



Revelstoke Bear Aware Society

Strategic Plan: Focus to 2025

Keeping Bears Wild & Our Community Safe



Photo: Kevin Couenen

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INTRODUCTION



The Revelstoke Bear Aware program began in 1996 as the Revelstoke Bear Management Committee. In 2004 the Committee created a registered charity, Revelstoke Bear Aware Society. This community educational program has proven to be successful in reducing bear-human conflict.

In early October 2021, the Board of Directors and I began a strategic planning process with a focus to 2025. It is the first time that Revelstoke Bear Aware has undergone such an endeavour. The process has helped us define our purpose, our ambition and our values; all of which inform the strategic priorities of Bear Aware for the next four years.

This strategic plan begins with a discussion about our **purpose** — **“Keeping Bears Wild and Our Community Safe”**. It is the reason we exist as an organization. Our partner organizations, public systems, government, and community members have all told us that our role as an influencer and education source on

bear safety in Revelstoke is of critical value to the work they do and to the community itself. Our **ambition** is to be recognized and respected as the **best-in-class guide** on how government (both municipal and provincial), community agencies, businesses, schools and community members can best change their behaviour and leverage their resources to reduce human/bear conflict in the community of Revelstoke. We are the guardians of the bear. We invite you to join us in our commitment to keeping bears wild and our community safe.

Purposeful and authentic collaboration is how we will drive this commitment. While remarkable success has come from coordinating with our partners at all levels, we now aim to raise the bar. Our objective is to become **better**. Better at delivering our educational offerings, better at government relations, better at community partnerships, better at non-grant based fundraising and better at governance and succession planning. Our eventual goal is to have influenced in such a way that by 2025, Revelstoke Bear Aware will not be needed in the way that it is today. We strive for a shift in focus to a broader strategy wherein our reputation as a “bear knowledge house” across Western Canada is well known and respected. We strive for a reality where Bear Aware is not involved in tagging garbage bins because Revelstoke will have achieved the Bear Smart Designation and bear safe waste management systems are in place and used appropriately by the community and commercial businesses. We strive for a community code where “being the bear” is as much a part of being a responsible member of the community as is shovelling snow or managing speeds in school and playground zones.

We fundamentally believe that working in silos will not deliver the outcomes we seek in the service of both the bears and the community. It just won't. We cannot do it alone.

I am proud of the strategic planning document you are now reading. It is the work of many people — Bear Aware contractors, Board members, community partners, funders, city councillors — all who care deeply about making Bear Aware the best that it can be. This document sets the stage for how we will improve always with a “bear-centered” approach in mind. It describes why we exist, what we want to achieve, the enduring values that guide us, and the initiatives we will embark upon in the years ahead as we pursue our ambition.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MS', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Maggie Spizzirri, Revelstoke Bear Aware Community Coordinator
November 2021

Purpose, Ambition & Values

Why do we exist as Revelstoke Bear Aware? What do we aspire to achieve as an organization? What are the enduring values that guide our behaviour?

Purpose:

An organization's true purpose is enduring. It transcends leadership changes or Board renewal. It stands strong against the impact of external trends and pressures, even when they arrive unexpectedly. When leaders change, when external forces create new dynamics or when a new government comes to power, strong organizations look to a clear articulation of purpose to point the entity toward its "true north".

Our statement of purpose — Keeping Bears Wild and Our Community Safe — articulates the higher calling of Bear Aware. It provides the passion for what we do and underlines the true meaning behind the daily work of our Community Coordinator, Board and Volunteers.

This means we are committed to:

1. Reducing bear mortality in Revelstoke
2. Reducing human/bear conflict
3. Engaging and empowering our community to protect the bears

Our Purpose: Keeping Bears Wild & Our Community Safe

Revelstoke Bear Aware commits to keeping bears wild and our community safe.

We are uniquely positioned in the system to observe the many factors that impact human/bear conflict in Revelstoke. Our broad line of sight gives us a deep understanding of the cause and effect of human behaviours, environmental factors and external trends that impact bear mortality in Revelstoke.

This insight allows us to inspire and influence the municipality, commercial businesses and the community to act upon our shared responsibility to keep bears wild and our community safe.

Achieving Our Ambition:

Our purpose describes why we exist as an organization; our ambition describes the collective desire for a certain achievement and the willingness to strive for its attainment. The two are intertwined – achieving our ambition helps us to fulfill our purpose, and purpose contextualizes ambition.

Our Ambition:

By 2025, we will be recognized and respected as the **best-in-class guide** on how government (both municipal and provincial), community agencies, businesses, schools and community members can best change their behaviour and leverage their resources to reduce human/bear conflict in the community of Revelstoke.

To accomplish this we will:

1. **Shift Perceptions** regarding the cause and effect of bear mortality in Revelstoke and educate regarding the roles of Bear Aware and Conservation Officers in this process. We desire to “be the first call at the first sighting” and to further understanding that calling early is the first step to reducing bear mortality, not increasing it. We will educate not only about bears and bear patterns in Revelstoke, but also about our organization’s purpose and benefit to the bears and the community.
2. **“Be the Bear”** which means that we will apply a bear-centric approach to our programmes and community education pieces. We will continue to gather and share data relating to bear behaviour, attractants, sighting locations and how increased density and development in the town of Revelstoke impacts bear safety in our community.
3. **Strengthen our Organization** in order to deliver our programmes and work with our community partners and government in a reliable and consistent way. This means that we will focus on organizational and board structure, volunteer engagement and fund development.

