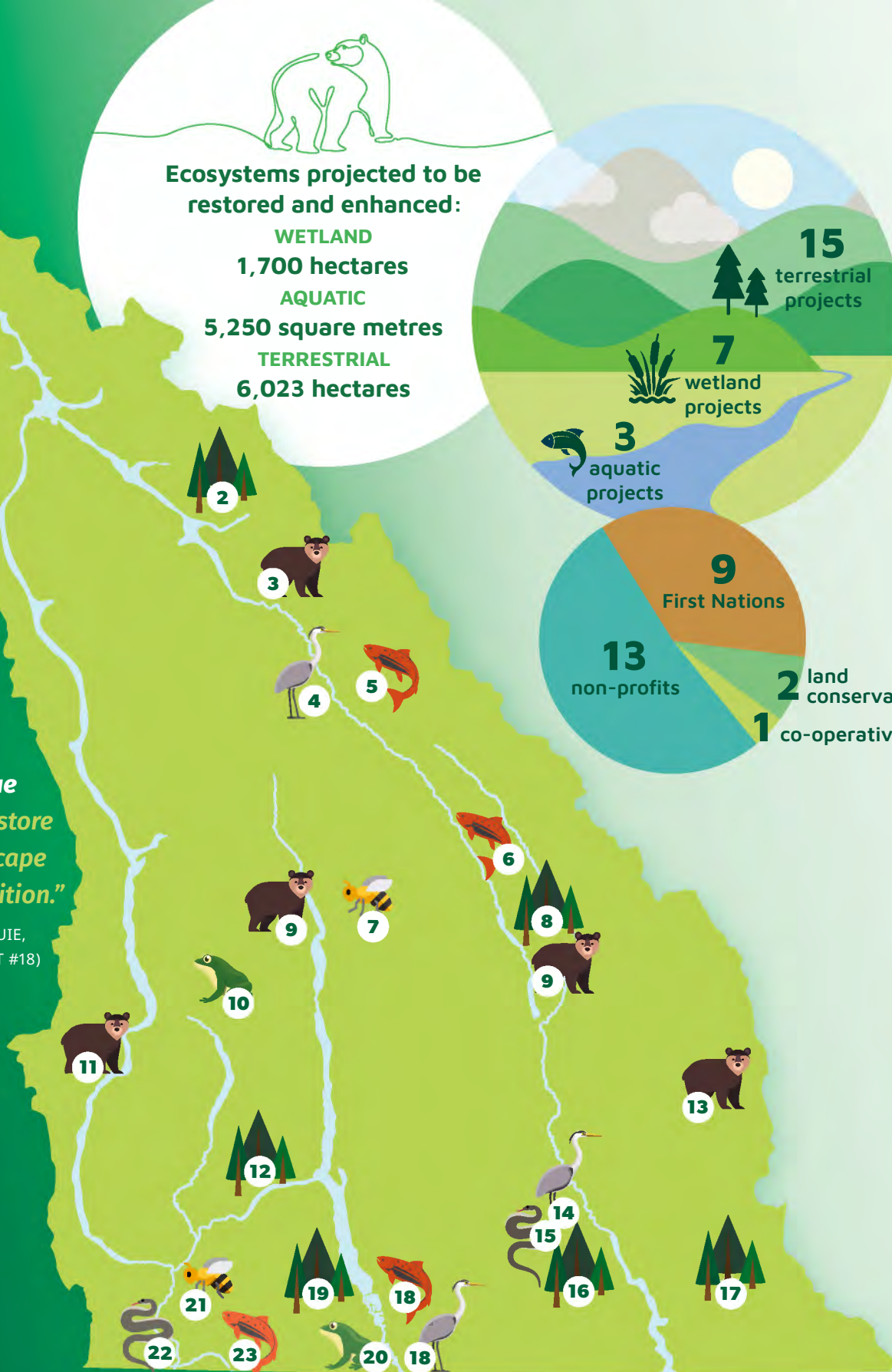
TERRESTRIAL

6,023 hectares



"This is a unique opportunity to restore an altered landscape to its former condition."

NASU?KIN JASON LOUIE,
YAQAN NU?KIY (PROJECT #18)



Amphibians



Birds



Insects



Reptiles



Fish



Mammals



Vegetation



Tech expands horizons

New equipment comes to Valemount's library



***"Our vision statement is 'Encouraging the spirit of learning and discovery.'
That sums up all the possibilities."***

HOLLIE BLANCHETTE, LIBRARIAN, VALEMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY

The community of Valemount has incredible assets, including breathtaking scenery and vast outdoor opportunities—but it wasn't until recently that it gained a rollercoaster, an old-fashioned saloon and a voyage in space.

