

Connections

Volume 35 Number 2 February 2016



The journal of the Global,
Environmental & Outdoor
Education Council



To promote involvement in
quality environmental and
outdoor education

What GEOEC Does

The Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council (GEOEC) is an interdisciplinary specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Our mission is to provide resources and venues for dialogue and networking, as well as to promote quality professional development for Alberta teachers in the area of global, environmental and outdoor education. Members receive current news items, teaching ideas, information about our workshop series and food for thought through our quarterly journal, *Connections*. We are also active on Facebook (www.facebook.com/geoecalberta) and Twitter (@GEOEC) with up-to-date information on PD opportunities and initiatives in Alberta.

CONTENTS

Message from the President.....	2	Don McLaughlin
Peaks to Learning: Conference 2016	3	Rita Poruchny
2015 Back on the Trails Conference—Photographic Moments.....	4	

FEATURE ARTICLES

Social Justice in Our Elementary School.....	6	Karen Strand
CAWST—Making Water Knowledge Common Knowledge	8	Jenai Lieu
What’s Next for the Castle, Alberta’s Newest Wildland and Provincial Park?.....	11	Katie Morrison

CANADA’S GREAT DIVIDE TRAIL

Lessons on Canada’s Great Divide	13	Jocelyn Wood
The Great Divide Trail Turns 50	16	Dustin Lynx

FAVOURITE TRAILS

Zephyr Creek Trail.....	18	Tyler Dixon
Coliseum Mountain Trail	20	Don McLaughlin
Snowshoeing – My Second Love	22	Andrew Nugara

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Connections is published for the Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council (GEOEC) by the ATA. Editor: Don McLaughlin, 296 Hamptons Terrace NW, Calgary, AB T3A 5R4; e-mail krzy4summer@yahoo.ca. Editorial and production services: Document Production staff, ATA. Address all correspondence regarding this publication to the editor. Opinions expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the GEOEC or the ATA. ISSN 0701-0400

Membership in the GEOEC includes a subscription to *Connections* and a reduced fee at the annual conference. Please address your inquiries to the memberships office of the ATA at 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta) or 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton).

Printed on unbleached 100 per cent postconsumer recycled paper to decrease our impact on the earth.

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Message from the President



Wow, it's 2016 and did the first few months of the school year ever go by quickly. Our council presented sessions at the Beginning Teachers' Conference in both Calgary and Edmonton; worked to support the successful October Earth Matters Conference in Canmore; held our annual planning retreat in Nordegg; took on the role of lead planners for the Specialist Council Carousel for preservice teachers to be held at Mount Royal University in Calgary on January 16 and at the University of Alberta in Edmonton on January 23; and completed detailed planning for our amazing annual conference on May 13–15, at the Goldeye Conference Centre (check out our website, www.geoec.org, for detailed information).

Speaking of the 2016 GEOEC Peaks to Learning Conference in Nordegg, we will feature keynote speakers Andrew Brash, a Calgary teacher and mountaineer well known for his selfless actions of saving a climber on the final approach to the Mount Everest summit, and Casey Eagle Speaker, a Blackfoot elder and spiritual leader who will share his experience with youth. We will have sessions focusing on the areas of global, environmental and outdoor education. There will be opportunities for walks through historic Nordegg, hikes to popular local destinations Shunda Mountain and Coliseum Mountain, and a peaceful evening stroll around Goldeye Lake. The majority of our conference sessions will take place outdoors, weather permitting, and will highlight the landscape of the David Thompson Region around Nordegg. There will also be opportunities to do a little team building with sessions on the high ropes circuit and team games in the activity centre at the Goldeye Conference Centre. We will be hosting nightly campfires with opportunities for stories and song, and a themed Saturday night dance, so come on out and join us in Nordegg this May.

Our 2016 GEOEC annual general meeting will be held on Saturday, May 14 at 7:30 AM during our conference in Nordegg; all council members are encouraged to attend. We are always looking for new executive members and have a number of entry level positions to help you get your feet wet before potentially taking on a few of the larger tasks on the GEOEC executive. Check out the GEOEC website for position descriptions and consider joining our outstanding group of educators.

In this issue of *Connections* are articles on the Eastern Slopes of Alberta from the perspective of a recreational hiker, trail builder and conservationist; articles examining the work of local organizations doing work on the global scene; and a school's work to promote positive future leaders who are aware of the need to take small steps locally to make a big difference globally. We close out the issue with articles on favourite snowshoe trails by Calgary-based author and teacher Andrew Nugara and favourite hiking trails by members of the GEOEC executive. We hope you enjoy this issue's theme, "Taking It Outdoors in Alberta."

Our June 2016 issue will feature special places in Alberta. If you have any suggestions or would like to submit an article on this theme, please send me an e-mail (president@geoec.org) with your suggestions.

Best regards for a rewarding 2016.

Don McLaughlin

Peaks to Learning

2016 Annual Conference of the Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education Council

Rita Poruchny

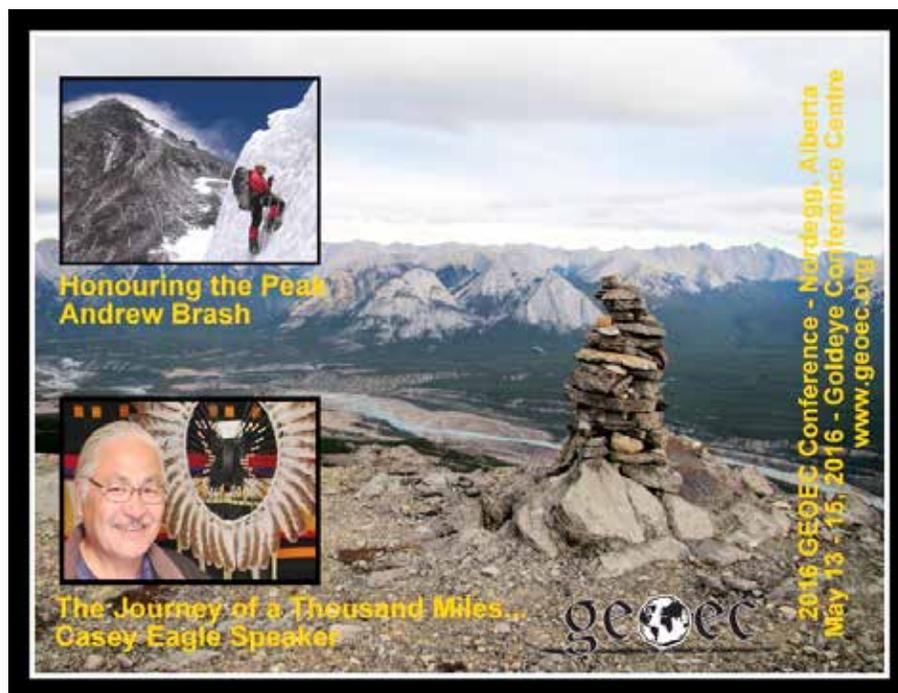
All environmental, global and outdoor education teachers are invited to attend the annual conference of the GEOEC on May 13–15, 2016 in Nordegg, Alberta. We have a rich program planned with exciting keynote speakers. Andrew Brash will tell us of his experience climbing Mount Everest. His dream was cut short when he helped an Australian climber. Casey Eagle Speaker will share his knowledge as a spiritual leader in the Indigenous community working with youth.

