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# 2021 Annual Report



**lake windermere  
ambassadors**  
healthy waters for healthy communities

Prepared by Shannon McGinty, BSc  
December 2021

# Thank you to our funders and supporters



wildsight





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Photo by Pat Morrow

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors are a society of community volunteers and cross-sector stakeholders representing local business, recreation, tourism, commercial marinas, water stewardship, ecological conservation, second homeowners, year-round residents, First Nations, local governments, and youth. The Ambassadors evolved from foundations created by the highly successful Lake Windermere Project which ran from 2005-2010 through Wildsight Invermere. Since 2010, our organization has been conducting annual water monitoring, community education, and working with stakeholders in the watershed in pursuit of our vision.

Our mandate is:

*“Through collaboration with community sectors and a balanced management approach that supports recreational and traditional uses, high fish and wildlife values, and economic prosperity; the Lake Windermere Ambassadors serve as a resource for projects benefiting the ecological health of Lake Windermere.”*

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors have been designated by the Regional District of the East Kootenay and the District of Invermere as the Lake Management Committee. The primary role of the Lake Management Committee is to assist each district in implementing the recommendations in the Lake Windermere Management Plan and providing comment on development referrals.

January to December 2021 was another successful year of programming for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. We saw the continuation and improvement of our annual monitoring program; community outreach and education campaigns; collaboration with First Nations, local government, and stewardship groups; expanded staff capacity; and the development of a new five-year strategic plan. This report will highlight successes and challenges of 2021 and take a peek at what is coming for 2022.

***Healthy waters for healthy communities***

## MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

With the Covid-19 pandemic still impacting our lives, and my return from parental leave 2021 did not fail to excite and challenge the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. We continue to see threats to Lake Windermere in the form of climate change and increased human pressures and continue to find innovative solutions to address them. We find strength in our diversity, adaptability, and shared passion for the health of Lake Windermere.

As in the past ten years the Ambassadors strived to balance community outreach and science-based water monitoring in 2021. The value in this approach allows us to develop a greater understanding of pressures on Lake Windermere and create tangible actions to make meaningful improvements centred around the health of Lake Windermere.

Our focus on community outreach in 2021 aimed to move beyond just sharing information and really understanding the priorities of the community. To this end we

- participated in Farmers Markets, school programs, and online forums;
- hosted summer camps and contributed to Akisq'nuk First Nation's summer camps; and
- hosted boat launch meet and greets, community clean ups, and community conversations.

We were able to employ these methods alongside our traditional practices, such as eNewsletters and newspaper articles, thanks to the support of our two Water Stewardship Assistants.

Alongside our community outreach, our annual water monitoring program continued this year. Thanks to the 2020 State of the Lake review done by Norm Zirnhelt with BC Lakes Stewardship Society we were able to implement improvements to our program, including auditing and expanded lab parameters. Based on the technical nature of our water monitoring program we will be publishing a separate report complimentary to this one that analyzes that data.

Since starting with the Ambassadors in 2018 I continue to be encouraged and motivated by the supportive community surrounding Lake Windermere and water stewardship. Reflecting on this year, we have seen major improvements to our programming and exposed areas to continue enhancing. I am excited to continue to support the great work done by the Ambassadors in 2022, together with our new Program Assistant starting December 2021.

*Shannon McGinty*

**Shannon McGinty, BSc.**

*Lake Windermere Ambassadors  
Program Coordinator*

## THE TEAM



Shawn Ridsdale  
Board Chair



Taoya Schaefer  
Board Vice Chair



Jennifer Beverley  
Treasurer and Secretary



Samson Boyer  
Director at Large



Max Fanderl  
Director at Large



Buzz Harmsworth  
Director at Large



Gurmeet Brar  
Director at Large



Reid Morrison  
Director at Large



Victoria Lang  
Director at Large



Paul Christy  
Director at Large



Richard Spenrath  
Director at Large



Bill Ark  
Director at Large



Alyssa Taburiaux  
Water Stewardship Assistant



Shannon McGinty  
Program Coordinator



Danny Burke  
Water Stewardship Assistant

### Government Advisors



**Susan Clovechok**  
*Regional District of East Kootenay*



**Ute Juras**  
*District of Invermere*



**Braydi Rice**  
*Shuswap Indian Band*



**Chief Ryan Nicholas**  
*Akisq'nuk First Nation*



## HIGHLIGHTS



## PROJECT WORK

Our work can be broken down into three core areas, Water Monitoring, Outreach and Education, and Organization Sustainability. Each area compliments another, we cannot achieve our vision without implementing all three in concert with each other.