Virtual reality ones, that is.

People can now borrow virtual reality equipment from the Valemount Public Library to experience all sorts of adventures. “The VR headsets are very, very popular,” says Hollie Blanchette, Technology/Interlibrary Loan Librarian.

The masks are just one of the many pieces of technology the library has added over the past couple of years, with Trust support. “Our vision statement is ‘Encouraging the spirit of learning and discovery,’” says Blanchette. “That sums up all the possibilities.”

New robotics kits provide hours of entertainment and instruction—all while building confidence, increasing literacy skills as the kids decipher the how-tos, and creating bonding moments between the children and their older helpers. Younger kids can enjoy LeapFrog tablets, which are packed with “different fun games, where they’re learning but they don’t know that they’re learning. That’s the trick!”

“We need to be able to offer all our community members everything that’s possible—and as the world evolves, technology is huge.”

HOLLIE BLANCHETTE, LIBRARIAN, VALEMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Adults can access a fully equipped meeting room, handy for individuals and groups like non-profits. And creative folks can design their own videos and movies with equipment like a video camera, a green screen and the essential accessories and software. “Anything they can think of, they can do.”

Even though a library’s traditional domain is books, Blanchette says that libraries need to keep growing. “We need to be able to offer all our community members everything that’s possible—and as the world evolves, technology is huge.”

Several years ago, the Trust introduced support to help communities and non-profit organizations increase the quality and availability of technology, which also affects overall community well-being.

Small and rural communities are working to give residents more opportunities to join and thrive in the digital world, whether it’s for amusement, school, work or connecting with others.

Valemount’s library appreciates the aid. “It’s wonderful to know we are heard when we say, ‘Hey, we could really use some help with X, Y or Z.’”

In the end, it’s users’ reactions that make it worthwhile. Without realizing he was learning scientific concepts, one boy put together the library’s new Star Wars droid robot. When he discovered he could successfully make it move, the boy was ecstatic. Blanchette recounts the parent’s words: “It was like Christmas, the father said.”



ourtrust.org/community



Library patron Gaia Beeson learns to navigate the robots.



179 non-profits have received new tech resources since 2020.

34 public spaces have received new tech equipment, from laptops to laser engravers, since 2019.



Library patrons Gaia Beeson and her father Kyle Beeson use the filming equipment.

Building a business and a career

Benefits abound when a law firm hires an intern

Lysenko Law's four lawyers aid people in many ways, from helping them with wills and real estate transactions, to performing litigation and family law. Started in 2013 by owner Lilina Lysenko and based out of Rossland—with a newly opened Kimberley branch—the firm has experienced increased demand.

To maintain its commitment to high-quality services and continue to thrive, in May 2021 it hired an intern: Kyrri Stewart, who had just graduated from the Legal Administrative Assistant program at Capilano University and had already fulfilled a two-week practicum at the office.

To bring her on full-time, the Trust's career internship wage subsidy was vital. Without it, "We probably wouldn't have hired her, and if we did, it might have only been part-time or casual," says Elaine Seto, Office Manager.

Stewart's duties include providing legal administration support for the lawyers, doing courthouse filings and preparing initial drafts of legal documents. She's gaining experience while making an income—both of which will help her continue on her path to becoming a full-fledged lawyer.

"I am improving my ability to read cases and analyze facts, and I am learning how the law applies, which are important skills to have for law school," says Stewart, who is currently finishing an undergraduate degree—a requirement for applying to law school—in environmental practice at Royal Roads



Kyrri Stewart, Legal Assistant, Lysenko Law.

"An internship is a great way to gain experience in my chosen field and learn from a great team."

KYRRI STEWART, LEGAL ASSISTANT, LYSENKO LAW

University, alongside her job at Lysenko. "Working in a law firm also has provided me with practical and procedural knowledge that law school doesn't necessarily provide—for example, drafting pleadings and the process for filing documents at the court registry—which is a great advantage."

Lysenko Law also benefits. It gets the hands-on help it requires right now, plus it will hopefully have a new lawyer on the team when Stewart passes her bar.

"She's still a few years away from practising law," Seto says, "but this opportunity gives us additional staff at a much-needed time and gives her the experience she needs to continue a career in law."

It's also a win for the region. People have told the Trust that having a diverse and resilient economy is extremely important—one that's supported by strong businesses, a trained workforce and sufficient job opportunities. This wage subsidy helps address all these aspects by enabling employers to create full-time, career-focused positions that lead to permanent employment.