Our program will include many ideas for you to implement in your classroom to enhance your curriculum. They include a hike with a First Nation elder, a walk through historic Nordegg, an inspiring session by the Great Divide Trail Association on having your students work on trail development and many other workshops. The full list will be coming out soon. Your students will have meaningful experiences when you implement your new set of ideas.

The Goldeye Centre is in the heart of the wilderness. It provides many different options for lodging, from hostel style to a modern hotel. There are trails for you to take a moment to be in the outdoors. The main lodge has a large stone fireplace for gathering to meet other participants. Find out about this special conference site at <http://goldeye.org> and be drawn to this location.

For more conference information, check out our website, www.geoec.org—we hope to see you in Nordegg.

Rita Poruchny is the 2016 GEOEC Conference Director.



2015 Back on the Trails Conference—Photographic Moments



J L Prodor

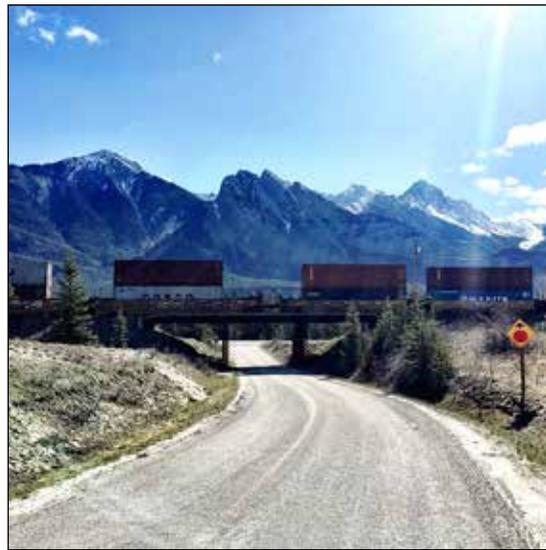


T C Dixon



Kathy Worobec

Tasha Roa



Feature Articles

Social Justice in Our Elementary School

Karen Strand

Twenty years ago, a twelve-year-old boy was attracted by a photo and a headline in the *Toronto Star* about the murder of a child slave in Pakistan, a country nearly a world away from his Thornhill, Ontario, home. He was shocked and angered that a young boy named Iqbal Masih, who was his exact age, had been sold into slavery by his family, escaped and spoke out against his captors only to be murdered for speaking out. He realized that the differences between his own comfortable life and the child slave were due to the countries they were born in. We now know the boy was Craig Kielburger who, with his brother Marc, has made childhood injustice and poverty in the developing world his life's work.



To harness support for his new-found cause of freeing children and their families from extreme poverty, Craig spoke to his classmates and teachers; through his passion and enthusiasm, his organization Free the Children was born. He and his supporters gained international attention from countless media

outlets, including appearances on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and *60 Minutes*. Free the Children celebrates students who, like Craig, want to help correct some of the world's poverty. His mission is to help students focus not just on themselves, but on others whose lives may not be as comfortable as our own. Kielburger also cofounded Me to We, which donates half the profits from its sales of socially conscious products to Free the Children. He continues to retell the story of Iqbal Masih to students and their teachers at each and every WE Day event to show that nothing is impossible when we harness the power of "We."



St Jerome is a K-6 school in the northwest Calgary community of Panorama Hills. Our Grade 6 students have learned about Craig Kielburger through their religion textbook and one of their language arts books. Because of our global and local fundraising efforts, we have been fortunate enough to be granted tickets to take Grade 6 students to WE Day three times. Craig, Marc and their fellow WE Day speakers continue to inspire our students and teachers to move from *me* to *we*. Our students have participated in many charitable activities that help people in our own community and around the world through organizations such as Free

the Children and the Holy Childhood Association and our local food banks and homeless shelters.



Some examples of activities undertaken by our students are sponsored by Free the Children, such as We Scare Hunger, which is a Halloween food collection for our local food bank, and We Create Change, where students collect loose change that is then donated to Free the Children for the improvement of people's lives in the developing world. We have also sold bracelets, which are beautiful glass bead chains handmade by Kenyan mothers. The women earn a fair wage for their work and the purchasers have a beautiful piece of jewelry. In addition, we have sold candy canes at Christmas, collected and donated gently worn blue jeans, collected toiletries and other necessities in backpacks that were then delivered to homeless shelters, and collected many hundreds of kilograms of nonperishable food in our annual food drives.



This year, when the students returned from WE Day they created presentations to show their classmates some of the highlights of their exciting and inspiring day. They have also created a Social Justice Club and a Leadership Club. The Leadership Club participates in various activities that are designed to assist parents and other students in the school. The Social Justice Club is led by the students, and they have chosen a variety of subcommittees based on their perceived needs of the school community and their own personal interests.

The Social Justice Club plans to have student playground helpers to help their peers solve conflict and to prevent bullying from occurring, a homework club to help peers of all ages with schoolwork, hallway monitors to ensure safe and smooth transitions during recess and noon hour, and recess games leaders to assist students who need help finding activities at recess. They are also investigating the procurement of a friendship bench for our playground, which will help students who have no one to play with or who have difficulty forming friendships.

Craig Kielburger has taught us that although each of us alone has a small impact, when we join together with like-minded individuals, we can truly see a change in the world.



Karen Strand is a Grade 6 teacher at St Jerome School in Calgary.

CAWST—Making Water Knowledge Common Knowledge

Jenai Lieu

CAWST, the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology, is a Calgary-based charity that equips people with the knowledge and skills to meet their water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs. For more than 14 years, CAWST has led through education, creating change and catalyzing independent action of local communities and individuals, which has led to millions of improved lives around the world. In North America, CAWST's Youth Wavemakers program replicates this strategy, providing educators with the tools and training that help them engage and empower youth to address local and global water issues.



A girl enjoys a glass of safe drinking water in Zambia.

Today a staggering number of people worldwide lack the basics of safe water and sanitation. Around the world, 1.8 billion people are drinking fecally contaminated water. This increases the risk of waterborne illness. Meanwhile, 2.4 billion people do not have access to a proper toilet. Diarrheal disease is prominent in areas where people lack the means and the knowledge to treat their drinking water and to

properly dispose of their waste. Diarrheal disease is the second leading cause of death in children under five years old, leading to 760,000 deaths every year. It can also affect children's ability to learn in school and people's capacity to go to work and to be contributing members of society.



A family collects water from a contaminated stream in Ethiopia.

CAWST works closely with practitioners and on-the-ground field workers, empowering them to find solutions to their WASH needs by providing technical training and consulting.

"CAWST has increased our organization's knowledge on WASH topics and technologies, but the greatest benefit has been on how they teach these concepts to others," says Kyle Lomax, international projects director of Wine to Water. "Where we and other organizations have struggled is effectively transferring the knowledge and skills to others; this is where CAWST has been so valuable to our mission."

A total of 11.4 million people are using better water or sanitation as a result of projects implemented by

CAWST's clients. CAWST is on track to exceed its target of reaching 20 million people by 2020.



Workers building the foundation of a latrine in Cambodia

CAWST also works to address water issues here at home.

CAWST's Youth Wavemakers program provides a variety of services to educators, including professional development workshops and curriculum support for educators. In the past year Wavemakers has also facilitated workshops to 40 classrooms across Calgary, focusing on addressing cross-cultural stereotypes and inspiring youth to take action in their communities.

