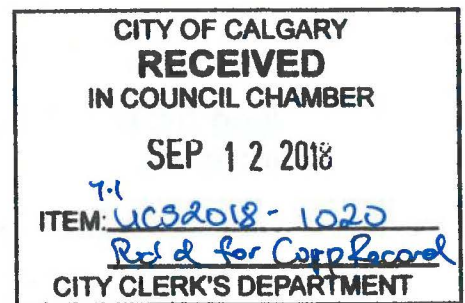




**Miistakis  
Institute**



Presentation to Standing Policy Committee on Utilities and Corporate  
Services  
September 12 2018

Danah Duke  
Executive Director  
Miistakis Institute

Calgarians expect that a healthy green city includes clean air, pure water, abundant and diverse wildlife and connected systems. They expect a healthy green city is also climate, flood and drought resilient. A healthy green city costs Calgarians less – natural areas are efficient flood and drought mitigators, roadways and communities planned with knowledge of wildlife have fewer collisions and natural vegetation cools our streets and buildings. Calgarians know our natural areas and parks are the foundation to a healthy green city.

Calgary's parks are the "wild" that is accessible to the people often forgotten in environmental conservation work. For many people who do not have the ability to access our national and provincial parks, their first real connection to nature comes when they wander along a trail in the Weaselhead or Nose Hill, or when they are first shown how many things live in the pond within their community, or when their class goes for a walk in the woods, or when they see a bobcat nursing a kitten in their backyard (as my colleague did a couple of weeks ago). This is where conservation starts, and municipalities are the front lines.

The City of Calgary is committed to leading and inspiring actions to reduce Calgary's ecological footprint and to conserve, protect and enhance the environment locally and regionally. In order to do that you need to understand the city's natural systems so you can better manage them, and so that we can plan more appropriately for future development.

And that's what the Miistakis Institute does. We determine research needs, we analyze conservation issues in a way that supports decision-making, and we engage communities and resource managers as partners in using the results. We are a not-for-profit, charitable, conservation research institute, and have been based in Calgary for 20 years. We are affiliated with Mount Royal University, and we have a

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long history of working collaboratively with Calgary Parks on issues including:

- Connectivity and wildlife movement
- Human wildlife conflict
- Biodiversity
- Watershed management
- Regional conservation planning
- Climate change adaptation

In all of these initiatives, we have worked with Parks staff to find opportunities to leverage funding we have access to as a charity, and the City has access to as a municipality, creating a great fiscal synergy, critical in a time of restrained resources.

We have partnered with Parks on two citizen science programs. Citizen science is volunteers collecting data to generate new information. Call of the Wetland engages Calgarians in understanding the health of wetlands through monitoring. It was designed to support the City's Biodiversity Strategy and results will inform the city's restoration priorities and support the city's Water Management Division in managing wetlands in Calgary not just as storm water infrastructure but for the high levels of biodiversity they support.

While citizens participate in gathering valuable data on frogs, toads and salamanders they are garnering a better understanding of the importance of wetlands, they are meeting neighbours with similar interests, new Canadians are out experiencing Calgary's fabulous natural areas and they are seeing first hand some of the issues our wetlands are facing.

Calgary Captured sees citizens from Calgary and from around the world viewing and classifying wildlife images taken from remote cameras placed throughout Calgary's natural areas. Programs like this allow Calgarians to engage in the cities natural areas even if they have limited opportunity to visit them themselves.

We know from our 15 years of experience designing and implementing citizen science programs that engaging in citizen science results in behaviour changes. We know it results in citizens engaging in local decision-making. We know it results in better data. We know it fosters a greater connection to place and community. We know it results in citizens improving their ecological literacy. And when people know better, they do better.

Calgarians value nature. Calgarians value the personal, social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits that come from the natural environment. It is important that you appropriately resource Parks to ensure Calgary remains a healthy green city.