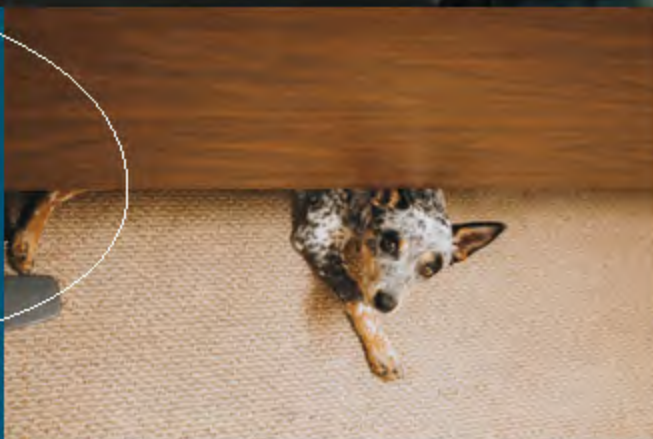
"An internship is a great way to gain experience in my chosen field and learn from a great team," says Stewart. "Plus, in this case it led to full-time, permanent employment for me, which I am thrilled about."

Lysenko Law staff. Front row, left to right: Kyrri Stewart, Legal Assistant; Kyle Rhedner, Law Student; Lilina Lysenko, Owner/Lawyer; Kelly McLean, Conveyancer. Back row, left to right: Emily MacKinnon, Lawyer; Emily Haws, Administrative Assistant/Receptionist; Elaine Seto, Legal Assistant/Office Manager.





**37 career interns
have gained
permanent,
full-time positions
since 2018.**



Improving connectivity for a better digital future

Important infrastructure is now in place

Janet Williamson and her husband spend as much time as they can in the East Kootenay town of Kragmont, where they work remotely thanks to solid access to high-speed internet.

Williamson works as a remote pharmacist, while her husband needs to stay connected to his environmental companies in Calgary and Edmonton. Add visits from their young-adult children and their internet demands shoot up even more. Happily, their service has been able to keep up. “We’ve been able to pretty much do anything we need without a worry,” Williamson says.

Recently, the Trust added 185 kilometres of fibre optic cable to its broadband network in the Basin, including in the South Country—where the Williamsons are laying roots—and up the Slocan Valley to north of Nakusp. Internet service providers can then hook up to this backbone to improve the speed and quality of their service.

Tough Country Communications is the Williamsons’ provider. It connected a few additional towers in the South Country to the network. “Customers were able to get the benefits right away from the improvement,” says Paul

McLean, President. “The new infrastructure allows all our customers to get a faster, more reliable connection to the internet. Since we see more customers using the

The Trust’s broadband backbone will soon be 1,285 kilometres long.

If this were stretched into a straight line, it would be slightly longer than the province of British Columbia is tall.

1,285 km

Partners on the Trust’s recent network-expansion projects include the federal Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, Province of BC’s Connecting British Columbia program, Regional District of East Kootenay, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Village of Slocan, Village of Silverton, Village of New Denver and Village of Nakusp.

Check out what the Trust is doing to connect the Basin in this new video!



ourtrust.org/connectingthebasin

internet for both work and pleasure, we can now better answer the demands of our customers in the South Country.”

Columbia Wireless will also link to the network, up the Slocan Valley. “This will increase internet speed to all of our existing customer base considerably, and allow us to offer fibre speeds to whole communities where we couldn’t before,” says Ben Leslie, Chief Executive Officer. “Students could stay at home and do college online, without having to move away,” he offers as an example. He has also heard of patients who could manage their conditions by connecting to their doctors online. “It will give everyone a nice, local advantage.”

People in the region have told the Trust that high-speed internet is extremely important to them, which is why the Trust is committed to improving access to it. Two more fibre backbone projects are under way: between Fruitvale and Nelson (via Salmo) and between Kimberley and Wasa, where the Trust is installing another 100 kilometres of fibre. Once these sections are complete—and considering the Slocan Valley and

“By making large strides like this, we are ensuring the growth of rural economic development and sustainable, healthy communities.”

ROB GAY, CHAIR, REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

South Country additions—an estimated 8,080 households could benefit from improved connectivity.

Williamson is glad to be one of them. Before, simply streaming movies was difficult, never mind doing important tasks. Now, “We don’t have any challenges with that. It’s been great.”



Paul McLean, President, Tough-Country Communications.



More access on the way!