### Water Monitoring



2021 marked the eleventh year of water monitoring by the Ambassadors, and the first year following our ten-year review. This allowed us to continue contributing to long term baseline data while improving our methods. Our monitoring occurred weekly from May to September on the Lake, Tributaries, and Public Beaches, with focused species surveys throughout. An annual monitoring report will be available following publication of this report, all raw data will be uploaded to the [Columbia Basin Water Hub](#) hosted by Living Lakes Canada.

### Lake Monitoring

Following the uncertainty of 2020 that limited our ability to bring volunteers into the boat, we were excited to welcome community members safely aboard again in 2021. We began our lake monitoring on April 12<sup>th</sup> following the ice melt on March 31<sup>st</sup>, and began weekly sampling when Water Stewardship Assistants, Alyssa and Danny, joined us May 25<sup>th</sup>. We were able to complete a total of 15 excursions, wrapping up our sampling on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Through our lake monitoring we trained 22 individuals as citizen scientists contributing a total of 77 volunteer hours, who came from a diverse background including both full time and seasonal residents, local business owners, tourists, youth, and recreation enthusiasts. Sampling methods and equipment were audited by the BC Lake Stewardship Society and Provincial Government Water Quality Science Specialist.





### Tributary Monitoring

This year we were able to continue weekly monitoring on Windermere and Abel Creek for water chemistry and quantity. Due to flooding during the 2020 freshet that damaged and swept away equipment we were only able to install a continuous flow logger in Windermere Creek but have partnered with Living Lakes Canada to set up another continuous monitoring station in Abel Creek. Overall, we conducted 17 excursions on the creeks including our weekly monitoring, monthly eDNA sample collection, and annual Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) monitoring.



### Public Beach Monitoring

In collaboration with the Interior Health Authority, we collected weekly water samples from Kinsmen, James Chabot, and Windermere Beach May 5, 2021 to August 23, 2021 (excluding long weekends). Samples were analyzed for *E. coli* through the Interior Health Authority laboratories. All public beaches met Ministry of Environment objectives for total *E. coli* counts throughout the summer season, data can be found on [Interior Health's Water Samples site](#).



Photo by Rachel Darvill



### Species Surveys

In addition to our standard sampling regime, we completed four species surveys, and monitored for invasive mussels in collaboration with East Kootenay Invasive Species Council. The Lake Windermere Ambassadors monitoring for invasive mussels was done with Substrate Samplers installed at six locations on the east side of the lake, Lakeview Meadows, Terra Vista Community Association, Akiskinook Resort, Windermere Public Beach, Indian Beach Estates, and Pete's Marina. East Kootenay Invasive Species Council conducted monthly veliger samples to provide early detection of invasive species. Through this sampling, no invasive species were

found to be present in Lake Windermere. The four species surveys included four days of Bank Swallow monitoring for the Columbia Valley Swallow Project, Aquatic Invasive Plant Survey (Goldeneye Ecological Services), Water Bird Survey (Goldeneye Ecological Services), and a three-day Fish Survey (Lotic Environmental).

## Outreach and Education

Success of our water monitoring is dependent upon effective and impactful outreach and education. We aim to connect with a diverse and inclusive audience that captures all those who love and care about Lake Windermere. In 2021 we directly engaged with 1,108 individuals on matters relating to the health of Lake Windermere.

