



**wild  
wise**  
YUKON

## **Progress Report**

March, 2021



## **WildWise is all about engagement**

2020, we all seem to agree, was an atypical year. WildWise is all about engagement. We had plans for outreach activities throughout Yukon, many of which were cancelled because of the travel restrictions. Despite that, we had an amazingly productive year. Without missing a beat, we redirected attention to projects which needed a high degree of collaboration and, thanks to a pandemic, WildWise and our partners are now extremely savvy in connecting online and getting things done in different ways. Travel budgets were freed up for outreach and communications. Outreach and education budgets and activities were reimagined. Plans for new and better collaborations have emerged because there has been time to connect and discuss how our mandate can help other organizations reach their goals and vice versa. This refocusing will strengthen our programs in many ways.

Never before have we had so much face time with partners, supporters, members and friends. This report is for all of you, and shows how your commitment and engagement is shaping what we do.

Heather Ashthorn  
*Executive Director*

Lindsay Caskenette  
*President*

## **On Board with Wildwise**

WildWise continues to be possible because of a dedicated and enthusiastic board. In 2020, the board worked with a facilitator to update our strategic plan. The new plan can be found on our website, which is also new! Board members bring a variety of interests and talents and guide how we focus our time and efforts. This year's board members are:



Lindsay Caskenette – President   Scott Gilbert – Vice President

Emilie Dory – Secretary/Treasurer

Pam Brown, Babette Mueller, Élise Brown-Dussault – Directors



## Bear Friendly Bin Testing

Carcross is a local example of a community with an effective approach to keeping bears out of residential garbage. They use the Haul All system, which is very very resistant to bears and other wildlife. Pelly Crossing is a community which has integrated bear-resistant waste bins in some areas. Those bins act as storage lockers for waste and bags are manually loaded to the waste truck on collection day. Whitehorse is not there yet. Throughout the year we worked with the City of Whitehorse to test Rehrig Pacific's bear bins, particularly in cold weather. We were hopeful that this product would be a good solution and the City would be able to budget for and phase them in as the existing bins wear out. In the fall, the City and Environment Yukon dedicated some funds for purchase of bins for a pilot project. WildWise negotiated a low price for 100 bins but was immediately contacted by other Bear Smart programs with a warning that the bins they received had a high malfunction rate. We agreed unanimously not to proceed with this project at least until the manufacturer has proven that the problem with the latches has been fixed. Since our goal is to keep bears out of garbage, there is no point proceeding until we have a high level of confidence in the product.

### How can I be involved with this project?

**Public:** Until we have a better project to test, residents can do one of two things. You can purchase your own bear-resistant bin, and if you live outside the City's waste management area, we encourage you to do just that. If you are on waste collection services, you will have to check with the City to find out which bins they will allow. They may not dump your bin if it is not compatible with their system.

**Governments:** All governments can help with the research and development of a bear-resistant waste management system.



## University of Alberta Mechanical Engineering Challenge

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In 2019 we hosted a hackathon which engaged Whitehorse area residents in a series of design challenges, including a retrofit latch for existing City of Whitehorse bins. One participant went on to secure funds and a partnership with the UofA's Mechanical Engineering department and, together, we submitted a design challenge, including criteria for a successful project. The project became the most popular challenge submission and in 2020 we had two teams in the winter semester and two in the fall semester take it on. There was one submission from the first round that had potential and we offered round 2 teams the chance to view and improve on that design. One team took it on and the other started from scratch. Covid restricted all teams' ability to take their design through the prototyping phase, but WildWise retains the CAD files for all designs and there is potential to have the prototypes produced at another time.



### How can I be involved with this project?

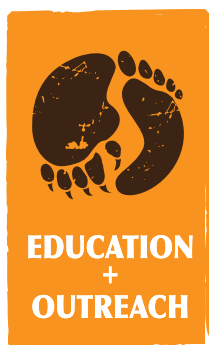
**Public:** Are you a mechanical engineering student? You can carry this concept forward at your own college or university. The more heads around this table the better.

**Governments:** When a promising design is submitted, it needs to be produced, certified by WildSafe BC and then tested. This all takes time and money. Governments can contribute both and can also help define community-specific design criteria.