The Trust is working hard to bring connectivity to as many underserved households in the Basin as possible. This takes a lot of partners, know-how and funding. The projects it's developing will improve connectivity to thousands more homes and allow for speeds of at least 50/10 megabits per second. They will significantly improve access to high-quality internet across the Basin. Check out the Trust's online map that shares its network area.

ourtrust.org/connectivity



All hands on deck to prevent wildfire

Invermere dedicates resources to safeguard the community

"We're all in this together." It may be the refrain of a song, but it's also how Anne-Sophie Corriveau feels when it comes to preventing wildfire. As FireSmart Coordinator for the District of Invermere, one of her main tasks is to get residents involved in hands-on activities that lower the possibility and impacts of raging flames.

"We're in a high-risk area," she says. "We're surrounded by forests and we have dry summers—very hot and windy—so there is high potential for wildfire."

After pursuing FireSmart work for a while, Invermere hired a designated coordinator in fall 2021 with support of the Trust and the Province of BC. One of Corriveau's objectives is to engage with residents. Through activities like presentations, a booth at the farmers' market and an open house at the fire hall, she shares FireSmart principles and explains why it's critical that everyone helps out.

She offers one-on-one property assessments that help residents identify specific actions and upgrades they can take on their properties to reduce wildfire risks, and then homeowners can complete the recommended prevention changes with financial aid of the District's rebate program. They can also take advantage of the community's yearly yard waste pickup, which reduces the amount of fuels left lying around.

For over a decade, the Trust has helped communities prevent or brace themselves against wildfire—particularly vital when climate change is upping the risk. Starting in 2021, the Trust partnered with the Province of BC to support rural communities as they become more resilient to these threats. Here are some stats about this partnership:

value of
\$3.1 million in 2021/22

including
\$2.4 million
contributed by the Province
with another
\$2.5 million
coming from the Province
in 2022/23

So far, this has resulted in:
29 projects
supported in
20 communities

293 jobs
created

186 hectares of land
treated to prevent wildfires



Anne-Sophie Corriveau,
FireSmart Coordinator,
Invermere Fire/Rescue.



With Trust and Province support, the District also undertakes fuel management efforts. For example, in spring 2022, local firefighters partnered with BC Wildfire Service crews to burn a couple of grassy fields, since old, dead grass that builds up over the years can easily ignite. This important cross-training exercise also honed firefighters' skills on wildland fires to be prepared for the 2022 wildfire season.

Corriveau also supported the idea of a local high school student, who wanted to focus on FireSmart for his capstone graduation project. "Together, we built this project of doing grass ignition," Corriveau says. Additionally, the student assembled friends, family and other volunteers to thin and prune some trees in a forest adjacent to the school, plus clear its floor of fine debris.

Fuel management

involves reducing the amount of living or dead trees, brush and other forest growth by prescribed burning, or using mechanical or other means to reduce the forest stand's structure. The goal is to reduce the vegetation on the landscape to create fire-resilient ecosystems.

Other fuel management projects are also taking place to build wildfire resiliency. One will be in the steep Toby Creek Canyon. Another, close to downtown, will make fire there less likely, plus its highly visible location makes it "an opportunity to engage with residents to explain to them why this kind of work is so important."

It's this community involvement that really stands out to Corriveau. A major goal of her position is to "bring more FireSmart awareness to the people," she says. "The key goal of FireSmart is to help people realize that they have the power and also the responsibility to do their part to lower wildfire risk."



ourtrust.org/climateresilience

FireSmart your property

- ✓ **Maintain a tidy lawn and yard.** Keep grass cut below 10 centimetres and keep decks, roofs and gutters clear of leaves and debris.
- ✓ **Replace flammable plants** with wildfire-resistant ones.
- ✓ **Establish a 1.5-metre non-combustible zone** around the perimeter of your house and deck.
- ✓ **Move firewood and propane tanks** 10 to 30 metres away from your house.
- ✓ **Prune trees** to create a two-metre clearance between the ground and the lowest branches.
- ✓ **Check out the FireSmart homeowner manual** and do a self-assessment of your home and property.

firesmartbc.ca



Kathleen O'Neill, Chair,
CastleRock Estates Community
Association FireSmart Committee.



Ben Mitchell-Banks,
Chair/President, CastleRock
Estates Community Association
and volunteer with the
FireSmart Committee.





The grand opening of the Creston seniors' pavilion featured lots of music.

A fresh-air space for seniors

Creston adds an outdoor venue

Where could seniors continue to safely get together?

This question was on the mind of staff and volunteers of a seniors' program in Creston—and a new pavilion was the result.

"What we needed was an outdoor meeting space, giving us options no matter what the COVID restrictions might be," says Justine Keirn, Executive Director, Valley Community Services Society.

The society's TAPS program (Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors) provides seniors with opportunities to come together, participate in community activities, connect, support each other and take pleasure in life. About 60 people attend each week, with an average age of 83 years.