"I teach at a French immersion school so it was wonderful that the Tikho slideshow was available in French," says Sarah Charlebois, a Grade 4 teacher at Westgate Elementary School in Calgary. "I also loved how interactive it was, with very interesting and thought-provoking questions. The videos were great as they really made the kids feel like they got to know



All the schools from the Wavemakers Summit

Tikho. They have also been trying to use less water at school and home."

The Wavemakers program offers many opportunities for youth to explore and engage in local and global WASH issues. The program educates youth on the WASH challenges faced in their communities, such as water consumption in municipalities and protection of the local watershed, and empowers them with tools and strategies to find sustainable solutions.

During its annual Wavemakers Summit (www.cawst.org/wavemakers/youth/takeaction/wavemakerssummit), the Wavemakers program brings together teams of students from across Alberta. The youth learn about local and global WASH issues, and how to plan effective action projects that address those issues. The summit marks the launch of action projects that the youth work on throughout the school year. Local water organizations also participate in the summit, educating youth about local water issues and how their action projects can align with efforts already underway. This year, the Wavemakers program launched its first-ever Virtual Wavemakers Summit, allowing schools and youth groups across the country the opportunity to learn about current WASH issues and launch water projects in their communities.

Action projects have included water awareness-raising campaigns, installing water-saving infrastructure, collaboration with overseas youth groups and educating communities about water issues



A student group brainstorming different WASH actions

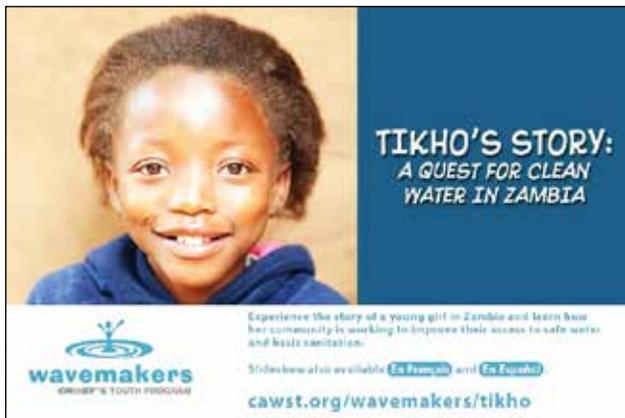
"Through the Wavemakers program I learned the influence of education, rather than strictly fundraising for infrastructure," says Claire Hunter, a student at Bishop Carroll. "I learned how much more sustainable it is to teach people how to do things themselves rather than solving things for people."

Since the Wavemakers program launched in 2005, participating youth have reached over 100,000 Canadians through youth action projects, helping to raise awareness about water issues among all Canadians. The program also provides valuable opportunities for youth to learn community leadership skills.



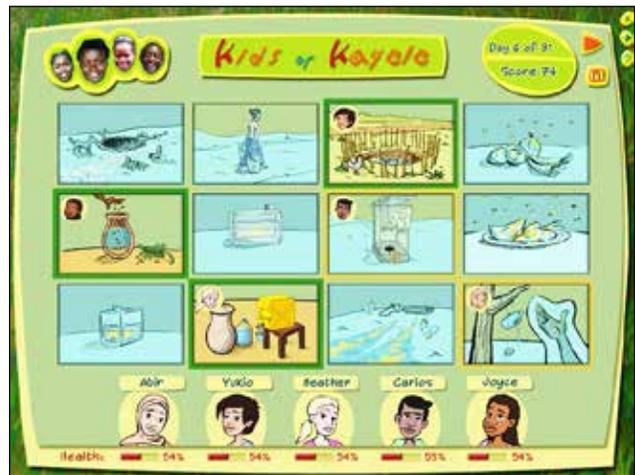
A Wavemakers team explaining their action project on biosand filters

To further support educators in engaging their classrooms on global WASH issues, the Wavemakers Program offers a variety of K to 12 resources and lesson plans available on the Wavemakers website (www.cawst.org/wavemakers/educators/teach).



Tikho's Story (www.cawst.org/wavemakers/educators/teach/tikhostory) is a slideshow lesson plan that highlights the connection between sanitation, safe drinking water and health and aims to diminish negative stereotypes surrounding developing countries.

Students will be able to classify appropriate and improper practices related to hygiene, sanitation and water conservation.



The Kids of Kayele (www.cawst.org/wavemakers/educators/teach/kidsofkayele) is an online game that uses video, photos, trivia and interactive gameplay to teach students about global WASH issues. Students learn about human impact on water quality, microbiological contamination, current practices and technologies that affect water quality, and problems that require both technological and social solutions.



Flood of Change (www.cawst.org/wavemakers/educators/teach/floodofchange) is a documentary that follows the story of three young people in Nepal and their movement to take action on WASH issues in their community. Students gain an understanding of the water issues faced in developing countries from the perspective of local youth and learn about actions taking place in these communities to address WASH issues.

To learn more about Wavemakers services and WASH resources, please visit cawst.org/Wavemakers or contact them at Wavemakers@cawst.org.

What's Next for the Castle, Alberta's Newest Wildland and Provincial Park?

Katie Morrison

Albertans have a new reason to celebrate nature with the long-awaited creation of two new protected areas in southwest Alberta. This September, after more than 40 years of pressure from local business, advocates and community members, the Government of Alberta announced its intention to protect the entire Castle Special Place as a provincial park and wildland provincial park, completing the protection of this 1,020-square-kilometre region.

Along with many dedicated partners, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Southern Alberta chapter was one of the key organizations in the campaign to protect this important part of the province. Protection of the Castle is an integral step toward preserving clean water for downstream communities, safeguarding our province's biodiversity and providing habitat to important wildlife such as grizzly bear and cutthroat trout. The announcement that logging will be prohibited in the new protected area is a very positive step for land and water conservation in southern Alberta.

Protected areas are a vital part of conserving natural areas and biodiversity. We need them now more than ever.

Ecological science is showing that many species are declining and that arresting this alarming decline depends on establishing a network of connected reserves. These reserves are places where plant and animal populations can thrive. The reserves also act as a benchmark to assess how well lands are being managed outside of protected areas. Thus, establishing and managing protected areas remains a principal approach of virtually all conservation strategies.

Protected areas are also beneficial to both people living in or near them and people living further away. Protected areas offer opportunities for recreation and protection of environmental components such as water, clean air and adaptation to climate change.

Parks also contribute to people's livelihoods, particularly at the local level. Over the last two decades, regions in the western United States with large areas of protected land have enjoyed three to four times the economic growth of regions without

protected areas. The Castle announcement was celebrated by local business owners who rely on conservation of wilderness areas to bring recreation and tourism to the region.

Recent science indicates that we need to protect and connect at least half of our lands and waters to maintain ecosystems and biodiversity essential both for human health and species conservation. These targets are far above Alberta's protected areas targets. Despite the fact that southern Alberta contains 80 per cent of the province's species at risk, less than 2 per cent of many of our natural ecological subregions are protected. Protection of the Castle is a step toward meeting these targets.