## Cross-Jurisdictional Bear Smart Communities Scan

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In 2018 we conducted interviews with bear smart program leads, bylaw officers, city planners and others involved in making communities bear smart. We did this to help our own community along the path to reducing hazards for bears and conflict with humans. Bear Smart communities meet a list of criteria before receiving an official designation. They have acknowledged that a problem exists and started the process of fixing the problem. Yukon communities are not there yet, despite having higher rates of conflict per capita than most or all of the bear smart communities. We are in the process of updating our 2018 scan, both as an effort to provide our partners with current information about what is working to reduce conflicts in other jurisdictions, as well as as a means of networking and seeking new ideas and collaborations. We aim to complete this work in April 2021. Check here for the update: <https://wildwise.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Bear-Smart-Communities-Scan-2018.pdf>



## Electric Fence Support Program

This is our most successful project to date. Formed over four years of collaboration with EMR and Conservation Officer Services, the program responds to feedback given by food producers about the barriers to installing electric fencing. This year we moved the needle by ramping up support for food producers in the form of technical advice, assistance with planning, ordering and installing fencing and troubleshooting maintenance issues. We completed 16 projects and provided a project report to all partners to help with planning for 2021. We conducted an evaluation with participants and received a resounding thumbs up, including comments that participants have watched bears being deterred by the fence, that they had their first season without a 'raid' and that they are much relieved to have their investments secured and to know that they are less likely to cause undue harm to wildlife. We look forward to managing an expanded program in 2021.

### How can I be involved?

Are you a food producer?  
You can sign up for our 2021 program! Consultation, site planning, materials ordering (but not purchase), help with funding applications and installation are all free. This is a smokin' deal and no project is too small.



## Sign Projects

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We are forever finding new ways to say the same thing in hopes of reaching a diverse audience. Sometimes we have something new to say, too! While we are conscious of littering the landscape with signs, and also of over-telling people what and what not to do, we also know that some people like to learn in their own time, and that signage can help people who do not already have a fixed perspective, to learn something new.

Here's what's new this year:

- **Bear spray reminder signage** - this was developed in two formats (short and sweet and slightly more informational). We installed the signs at prominent trailheads throughout the Whitehorse and Mt. Lorne areas, taking the lead for locations from Conservation Officer Services and First Nations.



*Our sign projects  
just keep  
getting more  
interesting, more  
collaborative  
and more fun!  
Soon we'll be  
sending you on a  
scavenger hunt to  
find them all.*

- **Swan disturbance signs** - this was a collaboration between WildWise, Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Carcross/Tagish First Nation, addressing their concerns about recreational activity in spring staging areas. Look at boat launches and pullouts along Marsh Lake, at the Tagish bridge and in Carcross for some pretty interesting information about swans.
- **Catch & Release signs** - similar to above, this project addresses emerging concerns about respect for fish and the pressure that sport fishing puts on fish populations. The signs encourage all of us to think and to self regulate and give some good information about how to keep fish alive and thriving.
- **Garbage management at roadside pull outs** - Strange as it may seem, garbage is a problem along the highway. Residential dumping happens in some pullouts and travellers sometimes leave garbage piled up beside the bins. Not all bins are bear-resistant either. Look for signs along the Alaska Highway. They remind people that bears get hurt when we leave garbage lying around. And, on a side note, *what is with the banana peels at the Alaska Hwy/North Klondike Hwy junction?* If you can answer this question and make it stop, we will give you a super rad WildWise hoodie. And \$50.



## How to Respect Bears - Kwanlin Dun First Nation Perspectives

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We love working with Kwanlin Dun First Nation because we learn new ways of thinking and knowing and one project always leads to an even better one. This year we lent a hand through our extraordinary graphic designer, and co-created a resource that can be shared with all Yukoners. It talks about respect for bears from a Kwanlin Dun First Nation perspective and gives valuable information about how to coexist. You can find it here: <https://wildwise.ca/seasonal-tips/>. And please check back at this location for seasonal tips in 2021.



**STAYING SAFE IN BEAR COUNTRY**

**Our Elders tell us bears are sacred:** we respect them; share the land, air and water with them; they are our spirit brothers and sisters; they are the protector of the animal kingdom; they keep the land healthy.

**Let's do our part to keep this legacy alive and protect bears and ourselves.**

**LEARN HOW**



## City of Whitehorse Communications Project

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We love to work with the City of Whitehorse. They carry the lion's share of responsibility for waste management and for implementing the recommendations in the Whitehorse Bear Hazard Assessment, and we have a lot of support to offer. This year, we worked together on an attractant management campaign for Whitehorse residents, but which also applies to, well, everyone. Watch on the City's FaceBook page in the coming months for tips. You may also catch our look on the back of the City bus soon. <https://www.facebook.com/cityofwhitehorse/>



## Whitehorse Area Human-Bear Conflict Working Group

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This collaboration is a continuation and improvement on the Whitehorse Bear Working Group, which convened in 2015 and carried through to 2017. We look forward to this collaboration with Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Ta'an Kwachan Council, Yukon Government and the City of Whitehorse. The focus of the working group is to keep each proponent informed about what is being done and where gaps need to be filled to effectively reduce human-caused conflict with bears. This is a very positive step towards being a more bear smart community.