"Coming to TAPS has improved my life," says one participant. "It has helped me open up."

Located on the grounds of the Creston and District Community Complex, the pavilion was built with support from the Trust, which helps organizations meet their communities' needs. It can also be used by other members of the public—when TAPS participants aren't busy using it for activities like bonding with friends, honing their bodies through Tai Chi or belting out catchy songs.



ourtrust.org/community

Better resources for seniors and Elders

Realized with Trust support, 25 new projects in 18 communities are creating or expanding services and activities that foster social inclusion and keep seniors and Elders active, or making energy-efficiency, safety and accessibility enhancements to the buildings where they gather.

For example, with support from the Trust, the Kaslo Senior's Centre has become more energy-efficient and accessible thanks to activities like upgrading the insulation and installing an accessible front door and heat pump. The centre is well used by the Kaslo Senior Citizens' Association, which focuses on helping seniors socialize, share information and learn new technical skills.

The Kaslo Senior's Centre, with renovations complete.



What we've accomplished, *together*

You told us your top areas of focus. Here's how we've acted.

Through a broad range of programs and initiatives, we're addressing the priorities outlined in our 2020–2023 *Columbia Basin Management Plan*, which people in the Basin helped us formulate. In this magazine, you'll read tons of examples of how this is being done. Here are a few more highlights of what's been achieved since 2020.

BY THE NUMBERS



82 STUDENTS RECOGNIZED for exemplary community service

382 KILOMETRES OF TRAILS developed, enhanced or maintained

50 TRAIL CREW JOBS created

Affordable housing projects:

projected **ENERGY SAVINGS** of 2.6 million kilowatt-hours

created **9,424 EMPLOYMENT HOURS**

attracted almost **\$102.5 MILLION** in external funding

PLACES TO PRODUCE FOOD within communities: 38 added or improved

WAGE SUBSIDIES for 182 farms

ADVICE provided to 81 agricultural businesses

350 BUSINESSES

took part in

2 #BUYBASIN festivals

54 BUY LOCAL campaigns

EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

13 projects supported to help communities deal with

17 projects supported in **MÉTIS** communities, including ones focused on culture, food and employment

ENERGY RETROFITS have saved 3.7 million kilowatt-hours,

including at **357 CHILD CARE CENTRES**

SECTION TITLE



A showcase of food and creativity

Slocan's farmers' market becomes even more of a draw

The Slocan Saturday Market is a hub that provides important social and economic connections for about 5,000 residents in and around the Village of Slocan. It offers excellent food, including fresh produce and baking, and locally made artwork, jewellery, candles and more.

"We can come together as a community," says Market Director Christina Knight. "We can share our talents. We can eat local farm food." Additionally, "It's a place where vendors can go and see a profit for their hard work."

About 20 vendors attend the market that runs June through

August at Slocan's Expo Park, followed by an October harvest market and a Christmas market. Knight oversees the entire operation, working alone the past few years—and with no funding her first year in summer 2018.

"It was hand-painted signs and doing all that I could—booking the musicians and running it however I could," she says. "It was a crazy amount of work. But it's something that's needed in our community. We're so far away from any other farmers' markets. For anybody to go all the way to Nelson or Castlegar, it's so far."

Vendors, performers and participants enjoy the farmers' market in Slocan.



13 farmers' markets supported to help respond to the demand for local food in 2022.



The market in summer 2022 was noticeably improved. First, Knight was joined by Gail Morris, who was one of the market's founders in 2016. Second, Trust funding to the Slokan Solutions Society enabled the market to expand in many ways, not least of which was enhancing the concession on the market grounds to have a fridge, a stove, a water heater and electrical upgrades.

"If somebody comes with local meat, they can put it in the fridge," says Knight. "We can wash dishes because there's a hot water tank. In years past, we had to put people with generators in the far corner, so they didn't conflict with musicians." Now they can simply plug in.

Tents and tables were also covered by the funding, allowing the market to lend them to newer vendors who may not yet have their own. In addition, sound equipment helps out musicians, and supplies for a kids' zone keep children occupied with fun activities, including a puppet show, while their parents shop.

Such additions help the market address an issue that's important to people in the Basin: being able to obtain local, fresh, healthy food. That's why the Trust offered an extra boost to farmers' markets around the region in 2022—so they could implement enhancements like these, affecting access to locally produced and processed foods and strengthening community well-being.

With these improvements to the market, Knight hopes to attract even more importers, artisans, bakers and farmers, providing them with the opportunity to be self-sufficient as they provide for others.