For all these reasons, CPAWS Southern Alberta has pushed for protection of the entire Castle wilderness. In July 2014, the Government of Alberta released the final South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, a land-use plan that sets the direction for conservation and development of southern Alberta for the next 50 years. Although it added parts of the Castle to the

protected areas system, most of the new protected area lay high above treeline, and approximately half of the Castle area was left unprotected. Since the Castle is one of the most species-rich areas in the province, this minimal protection was not enough to conserve the region's biodiversity, water and recreation values.

As part of its campaign platform, Alberta's new government committed to establishing the Castle wilderness as a protected area. CPAWS Southern Alberta and our partners worked with the new government to ensure that this promise was fulfilled.

The Crown of the Continent ecosystem (the shared Rocky Mountain region spread across Alberta, British Columbia and Montana) and the joint Canada–US Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative (Y2Y) corridor provide an integral connection for wildlife to move securely through the landscape and ensure that natural processes function across international and provincial borders. The creation of the wildland and provincial parks will also ensure that the wilderness values of the Castle are conserved for Albertans to recreate responsibly and connect to nature in our province, helping to diversify the economy and boost local business.

However, the work is not done yet. For meaningful conservation to actually occur in the new protected

area, management and enforcement for this area need to put nature first. Ecological integrity needs to be the top priority and must guide the planning and reality of what happens on the ground in the Castle.

In the new management plan, any recreation trails (motorized and nonmotorized), camping areas and facilities within the region should be developed only where ecologically appropriate. Adequate enforcement is necessary when inappropriate activities are taking place. CPAWS Southern Alberta strongly believes that off-highway vehicle (OHV) use is not an appropriate use in the provincial park. We recognize that OHV use occurs on public land in Alberta and that recreation planning and a system of specifically designed designated trails are needed to accommodate this land use and protect Alberta's important ecological values. However, given that almost no other provincial park in Alberta allows OHVs (which have the potential to disturb waterways, wildlife and other recreation users), OHV use in provincial parks in Alberta should be prohibited.

In the wildland park, OHVs should be limited to designated trails specifically planned and designed to avoid ecologically sensitive areas. We need to create areas for nonmotorized users and wildlife away from the sensory disturbance of OHVs.

While much of the Castle remains as wilderness, there are many areas that have been damaged by the cumulative effects of intensive land uses such as oil and gas, forestry, grazing and off-highway vehicle use. Studies of roads and trails in the Castle indicate that in many areas these disturbances are far above thresholds for species at risk in Alberta such as grizzly bear, cutthroat trout and bull trout. Many roads, trails, staging areas, well sites, clear-cuts and other disturbed features will have to be reclaimed in order to protect our waterways and species at risk.

A diverse economy focusing on tourism that boosts local business must be based on intact healthy wilderness in this region. A plan for sustainable and responsible recreation is also critical for moving forward.

CPAWS Southern Alberta celebrates the creation of the new Castle Wildland and Provincial Parks and will continue to be engaged in creating a plan that prioritizes conservation outcomes for the Castle.

Visit our website, <http://cpaws-southernalberta.org/campaigns/castle>, to stay up to date on progress and management planning in the new Castle protected areas.

Katie Morrison is conservation director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter.

Canada's Great Divide Trail

Lessons on Canada's Great Divide

Jocelyn Wood

As John Muir said, "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." The Great Divide Trail Association (GDTA) is dedicated to providing those in pursuit of more with an opportunity to find it on the Great Divide Trail (GDT) in the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

Long-distance thru-hiking has been gaining in popularity every year and, with the release of the movies *Wild* and *A Walk in the Woods*, 2015 was a record year for long trails such as the Pacific Crest Trail and the Great Divide Trail. The enthusiasm of people young and old is enhanced by the spiritual, physical and mental challenges and rewards of a long-distance hike, and the popularity of long-distance hiking is only expected to grow. As a premier destination for hikers from around the globe, Canada can only benefit from such a rise in interest.

Fortunately, the GDT is a nearly completed trail linking national parks, provincial parks and crown land over 1,200 kilometres along the continental divide from the Canada-US border in Waterton Lakes National Park to Kakwa Provincial Park (located in the foothills just east of the northern Canadian Rockies). The GDT is an

unrivalled wilderness recreation opportunity where hikers move through areas of cultural and ecological significance and leave it as they found it while taking with them an unforgettable experience.

This experience is looked after by the GDTA, a Canadian not-for-profit corporation headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, responsible for maintaining, promoting and protecting the GDT. The GDTA works with regional partners to coordinate trail improvements, maintenance and protection. Members, volunteers and hikers who support the GDTA make the Great Divide Trail experience possible. Even though many government departments and organizations informally recognize the Great Divide Trail, it is still not officially designated.

In 1966 the GDT was born as a proposal by the Girl Guides, who envisioned a trail the length of the BC-Alberta border along the Rocky Mountains. By 1970, Jim Thorsell developed the first guide to the GDT, generating conversations and interest in the trail with Parks Canada.

In 1974, a group of students funded by the federal Opportunities for Youth program carried Thorsell's

torch and began surveying a route. In 1976, the Alberta government also contributed to funding the trail, and by the 1980s, the GDT was completed from Fording River Pass in the north to Tornado Pass in the south.

In the 1990s, the GDT went into hibernation as government support faded, heavy logging in the area impeded work and many of the founders of the trail were preoccupied with family and career life. As the 21st century rolled around, so did renewed vigour in the GDT with the release of Dustin Lynx's *Hiking Canada's Great Divide Trail* guidebook, in 2000 (Rocky Mountain Books), and the start of annual trail maintenance trips by the Friends of the GDT, in 2004. In 2013, the Friends of the GDT went a step further to formalize their activities and passions and federally incorporated the GDTA.

Since then, the GDTA has been busy upholding its objectives, hosting annual trail maintenance trips and connecting with like-minded people and organizations, trying to generate involvement, sponsorship, funding and recognition. The GDTA is gaining momentum, achieving goals and

... Canada's Great Divide Trail ...

making progress every year; 2015 has been the busiest year to date.

The Alberta government once again formally recognized the GDTA as the official trail operator, and the association has been busy coordinating trail maintenance trips and outreach events to maintain momentum. Every summer the GDTA hosts Signature Trail Maintenance Trips, recruiting volunteers to help repair and maintain degraded sections of the GDT—building bridges, clearing brush, blazing the trail and installing signage. This year, with the support of various sponsors such as The North Face, MEC and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, the GDTA partnered with the Hornaday Wilderness Society to restore the Aldridge Creek Trail. Eighteen hard-working volunteers cleared and restored 10 kilometres of notoriously overgrown trail that was badly damaged in the 2013

floods that affected much of southwestern BC and southeastern Alberta.

A series of smaller trips took place throughout the summer, including the installation of two bridges at Lyall Creek and Cache Creek in partnership with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD). A group of ESRD staff and GDTA volunteers, accompanied by a mule team and helicopter, spent several days in the backcountry in the Beehive Natural Area preparing sites for the bridges and assembling bridges by installing log stringers across both creeks. Another GDTA trail crew spent four days hiking along Owen Creek for 40 kilometres outside the Banff National Park boundary and, as needed, clearing trail with handsaws and loppers. By connecting land managers, volunteers, members and hikers (day, section and thru) with

the Great Divide Trail experience, the GDTA is investing in a future for the trail.