### Events, Presentations and Workshops

Each year we look for opportunities to provide unique educational experiences for the community, this year we were able to host 10 events and 16 summer camps. All of our events, presentations, and workshops were free to attend in an effort to reduce barriers for participation in water stewardship. Our summer camp programming has become popular over the past few years, and this year we were able to extend our programming to offer guest sessions at Little Badgers Camps, and partner with Columbia Lake Stewardship Society on busy weeks to offer bigger group programs. Overall, we saw 279 kids age 6 to 12 through the camps, and focused on nine key themes, including:

- Birds of our Sky
- Aliens in our Lake
- Our Wonderful Watershed
- Life in a Drop of Water
- Wild Wetlands
- Fishing for Fun
- Making Waves
- A Bug's Life
- Water Superheroes

With the Covid-19 pandemic still very present in our lives we needed to take a unique approach to hosting events that kept our community safe while sharing valuable information about keeping Lake Windermere and the watershed healthy. To this end, we hosted more virtual and outdoor events that saw 305 participants, these events included:

- Virtual Whiteway Winter Challenge
- Windermere Elementary EcoStewards Program (partnership with Wildsight Education Programs)





- Annual General Meeting
- Spring Community Clean Up
- Boating on BC Lakes: A Diverse Future (partnership with BC Lake Stewardship Society and Living Lakes Canada)
- Sip & Splash Fundraiser
- Pedley Heights Weed Pull
- BC Rivers Day Paddle (partnership with Wildsight Invermere, Living Lakes Canada, and Columbia River Paddle)
- Learn About your Lake
- Youth Climate Corps (partnership with Wildsight Regional and Living Lakes Canada)
- Wells, Water Levels, and Windermere Creek Webinar (partnership with Living Lakes Canada)

## Out in the Community

In addition to hosting and co-hosting many events we continued to find ways to connect with the community through ongoing events; in 2021 this largely looked like participation in virtual events and Annual General Meetings, attending community Farmers Markets, and setting up informative booths at popular boat launches and beaches around the lake. We were able to get out into the community at 16 different events connecting with 561 individuals on the issues that matter to them. We continue to seek opportunities to connect with a variety of community members to ensure we are listening to the many concerns this community has.



Photo by Pat Morrow

## Educational Articles and Publications

Our final major avenue for connection with the community is through publications and features on many platforms. The Columbia Valley Pioneer is a well-loved newspaper in our community, and we are fortunate enough to be provided the opportunity to contribute weekly updates during the sampling season and monthly educational articles under our Watershed Wanderings column. Our social media platforms saw a reach over 17,000 with 1,788 followers. The table below outlines the articles published in 2021:



Date	Publisher	Title & Link
Feb 20, 2021	Kootenay Conservation Program	<a href="#">Faces &amp; Places: Shannon McGinty</a>
Apr 16, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">When the Ice Melts</a>
May 15, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">Happy Garden, Healthy Lake</a>
May 21, 2021	Blog	<a href="#">The Dangers of Wake Boats on Shallow Lakes</a>
May 26, 2021	Blog	<a href="#">Bank Swallows Return to Lake Windermere</a>
June 11, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">Foreshore Integrated Management Planning</a>
July 16, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">Lake Windermere's Changing Climate</a>
July 23, 2021	BCLSS Newsletter & Blog	<a href="#">Spotlight on Stewardship: Lake Windermere Ambassadors</a>
August 16, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">Loving our Lake to Death</a>
September 16, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">Insects as Indicators</a>
October 16, 2021	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	<a href="#">Lake Windermere Home Inspection</a>

## Organization Sustainability

Each year the Lake Windermere Ambassadors continue to implement water monitoring and educational programming, we continue to work on our organization sustainability in the background. This is vital to the success of our organization and longevity of Lake Windermere.



## Collaborators and Supporters

The Ambassadors were borne out of the Lake Windermere Project by Wildsight Invermere, collaboration is in our origins, and continues to provide value to our programming. This year we collaborated with and were supported by 15 unique organizations and 19 local businesses.