"It's a lot of effort, but it's paid for in happiness and a sense of community," says Knight.

ourtrust.org/food



Christina Knight,
Slokan Market Director.



A top-notch place to buy local foods

From June through September, the Edgewood Farmers' Market is a weekly community hub, a place for farmers and artisans to share their products with customers—and it's continuing to grow. With Trust support, the Royal Canadian Legion No. 203 Edgewood—which lets the market use its land—is building a 32-by-40-foot pavilion that provides shelter from the weather, a washroom and a kitchen. Vendors are thrilled—as are shoppers keen on having a more comfortable, practical location in which to buy local, delicious food.





Taking the road of her role models

Indigenous student follows the footsteps of those who inspired her

Erica Sylte-Hambler stood inside the gym at the College of the Rockies Career and Job Fair. It was a mild, cloudy day in March 2016. Excited students hovered around the various career booths, dropping off resumés and gathering pamphlets. Sylte-Hambler, 15 at the time, was still uncertain about her future career.

She perused the booths, but nothing sparked her interest. Then she looked over at Jackie Mynott, the Aboriginal Support Worker at Prince Charles Secondary School in Creston (now named Kootenay River Secondary School). She reflected on the Indigenous support workers, like Mynott, who had been invaluable to her, supporting her both at school and in her personal life.

“That’s when I decided that that’s where I wanted to go. The more I looked into it and the more I thought about it, the more I knew, this is where I want to be,” says Sylte-Hambler, who is Cree and Métis. Her dream: to enroll in an Aboriginal Education Support Worker program.

A unique opportunity

A step in the right direction came about a year later, when, at age 16, Sylte-Hambler was hired to work at Creston’s Legend Logos, with a wage subsidy from the Trust. Legend Logos is a yaqan nu?kiy heritage centre, gift shop and community museum for the yaqan nu?kiy Peoples. It offers First Nations art and embroidery, and provides lake tours that include teachings about the Indigenous Peoples of the area.

“I got to learn so much about the yaqan nu?kiy culture and traditions,” says Sylte-Hambler, who moved to Creston at age 14, after time in Prince George, Moberly Lake’s Saulteau First Nation and West Kelowna, where she was active in the Westbank First Nation Youth Centre. “Legend Logos helped me become part of the community and develop relationships. That’s what a big part of support work is: developing relationships with people, and understanding,” says Sylte-Hambler.

The job was created with support from a Trust wage subsidy, which helps employers hire full-time students on a part-time basis throughout the school year, aiding the employers while providing opportunities for students to gain career-related work experience.

**3,702 businesses
supported and
428 jobs created
since 2020.**



Legend Logos staff. From left to right: Janine Basil, Supervisor, and employees Joanna Oler, Roquel Androshak and Gabe Kobasiuk.



***“Legend Logos helped me
become part of the community
and develop relationships.”***

ERICA SYLTE-HAMBLER, FORMER STAFF MEMBER, LEGEND LOGOS

One of Legend Logos’ owners, Denice Louie, explains that her business would not have been able to hire Sylte-Hambler without the support of the program.

“We were pretty limited. Just recently we started to make enough money to hire people,” says Louie. “It’s been really nice to have young people work here, the ones who were supported through the Trust.”

Sylte-Hambler worked in multiple positions at Legend Logos, including the heritage centre, retail and the production side of the business, such as operating the heat press machine.

“She’s a great person, a team worker, and really upbeat and cheerful and willing to do her fair share of work. She is a member of our community and we’re very proud of her,” says Louie.

Louie thinks that the dedication she saw in Sylte-Hambler will make her a compassionate support worker. “I think that because she’s really intelligent and she’s kind-hearted that she’ll do really well. She’ll make a great impact on whoever she works with.”

A bright future

With experience like this under her belt, in 2020 Sylte-Hambler enrolled in College of the Rockies’ Aboriginal Education Support Worker diploma program, where she received a BC Indigenous Student Award. Now 21, she graduated from the program in June 2022 and is qualified to support Indigenous youth in public, private or Indigenous schools.

She currently works at Ktunaxa Kinbasket Child and Family Services Society as a Family Support Worker, where she supports clients while building relationships with families and children. She’s also considering a career in education.

“I think one day in the future I’d like to get an Indigenous studies degree, possibly with a Bachelor of Education, so I can teach Indigenous studies,” she says.

Mynott, who has followed Sylte-Hambler’s journey over social media, thinks her former student will be well suited to a career in Indigenous support work.

“There’s just something about her nature and character,” Mynott says. “I believe students will make a really true connection with her.”