Enthusiastic Owen Creek trail maintenance crew with loppers and handsaws, Alberta, 2015

—Photo by Brad Vaillancourt



Restoring trail damaged in the 2013 floods, Aldridge Creek, BC, 2015

—Photo by Jean-Francois Cianci



Aldridge Creek Signature Trail Maintenance Trip volunteers, Elk River Valley, BC, 2015

—Photo by Jean-Francois Cianci



The Great Divide Trail wilderness route along the continental divide in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Alberta, 2015

—Photo by Jocelyn Wood

The GDTA is committed to connecting the global community to the world of Canada's Great Divide, in particular connecting youth with the wonders of the GDT. The GDTA offers presentations throughout the year at public conferences, trail events, meetings of partner organizations, universities, schools and youth programs. At these various events in Alberta and British Columbia, the GDTA shares photos and videos, talks about the challenges the association faces and

invites new members to join. In 2015, the GDTA presented at the University of Calgary, Quest University (Squamish, British Columbia) and the British Columbia Institute of Technology, and partnered with a local Scout troop to enable them to "adopt" a section of the GDT to maintain.

All of this work is part of the GDTA plan to draw people outdoors and develop an appreciation for the Canadian Rocky Mountain wilderness through use of

the GDT. The GDTA believes hiking or riding for a day, a section or all the way through on the long-distance trail is of great value to Canadians because it inspires people. It connects them with seemingly inaccessible nature and builds their appreciation for the wilderness. People will not protect what they do not care about, and they will not care about what they have not experienced.

The GDT creates the opportunity for people to experience the wilderness of the Canadian Rockies first hand, introducing people to the magic of the Great Divide without imposing on its natural capital. The GDTA is keen to invest in youth so stewardship values may be woven into the moral conscience of future generations. Connecting people with nature ensures its long-term survival.

To learn more about the Great Divide Trail and become involved with the Great Divide Trail Association, please visit the GDTA's website, www.greatdividetrail.com.

Jocelyn Wood is secretary of the Great Divide Trail Association.



Connecting with nature on the Great Divide Trail, Upper Michele Lake, Alberta, 2015

—Photo by Jocelyn Wood

The Great Divide Trail Turns 50

Dustin Lynx

What a delight to come across a booth of eager volunteers promoting the Great Divide Trail Association at the recent Banff Mountain Book and Film Festival. I chatted with Dave Hockey, one of the board members, while he swiped my credit card through a device on his smartphone. He demonstrated to the other volunteers how to collect an electronic payment for a membership. How amazing! I had just become part of an organization dedicated to what was a little-known wilderness route when I had hiked it almost 20 years ago.

Dave is a tall, middle-aged guy with a big smile and an even bigger voice. He told me a bit about his recent hike on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), the long trail recently brought into the public's psyche through *Wild*, the book and, especially, the movie. He described how land managers have had to adopt a quota system for thru-hikers (those hiking from point A to B). Where there used to be a dozen people camped out at a resupply and staging area like Kennedy Meadows in California, there could now be hundreds! I couldn't imagine it. When my then girlfriend, Julia, and I hiked it in '94, we were

considered vagabonds and no one could understand what we were doing out there.

In 2016, the Great Divide Trail (GDT), or at least the idea of it, turns 50 years old. With leaders like Dave and a dedicated group of volunteers who are as adept at using a brush saw as writing letters to government authorities, the crowning trail of the Rockies is about to become reality.

In case you had to go back and read it twice—yes, the GDT is that old! The first recorded mention that I can find of the route goes back to the minutes of a national parks standing committee meeting in 1966, in Banff and Jasper (Whyte Museum and Archives). At that time, the Girl Guides of Canada proposed that the parks create a hiking trail along the continental divide, 1,200 kilometres along the Alberta–British Columbia border in the Rockies. Soon afterward, a local architect and present-day holder of the Summit of Excellence Award, Philip DeLasalle, submitted plans to Banff National Park to build a series of shelters every 15 kilometres on the trail in three of the national parks, to spur outdoor activity and hiking as a way of life.

This was an exciting time for hikers. South of the border, the USA had passed the *National Trails System Act*, in late 1968, which officially mandated the founding of the Appalachian Trail on the east coast and the PCT on the west, with an additional 14 trails in the hopper. Jim Thorsell must have sensed that excitement when he published a provisional trail guide for the GDT in 1970. His description of the trail through Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay and Banff national parks appeared in the very popular *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* the following year. That guidebook, now in its ninth edition, spread the word to hundreds of thousands of people and far outside Canada.¹

By 1974, the USA had thousands of kilometres of continuous trail in development. Where were the long-distance trails in Canada? We had the 800-kilometre Bruce Trail in Ontario, but nothing in the west, certainly nothing to rival the PCT. That's when a group of students at the University of Calgary got together with the Alberta Wilderness Association and received a grant from the Government of Alberta to

¹ The *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, 9th ed, by Brian Patton and Bart Robinson, was published in 2011 by Summerthought Publishing, Banff, Alberta.

explore and survey a potential route for the GDT south of Banff National Park all the way to Waterton Lakes National Park, near the US border.

Cliff White, a retired wildlife biologist speaks favourably of his time on that crew. In a 2001 *Backpacker* article, he is quoted as saying, "We got to hike all over and get paid for it—kind of. There were three groups of two. We had three old cars we wrestled down muddy backroads, then we'd spend days hiking around, surveying the terrain." (See more at www.backpacker.com/trips/international/canada-s-great-divide-trail.)

These students went on to found the GDTA as a nonprofit organization that built trail and advocated for protected areas along the corridor surrounding the trail. Their efforts produced the only existing trail built and signed as the GDT—about 100 kilometres of it, largely in Kananaskis Country, south of Highwood House. That first incarnation of the GDTA lasted for over ten years.

When I hiked the GDT in 1996 between semesters at the U of C, the word on the GDT was out there but detailed information about the route outside of the national parks was sparse. After hiking the route, I decided to hold on to all my research and write a guidebook—

which became another degree all on its own! Rocky Mountain Books published the guide, describing what I called a wilderness route, in 2000. I warned would-be hikers that it's not like the PCT and that they would need topographical maps and perhaps even a gadget called a GPS—the handheld models were new at the time.

Fast-forward a decade and the GDTA is once again in existence, and here is Dave grinning widely and talking about a rising and vibrant membership. The brochures are sleek, but the handshake is real. One of the GDTA's goals is "to obtain formal recognition and protection of the Great Divide Trail Corridor" (read more at www.greatdividetrail.com/about-us). Shaking Dave's callused hand, I believe it to be true.

Now, all that remains is to look at my calendar to see if I can join the next trail maintenance gathering and meet others who are as energized about the GDT as Dave and I are. Perhaps I'll see you there too.

Areas of Interest

The GDT is 1,200 kilometres long and is accessible at many places. One of the most gorgeous spots is Owen Creek, the first drainage outside the Banff National

Park gate on the David Thompson Highway no 11, west of Nordegg. There is a small pull-out there and you need to walk for only about 20 minutes to reach the incredibly scenic gorge north of the highway. Turn around after 20 minutes or perhaps you'll feel the tug to continue north for another 20 days. That's the true magic of a long wilderness trail: it beckons you.

A map of the Great Divide Trail is available at www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zoi7YBwhVGcE.kCtMGWREICCg&usp=sharing, or <http://tinyurl.com/jdyqv92>. (Courtesy of the GDTA.)

For more information about the GDT, or if you are interested in joining the association, please visit www.greatdividetrail.com.