## 6th International Human-Bear Conflicts Workshop

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So, here is a pretty neat bit of news. WildWise is a co-chair for a major, international workshop! The event is an opportunity for managers, researchers and grassroots organizations (that's us) to come together and learn from each other. The first two were held in Canada and the rest have been in the U.S. The 2021 workshop has been delayed until 2022, but this will give us even more time to make it great.

*If you are thinking this might be an event for you, please follow the FB page (which has just recently been created so please bear with us while we load more information in the coming weeks).*

*<https://www.facebook.com/HBCW2022/>.*

*Registration will open soon.*







## How do we stay afloat?

A yearly contribution from Yukon Government covers many of our operational costs. Program and project funds are found in many other places. These contributions enable us to address the problem in many ways.

We would also like to thank those who purchased memberships, bought locks for their garbage bins and/or made a donation to WildWise this year. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and work towards making our communities safer for humans and bears.

| <i><b>Fund/Grant</b></i>                                | <i><b>Amount requested</b></i> | <i><b>Projects included</b></i>   | <i><b>Amount Approved</b></i> |
|---|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Environment Yukon                                       | \$50,000                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract fees &amp; operational costs</li> <li>• Electric Fence Support Program</li> </ul>               | \$50,000                      |
| Stay Another Day Program (YG Dept of Tourism & Culture) | \$5,000                        | Signage projects:<br>Garbage management tips in roadside pullouts   | \$5,000                       |
| City of Whitehorse, Waste & Water Services              | \$4,000                        | Development of an attractant management education campaign for social media and city buses  | \$4,000                       |
| Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund            | \$14,000                       | Electric fence support program<br>Sign projects addressing swan disturbance and respectful catch & release practices<br>Education/outreach events | \$14,000                      |
| Community Development Fund (Community Services)         | \$2,000                        | Website development   | \$2,000                       |
| EMR   | \$1,500                        | Electric fence support program  | \$1,000                       |
| <b>Total funds received in 2020</b>                     |                                |   | <b>\$76,000</b>               |

*\* some funds will be carried into 2021 for the electric fence support program*



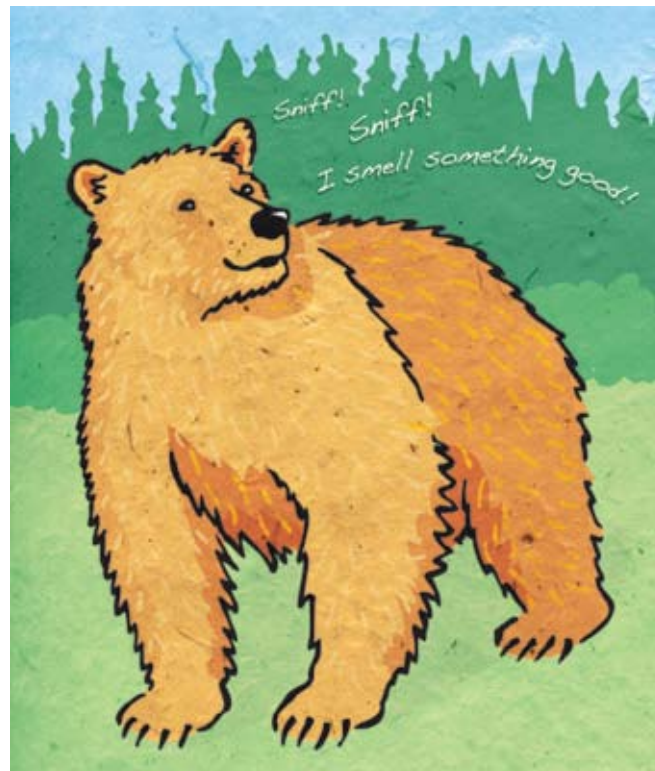
## Working in Partnerships

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We are grateful to be working within the Traditional Territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwach'an Council and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and to be collaborating with First Nations governments throughout the Yukon in times that allow for travel between communities. We are also grateful for our relationships with Renewable Resource Councils, the territorial and municipal governments and for the valuable insights offered by our members, supporters and friends.

Despite significant, Covid-related setbacks in 2020, we are not skipping a beat for 2021 planning. Here are some highlights to look forward to:

- WildWise will be found at Visitor Info Centres in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Dawson City and Faro, and in campgrounds from May-September. We will be talking with people about bear behavior, respectful travel in bear country and will be offering bear spray training.
- Electric Fence Support Program v2. We aim to help 24 food producers secure their attractants;
- Camps, community events and more. We'll be there on demand;
- Collaboration with KDFN, TKC and CPAWS addressing wildlife awareness in the Copper Creek area.



**134 conflicts with bears in 2020.**  
**32 BEARS KILLED.**  
They call this an average year.

***Do something Yukon!***  
[www.wildwise.ca/  
managing attractants/](http://www.wildwise.ca/managing-attractants/)





# **wild wise**

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