\$87.8M
TOTAL BENEFITS

\$96M
IN REVENUES

\$2.1B
TOTAL BOOK VALUE
OF ASSETS

\$7M
IN NEW REAL ESTATE AND
COMMERCIAL INVESTMENTS

75
ACTIVE PROGRAMS
AND INITIATIVES

\$12.5M
IN CAPITAL
PROJECTS

2,400
PROJECTS
SUPPORTED

\$62.4M
IN GRANTS

RETURN ON
INVESTMENTS

11.43%
POWER
PROJECTS

4.36%
PRIVATE
PLACEMENTS

7.4%
MARKET SECURITIES

\$5.9M
IN NEW
BUSINESS LOANS

Financial overview

Our investments result in strong impacts in the region

The Trust provided \$87.8 million in 2021/22 to support the efforts of Basin communities and residents. This included \$62.4 million in granting programs and initiatives, \$12.5 million in capital projects to support economic development and broadband infrastructure, \$5.9 million in business loans and \$7 million in real estate and commercial investments.

We gave financial support to nearly 2,400 projects through our comprehensive range of programs and initiatives. Revenues totalled over \$96 million thanks to the reliable performance of our hydropower facilities, jointly owned with Columbia Power Corporation.



Generating returns

The Trust invests in the region's future

To generate the revenues it needs to fund programs that support the efforts of Basin residents, the Trust has investments in, and invests in, three overarching categories:

- hydropower facilities
- private placements, which includes real estate investments and loans to Basin businesses
- market securities.

Our goal is to generate a predictable, sustainable and growing income stream, always keeping in mind the principles of a prudent investor and the balance between risk and returns.



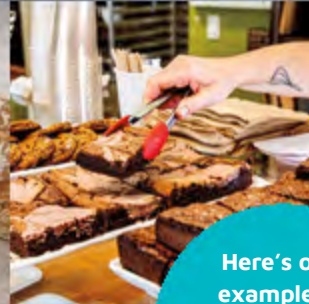
ourtrust.org/investments



Dan Eheler, Owner, Seven Summits Contracting.



Staff at Alkeme bakery.



Here's one example of how the Trust invests in Basin businesses.

Sought-after location opens

A Rossland homebuilder goes commercial

It's where a chocolate shop produces its ice cream and a gluten-free bakery bakes its ancient-grains sourdough. It's the base for enterprises like a welding company and an engineering firm. In short, this cluster of three commercial buildings in Rossland is home to "an interesting group, for sure," says its developer Dan Eheler. There's "a little bit of everything."

Eheler's business, Seven Summits Contracting, focuses on constructing custom houses. He, however, has long had an interest in commercial spaces, too. "I grew up on the coast and there were these buildings everywhere. I always thought that it was a good idea."

After moving to Rossland, he recognized that there were few options for businesses hoping to rent a commercial location, and that this was the perfect place to bring his interest to life. In 2017, he started building the first four-bay unit on Old

Rossland Cascade Highway. When it was finished in early 2018, it immediately filled up. The land was large enough for two more buildings—and demand was certainly high—so he contacted the Trust for financing, which offers loans to Basin-based businesses, non-profits and social enterprises.

His own company benefits, as it now has space for woodworking, storage and other activities. So do additional local ventures; they're thrilled to have this rare opportunity to rent a commercial spot in Rossland, which helps with their vibrancy and growth.

"I have a lineup for new spaces," says Eheler. "I have people knocking on my door every day."

It's a dream he's proud to have accomplished. As his wife said one day over coffee, "You finally did it." And many other businesses are glad he did.

A hydropower overhaul benefits people in the Basin

Major maintenance keeps a Trust investment strong

They like to call it “the brain.” That’s because this complex piece of equipment provides much of the control at Brilliant Expansion Generating Station—swiftly adjusting, for example, how many megawatts the facility generates. However, this type of brain only lasts so long and to keep the station working at tip-top shape, Brilliant Expansion’s complex control system was recently replaced.

Owned by the Trust and Columbia Power Corporation, the station is located on the east bank of Kootenay River downstream from Brilliant Dam. Using water that would otherwise be spilled, it generates enough power to supply 50,000 homes.

“At 15 years of age, it was ready for this overhaul,” says Brandon Haney, Executive Director of Power Operations at the Trust. “The different components that are there will only last so long. As part of our reliability-centred maintenance program—which optimizes operations and maintenance

costs, and increases the amount of time the station is available to generate power and make money—it was critical for us to prioritize this to keep the facility running.”