Dustin Lynx is the author of Hiking Canada's Great Divide Trail (2nd ed, Rocky Mountain Books 2007). He lives with his family in Canmore, where he can be close to the trails he loves. Recently, he started a publishing company called Imaginary Mountain Surveyors. One book was shortlisted for the Mountain Fiction and Poetry Award at the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival in 2013, and another won that prize in 2014. Hiking is a lifelong passion for Dustin; writing and publishing are a couple of ways that he has found to share that inspiration with others. Find out more at www.imaginarymountains.com.

Favourite Trails

Zephyr Creek Trail

Tyler Dixon

If you're looking for an exciting day trip in the Calgary area, look no further than the Zephyr Creek Trail, in the Highwood region of Kananaskis Country. This nine-kilometre hike is quite easy, as it only gains about 150 metres in elevation, but the one caveat I would place on this adventure is that you must ford the icy-cold Highwood River to access the trail.

The original trailhead was the Sentinel Provincial Recreation Area, but it no longer exists due to the devastating floods of 2013. Instead, we parked along Highway 40 and made our way over the flood debris down to the river. We were thankful that it was a bright sunny day with a temperature hovering in the mid-

20s—it made the river crossing all the more bearable. We cached flip-flops and towels in thick brush and began searching for the trail.

Locating the trail on the opposite side of the Highwood proved difficult because floodwater had badly eroded the opposite bank. We had to do some off-trail exploration and a little bushwhacking before we found the correct spot.

The trail was forest covered for a short time before it opened into a large meadow that was once the site of a *ti-jurabi-chubi*, or sun dance ceremony, performed by the Stoney First Nation. The decaying remains of the lodge can be found at one end of the meadow while brightly coloured ceremonial banners adorn

stands of poplar trees on the opposite side. Roughly translated, *ti-jurabi-chubi* means “to make a lodge dwelling for a religious ceremony.” In the words of Chief John Snow, the dance that accompanies the ceremony is “an expression of the joy and ecstasy of a religious life, of being thankful for life, the beautiful creation, the rain, the sun, and the changing seasons.”

The lodge was made from freshly cut trees and shrubs and then colourful banners were hung from the central pole. Once the ceremony is complete the lodge is left to time and weather for dismantling. I am uncertain what year this ceremony took place, but the lodge and auxiliary structures are in various



Highwood River



Ti-jurabi-chubi site



Ceremonial banners



Painted Valley

stages of decay, so I'm assuming it was more than several years ago.

We explored the meadow, taking precautions not to disturb the sacred site before moving on. The trail beyond the meadow follows Zephyr Creek, crossing it a few times before reaching an intersection. This is the junction with the trail to Painted Valley, where ancient First Nation rock art can be found. If you turn left at this junction it's a short half-kilometre hike that zigzags across Painted Creek six times before you reach the artwork. If you stay on the Zephyr Creek Trail it's another 3.5 kilometres, with an additional 370 metres gained in elevation, to reach the Zephyr/Bear Pass summit.

Rock art can be classified in two ways: pictographs (paintings) and petroglyphs (carvings). Petroglyphs are rock carvings that are created by

removing part of a rock's surface through a variety of techniques. Pictographs, on the other hand, are paintings that were created using a mixture of red ochre, a natural iron-based mineral, and animal fat. The mixture was then painted onto rock faces for a variety of different reasons. It is believed that rock art is Canada's oldest and most prevalent artistic tradition, even though accurately dating many sites has proven difficult. Much of the artwork found across the western provinces can be linked to shamanism, vision quests or the search for helping spirits.

Painted Canyon contains several pictographs that are believed to be more than 300 years old and are thought to be painted by either the Kootenai or the Salish people who lived on the edge of the prairies. Due to their isolated location it's been

theorized that the pictographs are from a successful completion of a vision quest ceremony. The site was originally home to a large collection of paintings, but a rockslide in 1975 destroyed most of them. Today there are two very distinct paintings, with a few more close by that have been eroded by weather and time. There are reports that additional pictographs can be found higher up the ridge, which would require climbing the steep scree slope to the right of the paintings. A few of us decided to scramble up the slope to see if we could find anymore artwork, but all we discovered were a couple of small red blotches on the rocks. It's possible that these are the remains of long-faded paintings that are now lost forever.

We enjoyed a bite to eat in Painted Canyon before heading back the way we came. We decided to leave Zephyr/Bear Pass for another day and leisurely made our way back to the cars. The glacial water of the Highwood felt refreshing on our sore feet, but we were happy that we found the pictographs and enjoyed a beautiful day in the mountains. During the drive home we were already planning our next adventure.



Pictographs

Coliseum Mountain Trail to the Coliseum Viewpoint

Don McLaughlin

Location and Access

This trail is near Nordegg, Alberta (100 kilometres west of Rocky Mountain House); 500 metres west of the Nordegg townsite on Highway 11, turn north on the Shunda Creek Road and follow the signage to the Coliseum Trail—the road and parking area are maintained over the winter.

What to Expect

The trail starts a few metres north of the trailhead sign and follows a well-used trail through a series of switchbacks to the Coliseum Viewpoint. The walk through the forest offers opportunities to see numerous

species of birds (you may even come across a well-camouflaged grouse that will not move until you are within a few metres), deer and even the odd moose.

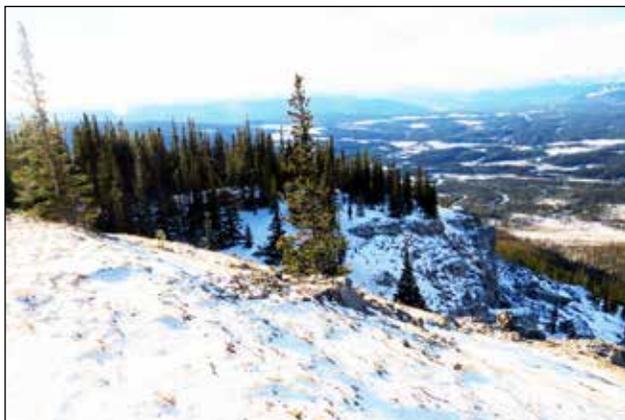
The hike is popular for families and in the geocaching community as there are a number of geocaches to find on the way to the viewpoint. Take along a GPS (they are now available at a number of public libraries in Alberta's larger centres), load up the caches along the trail from www.geocaching.com, and let the kids find the treasure along the forest trail!

Once at the Coliseum Viewpoint, enjoy the spectacular views of the west summit of Coliseum Mountain (about 1.5 to 2 kilometres to the west), the east ridge leading to the east summit of Coliseum Mountain (approximately 5 metres lower than

the west summit) and the outstanding views of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and the peaks of the eastern slopes to the west.

Travel Beyond the Viewpoint

Travel to the west summit for families is not recommended during the winter due to snow accumulations along the north ridge. However, for those interested in checking out the west summit, the trail continues northwest of the viewpoint just below the east-ridge. If you own a GPS, do a Google search for southern Alberta trail maps and load the GPX trails to keep you on track past the viewpoint.



Coliseum Mountain East Ridge



Coliseum Mountain East Summit as seen from the West Summit

... Favourite Trails ...