## New Strategic Priorities

Over our eleven years of operation our priorities have changed and adapted to the needs and interests of the communities, this year was no different. With our previous strategic plan expiring since its development five years earlier, the board and staff underwent a strategic

planning process. This year's strategic plan, facilitated by Laurie Klassen and funded by the Columbia Basin Trust, came up with four strategic goals:



1. Create a Sustainable Organization
2. Enhance Education and Communication to the Community
3. Maintain and Increase Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and Community Stakeholders
4. Improve and Preserve the Health of the Lake

## Innovative Funding Solutions

As is the ongoing challenge for many non-profits, the Ambassadors continued to seek new and ground-breaking funding solutions. We have been fortunate enough to serve as the Lake Management Committee for the Regional District of East Kootenay and District of Invermere for the past eleven years, which comes with some supportive funds; at the same time, we have seen considerable organizational growth. With these factors in mind, we developed four fundraising platforms to support our operations.



### 1. Sip and Splash

In 2021 we hosted our inaugural Sip and Splash event that raised over \$3,000 to support Lake Windermere. This event engaged 16 local businesses to provide a drink feature for weeklong event that contributed a portion of the proceeds back to the Ambassadors, while we encouraged the public to visit and support these businesses.

### 2. Raffle

Supported by two local businesses the Ambassadors were able to raffle a paddle board and river rafting trip that brought in over \$6,000 in donations. This event ran from June to August and was solely facilitated by the Water Stewardship Assistants.



### 3. [Annual Giving Membership Program](#)

After connecting with various non-profits with similar missions to our own, we realized that an Annual Giving Membership Program was the market norm, and that we needed to adjust our membership policies reflect that. The board voted in a policy that saw a tiered approach to membership, while still offering a free membership for those that wanted to support but weren't in a financial position to contribute annually. We have seen great support from the community with considerable uptake for this program.

### 4. [Endowment Fund](#)

Lake Windermere continues to be a lifeline for our community providing environmental, recreational, and economic value<sup>1</sup>; for this reason, the Ambassadors decided to embark on the development of an Endowment Fund that sees the protection of Lake Windermere in perpetuity. This fund is facilitated by the Columbia Valley Community Foundation for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors, we have a goal of \$10,000 by 2026 –



help us protect Lake Windermere and reach this goal by donating today and be recognized on our website and in our annual report.

<sup>1</sup> [https://valleyfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CVCF\\_vitalsigns\\_report\\_2018\\_WEB.pdf](https://valleyfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CVCF_vitalsigns_report_2018_WEB.pdf)



## CONCLUSIONS

We are continually motivated by the incredible support we receive from the community for our ongoing programming and initiatives. We look forward to continuing our annual monitoring and outreach in 2022, along with expanded staff capacity, increased awareness of public access sites, a shoreline stewardship and restoration program, and sustained increased understanding of the health of Lake Windermere. If you have any questions about anything you have read in this report, or any of our programming please don't hesitate to reach out, we would love to connect.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work we do could not happen without our collaborators, partners, and mentors:

- Akiskinook Resort
- Akisq'nuk First Nation
- Alyssa Taburiaux, Water Stewardship Assistant
- Arrowhead Brewing Company
- Aspire Professional Corporations
- Back Alley Grill
- BC Hydro
- BC Lakes Stewardship Society
- BC Parks
- Beginnings Breakfast and Brunch
- Blue Dog Café
- Café Allium
- Cardiff Cove Marina
- Canadian Freshwater Alliance
- Circle Market and Café
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Columbia Basin Watershed Network
- Columbia Lake Stewardship Society
- Columbia River Paddle
- Columbia Valley Community Foundation
- Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners
- Community Donors
- Danny Burke, Water Stewardship Assistant
- District of Invermere
- Eagle Ranch Resort
- East Kootenay Invasive Species Council
- Edible Acres
- Fuze
- Golden Eye Ecological Services, Rachel Darvill
- Hungry Rooster Food Truck
- Invermere Bakery
- Kootenay Conservation Program
- Kootenay River Runners
- Lakeview Meadows
- Leo Burrito
- Living Lakes Canada
- Our Committed Board of Directors
- Our Waters BC
- Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Regional District of East Kootenay
- Shady Brook Resort
- Sign Artist
- Shuswap Indian Band
- Station Pub
- Stolen Church Coffee and Gelati
- Sweet Mountain Shave Ice
- Syndicate Board Shop
- Terra Vista Community Association
- Toby Creek Nordic Ski Club
- Ullr Bar
- Wildsight Invermere
- Windermere Community Association