It wasn’t a simple process, as it’s not a simple piece of machinery. There are the Programmable Logic Controllers, computers that receive data from places like instrumentation in the field or FortisBC’s system control centre, which relays direction from BC Hydro (which optimizes hydropower production in the province). The computers then use logic to decide what to do about this information, and then send instructions to the rest of the facility. There are also physical components, like the numerous wires that transfer info in and out.

Just preparing to replace all this took in-depth planning. Then the facility shut down for over a month in early 2022, with people working hard to do the task as quickly as possible: labelling the wires carefully, taking out the old



*Buildings on left: Brilliant Dam and Generating Station.
Building on right: Brilliant Expansion Generating Station.
Below: “The brain” at Brilliant Expansion Generating Station.*



equipment, putting in the new, rewiring it properly and then testing it to make sure it ran well.

The team involved Trust staff, staff from FortisBC, which runs the day-to-day operations of Brilliant Expansion, and a contractor, L&S Electric. The skilled tradespeople from FortisBC who worked on the project—like electricians, mechanics and technicians—were largely from the area, demonstrating how the long history of hydropower in the region has resulted in local expertise.

“It was a really strong, collaborative effort,” Haney says. “It was an impressive feat that this work was completed in as short a time period as it was.”

Even though the station couldn’t generate power during that time, it was worth it. “To have reliable equipment, we have to maintain it.”

Now, Brilliant Expansion’s generating capabilities should be ready for another 15 years or more of making smart decisions—and earning money to support the region.



Here and image below:
Arrow Lakes Generating Station.



Adjusting the control panel
at Brilliant Expansion
Generating Station.

The earning power of hydropower

The Trust and Columbia Power own four hydropower facilities in the Basin. The income generated from these facilities is shared equally, and is used to support Trust operations, including the delivery of programs and initiatives that support social, economic and environmental well-being in the Basin—including all the projects in this magazine.

ARROW LAKES GENERATING STATION

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



BRILLIANT EXPANSION GENERATING STATION

Located on the east bank of Kootenay River, downstream from Brilliant Dam, this \$245-million project makes use of water that would otherwise be spilled. It generates enough power to supply 50,000 homes.



BRILLIANT DAM AND GENERATING STATION

The Trust and Columbia Power bought this dam from Teck (formerly Cominco) for \$130 million and performed \$100 million in improvements to extend its life and increase its capacity. It is located approximately eight kilometres from Castlegar on Kootenay River, and generates enough power to supply 100,000 homes.



WANETA EXPANSION GENERATING STATION

Located immediately downstream of Waneta Dam on Pend d'Oreille River near Trail, this \$900-million expansion was built in partnership with Fortis Inc. The Trust and Columbia Power purchased Fortis' interest in the project in 2019. It generates enough power to supply 63,000 homes.



Seniors can stay *closer to home*

Starting in the 1940s, the Mount St. Francis hospital served the people of Nelson and area for many decades. The site is now on its way to again becoming essential when it comes to offering local care, including 75 new long-term care suites for seniors.

The long-term complex will be owned by the Trust and its partner Golden Life Management, and leased and operated by Interior Health. The project marks the largest one-time increase in long-term care beds in the province's interior in more than 16 years. It should be ready for residents by fall 2024.

It's an impressive undertaking that will enable significantly more people to access state-of-the-art resources in or near their

own communities. In addition, it's a way for the Trust to earn the income that funds its broad range of programs, which it also does through the nine seniors living communities it already owns in the Basin, operated by Golden Life.

The long-term care is just one of many items that will be situated in Interior Health's new Nelson Health Campus. Other examples include dental, environmental health, population health, mental health, public health, speech-language pathology and adult day services. The aim is to simplify access to health care.

Together, these will enable seniors to obtain the resources they need, right here in the region.



*Top: Digital illustration of the upcoming Nelson Health Campus.
Below right: The partners gather to celebrate the project announcement.
Below left: The former Mount St. Francis hospital. (PHOTO: NELSON STAR)*

Mount St. Francis hospital was operated by the Sisters of St. Anne. It has been closed since 2005. Before deconstruction, all items of historical importance were preserved.



Columbia Basin Trust region

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

Map legend

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

The area encompasses nearly 80,000 square kilometres in southeastern British Columbia and has a population of 165,000 people.

Contact us

1.800.505.8998

info@ourtrust.org

SECTION TITLE





THE HEADWATERS

STORIES FROM THE SOURCE

All eight episodes are out now!
Listen wherever you get your podcasts.
Two bonus episodes coming this fall.

“Enlightening, educational,
fascinating information.
Well done!”

DIANNE FARLINGER, LISTENER



KOOTENAY
MOUNTAIN CULTURE
MAGAZINE



headwaterspodcast.com



Columbia
Basin **trust**