Coliseum Mountain East Summit



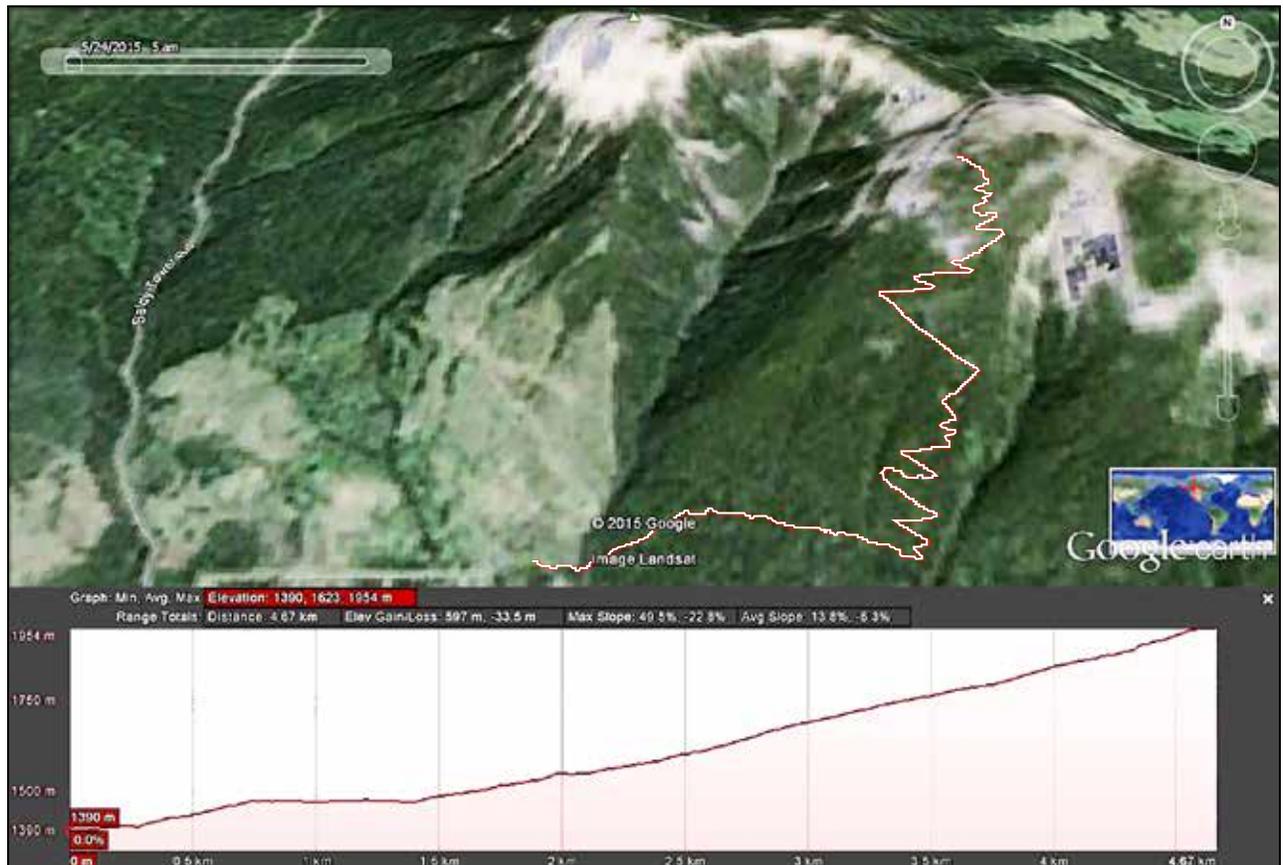
Coliseum Mountain West Summit

Distance and Elevation

Round-trip distance to the viewpoint from the trailhead is about 7 to 9 kilometres, with approximately 400 metres of elevation gain.

Gear Required

You will need good winter-time hiking shoes and gaiters (to keep the snow out); dress in layers, and consider snowshoes or traction devices, depending on conditions. Enjoy this fine location!



Snowshoeing – My Second Love

Andrew Nugara

My first love in the mountains was the activity we now call *scrambling*—getting to the top of a mountain without the use of climbing equipment such as ropes. However, as much as I love summer and fall scrambling, I yearn for the snow to arrive, as the cold months approach and snowshoeing takes the place of scrambling. There is something so magical and invigorating about the mountains and the land when snow covers everything. T S Eliot had it right when he wrote

“Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow ...”
(The Waste Land, 1922)

My brother, Mark, and I started snowshoeing in 2002, simply because we didn't want our trips to the mountains to end when the snow fell. Snowshoeing seemed to be a logical mode of winter travel. We immediately took to the activity. In winter, the Canadian Rockies offer endless kilometres of exquisite, pristine, snow-covered terrain and innumerable mountains that are possible to ascend. Snowshoes gave us the freedom to explore the mountains year-round. And the scenery and views truly are breathtaking in winter. Ascending a mountain on snowshoes was a completely different experience from the same trip in the summer.

Snowshoeing really opened up a whole new world to us.

Later we would also try ski mountaineering, but Mark is legally blind and therefore the fast-moving, downhill aspect of that activity was infinitely more challenging and often unnerving for him. We were more than happy to stick with the slower-moving pastime of snowshoeing. It certainly gives you more time to enjoy the scenery!

I found the physical, emotional, social and even spiritual benefits of snowshoeing to be undeniable. The stresses of city life, of work and of other pressures are completely absent when you are in the mountains. There is nowhere I'd rather be on a



Mark Nugara gets some air on Cameron Lake.

cold, crisp, clear January day than snowshoeing amid the grandeur and majestic peaks of the Rockies; and there is nothing that keeps me as grounded, humble and appreciative of life as being out there. The mountains are perfect therapy!

Snowshoeing is also inexpensive, and you can master basic techniques within minutes of trying it. Perhaps it has been said too often, but it is true: “If you can walk, you can snowshoe!”

By 2008, Mark and I had completed quite a number of interesting snowshoe routes. When he suggested I write a snowshoe guidebook I really couldn't say no. Here's a guy who holds a full-time job, has raised three children, paints, takes great photographs, travels the world and has climbed hundreds of mountains, all with only about 10 per cent of his vision remaining. Given that I have 100 per cent of my vision, I didn't have any excuse not to write a

simple guidebook. Plus, I never argue with my big brother!

My first snowshoeing guidebook, *Snowshoeing in the Canadian Rockies*, was published in 2011, by Rocky Mountain Books (RMB). It may not have been what most people were expecting, being full of somewhat extreme trips—long routes, up steep terrain and sometimes in avalanche areas. Mark and I have always been “summit driven,” and so the focus of the book was more about getting to the top of a mountain using snowshoes and other climbing techniques and less about summitless routes. I called it a more of a snowshoe mountaineering guidebook. To fill in the gaps, I immediately wrote *A Beginner's Guide to Snowshoeing in the Canadian Rockies*, published one year later, outlining shorter trips that are not necessarily to the top of a mountain and none that are in avalanche areas. At present I am in the process of updating

and adding to both books. They should be available by late November of 2016.

Revisiting the snowshoeing guidebooks books has given me the opportunity to reflect on some of my favourite snowshoe trips in the Canadian Rockies. By no means a comprehensive list and in no specific order, here are a few:

From A Beginner's Guide to Snowshoeing in the Canadian Rockies

1. Beyond Buller Pond and the south end of Spray Lake. In both of these trips you actually lose elevation to reach the destination, but it's so worth it. The huge lake is surrounded by stunning mountains. The wind can clear snow off the ice surface, revealing massive cracks and bubbles in the ice.



Checking out the exposed ice on Spray Lake. Cone Mountain fills the background.

... Favourite Trails ...

2. Bow Lake. The lake and awesome views are two minutes from your car! Tons of terrain to explore around the lake and towards the Wapta Icefield.
3. Chester Lake. The snowshoe route to Chester Lake is the busiest in the Canadian Rockies, and for good reason. Although solitude is unlikely here, you will find great snow and fantastic views. There are also many options to extend this trip, including the amazing Elephant Rocks.
4. Cameron Lake. An easy trip to a huge lake, backdropped by stunning Mount Custer.

From Snowshoeing in the Canadian Rockies

1. Crystal Ridge (also known as Helen Ridge). Not an excessively

long or difficult trip but one that is excessively scenic (if there is such a thing!). Once above the treeline, the views toward Bow Lake and the Wapta Icefield are breathtaking. The extension to the south summit has some of the best ridge and cornice scenery I've ever seen.

2. Commonwealth Ridge. The view from the north summit is excellent, especially toward Commonwealth Peak. Call it a day there, or embark on an incredible and exhilarating ridge walk/scramble to the true summit, where you are treated to an even more remarkable view of the British Military Group.
3. Big Bend Peak. The valley north of Mount Saskatchewan is without a doubt one of my favourite areas in the Rockies: *big* views and *big* scenery everywhere! And what better way to see it all than with an ascent of Big Bend Peak. This

mountain represents the easiest of the ascents is this area but is still a tough grind up steep terrain. The wicked summit view makes every step worthwhile.

4. Tent Ridge. I've recently visited all the summits of Tent Ridge using a variety of different routes. Each trip has been outstanding, boasting some of the best views in Kananaskis. These routes will be described in the updated edition.

I could honestly go on forever! Snowshoeing has enabled me to see and experience the world in a completely different way. Like all worthwhile activities, I would say that snowshoeing feeds my soul. But don't take my word for it—get a pair of snowshoes and try it for yourself; you have everything to gain!

Andrew Nugara teaches at Notre Dame High School in Calgary, Alberta.



At the North Summit of Tent Ridge, looking towards Spray Lake

Global, Environmental, & Outdoor Education Council 2016 Award Nomination Form

Important: The submission deadline for nominees is **April 1, 2016**. Descriptions of each award are available on our website, www.geoec.org.

I am making a nomination for the following award:

- Award of Merit
 Distinguished Fellow Award
 Appreciation of Service Award

Nominee

Name:

Street Address:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

Nominator

Name:

Street Address:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

E-mail Address:

Supporter

Name:

Street Address:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

Briefly describe the nominee's contributions that are relevant to this award (or attach a curriculum vitae):

Today's date:

Send this form to Don McLaughlin, GEOEC president, at president@geoec.org.

Five great reasons to get (or update) your online ATA account now!

Please encourage teachers you know to get or update their ATA account. Here are some reasons to share with them on why they should do this.

1. Receive bargaining updates

All collective agreements between ATA bargaining units and their respective school jurisdictions expire August 31, 2016. As new negotiations get under way, regular updates and other information critical to keeping you informed of developments regarding bargaining will be posted in the Members Only section of the Association website. To gain access to the Members Only section, you must have an online ATA account.

2. Use ATA library online resources and databases

The ATA library has an extensive collection of books, periodicals, videos and other materials for teachers focusing on educational research and professional development. Library services and materials are available in both French and English. An online ATA account is necessary to log in to our catalogue to reserve books or videos.

3. Vote in ATA elections

Provincial Executive Council conducts the business of the Association and is made up of 20 members, 18 of whom are elected by you. To vote in Association elections, you need an online ATA account.

4. Get no-cost ATA specialist council memberships

As a benefit of ATA membership, active members are entitled to join one specialist council of their choice each year at no cost. Active members must have an online ATA account to select and join the specialist council of their choice.

5. Print your own ATA member card

The Association is launching online self-serve membership card distribution. With an online ATA account, you will have the convenience of printing your own ATA member card from the Association website when you need it. ATA member cards are useful when your identification as a teacher or member of an association is needed to attend events, receive discounts or be eligible for other offers from retailers and service providers.



Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council

Mission Statement

To promote involvement in quality global, environmental and outdoor education

Objectives

- To provide a vehicle for Alberta teachers for professional development and communication in global, environmental and outdoor education
- To study and make professional recommendations about global, environmental and outdoor education issues
- To network with other provincial organizations that have similar concerns

Membership

- Regular member—Active and Associate members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, as specified in ATA bylaws, are entitled to full privileges of council membership including the rights to vote and to hold office.
- Student member—Student members of the ATA are entitled to all benefits and services of council membership except the right to hold office.
- GEOEC members may also choose to belong to the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM) for an additional fee.
- ATA members may sign up for a GEOEC membership through the ATA website as their choice of one free specialist council membership included in the ATA annual fee.
- ATA members and subscribers may also sign up for a GEOEC membership and pay a fee determined by the GEOEC executive. From time to time the executive may decrease the fee to provide incentives for membership recruitment.

Subscribers

- Persons who are not ATA members as specified by ATA bylaws receive all the benefits and services

of council membership except the rights to vote and hold office. Subscribers do have the right to serve as community liaisons on the council executive.

Publications

- The GEOEC recognizes the wide range of interests among members and strives to foster the exchange of ideas and provide information and articles relating to the various components of the elementary and secondary curricula through the publication of *Connections*.
- The GEOEC maintains a website in order to publish timely information and provide access to like-minded organizations and individuals.

Annual Conference

- The annual conference features a blend of activities, indoors and outdoors, ranging from hands-on workshops to social gatherings. All grade levels are represented in sessions. The emphasis is on practical information and application. The annual general meeting of the GEOEC is held in conjunction with the conference.

Executive

- Members are elected to serve on the GEOEC executive.
- Contact the president or past president of the GEOEC through the ATA office if you are interested in seeking a position.
- Elections take place at the annual general meeting during the annual conference.

Workshops

- Various activities and workshops are organized by the GEOEC either as standalone events or in conjunction with other organizations.

Join now and become involved in the Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council

Name _____ Alberta Teaching Certificate No _____
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Make cheque payable to the Alberta Teachers' Association and mail it with the application to the Association at 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton AB T5N 2R1.

Permission for Use of Photographs or Student Work

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) requests the permission of parents/guardians for the reproduction of photographs depicting their children and/or the reproduction of work assignments completed by their children. The photograph/work will be reproduced in the Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council (GEOEC) newsletter, *Connections*, and is intended for teacher professional development.

Name of student _____

I, _____ (printed name of parent/guardian of student), agree to the use of this photograph/work for the purpose stated above.

Signature _____

Relationship to student _____

Address _____

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We have recently begun posting archived issues of *Connections* on the GEOEC website (www.geoec.org/newsletter). Are you willing to have your child's written work posted on the Internet as well?

- Yes, I agree to have my child's written work posted on the GEOEC website.
- Yes, I agree to have my child's written work posted on the GEOEC website, using a first name only.
- No, I do not want my child's written work posted on the GEOEC website.
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Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council

GEOEC website: www.geoec.org

ISSN 0701-0400
Printed at Barnett House
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5N 2R1