Living Our Shared Values

Having purpose inspires and unites us. It gives us energy. Being clear about our ambition helps turn that energy into positive results for the bears and the community. Further, when everyone in our organization operates under a set of shared values it has a positive effect on our collective will **to keep going**, even in the face of challenging times. Shared values guide our actions and behaviour. They influence the way we work with each other — and the way we engage with our partners and the community.

Our Values:

Our values define who we are as an organization.

We are:

- 1. Purposeful Collaborators** - We believe in collaboration that is authentic and results focussed. We hold ourselves and those with whom we collaborate to account when focus drifts. We address the issues with an open and solutions-based mindset. We believe in having fun and celebrate the wins -both big and small - with our partners and community.
- 2. Driven by Integrity** - Our credibility is based in our integrity. We honour our responsibility to keep bears safe. We will act in a reliable and consistent matter to support this purpose.
- 3. Proud of Our Work** - Bear Aware has made a substantial difference to the Revelstoke Community for the past 25 years. We are proud of the progress that has been made. It fuels our passion and energy to continue the work and help empower our community to “be the bear”.

The World In Which We Operate

In this ever-changing world, the Board asked: “What are the key trends that will impact Bear Aware as we embark upon the next five years? How must Bear Aware adapt as the world around us changes?”.

Taking the time to anticipate the impact of external trends most relevant to the organization is an important step toward building a strategic plan that is enduring and relevant. The table below summarizes the trends we believe will have the greatest impact on Bear Aware over the next four years.

Trend	Impact
Economic Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicted strong rebound in BC economy as COVID-19 restrictions ease will lead to increase in development and labour market opportunities • Potential negative impact of inflation and higher cost of living on charitable giving
Demographic & Development Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued influx of transient/seasonal workers to support tourism industry in Revelstoke • Revelstoke population expected to grow by 7% between 2020 - 2040 • Increase in traffic along Highway 1 and other routes considered to impact bear movement patterns • New residential and commercial developments need to be incorporated into the overall Community Plan and waste management approach
Social/Cultural Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Working remotely” increases Revelstoke’s attractiveness as a place to live for the outdoor enthusiast • Donors and funders will continue to seek greater transparency related to the use of funds provided • Shortage in labour market for non-profits for part-time positions
Political/Regulatory Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for restricted access to funding as both funders and private donors tire of municipality’s reluctance to allocate revenue to bear safe waste management systems (including composting) • Difficulty in keeping up with policies to regulate growth of animal husbandry activities in Revelstoke • Work-safe regulations and provincial budget influence allocation of Conservation Officers to Revelstoke

Strategic Focus to 2025

After reviewing the results of our SWOT analysis, feedback from our key partners and our own “wishes” for Bear Aware, we refined a number of potential initiatives to four main areas of strategic focus all of which are consistent with our purpose and ambition.

Focus 1: Government Relations

Our objective is to work more effectively with government at both the municipal and provincial levels in order to secure the systemic community changes that support our purpose of keeping bears wild and our community safe.

We will accomplish this by:

1. Improving and maintaining a long term government relations plan that takes into account the potential for change at the municipal and provincial level. This will allow us to:
 - Improve our understanding of key municipal and provincial governments contacts.
 - Demonstrate how our purpose is linked to and supports key objectives of the municipality and the province related to the Revelstoke community.
2. Working with our community partners to uncover shared concerns that require advocacy at the municipal and provincial level. This will allow us to:
 - Demonstrate how the community as a whole will benefit from systemic change (ie waste management, policies/bylaws related to liveries/animal husbandry)
 - Further our understanding of the intersection points across community partners, government and Bear Aware.

Focus 2: “Be the Bear” Knowledge House

Our objective is to continue to build our own internal knowledge databases relating to bear activity, trends and issues; to improve upon and amplify our delivery of Bear Aware educational programmes; and to improve understanding of Bear Aware’s history and positive influence on the Revelstoke community for the past 25 years.

We will accomplish this by:

1. Identifying ways to improve our knowledge management systems and recruit the data analysis skill set into the organization. Continue to work with our key partners at Conservation and Parks to understand the types of data that is most relevant to protecting bears.
2. Developing a marketing and communications plan that focusses on building the Bear Aware brand and sharing our strategy.
3. Building greater awareness about the role we play and the value we bring to the community with the end goal of shifting any negative perceptions related to the activities of Bear Aware.
4. Developing a community education plan that identifies key sectors of our community and defines sector dependent educational needs/custom materials on how to mitigate bear/human conflict.

Focus 3: Community Partnerships

We strive to become a lead collaborator among our community partners and in pursuit of this goal, we set the standard for purposeful, results-oriented collaboration that delivers a strong collective impact to our community.

This means we will:

1. Participate in the right networks to help drive discussion on the key social and environmental issues that are likely to impact both bears and humans in our community.
2. Identify opportunities to work with our current community partners and identify ways to develop relationships with new community partners.

Focus 4: Fund Development

Our key goal is to increase our financial stability and flexibility through the growth of existing grant based funding and the development of non-grant based funding.

To accomplish this we will:

1. Create a fund development plan that identifies both grant and private donor opportunities that support our purpose and build capacity within our organization and programmes.
2. Support development and implementation of new fundraising events and initiatives (as identified in the plan).
3. Clarify roles and expectations of Board members, staff and volunteers related to donor engagement and stewardship.

Focus 5: Governance & Succession Planning

Our objective is to develop the capacity of the Board and the organization to ensure long-term sustainability of Bear Aware and its purpose.

This means we will:

1. Identify the appropriate Board and committee structure to support the strategic initiatives outlined in this plan.
2. Create a succession plan for both the Board and the organization focussing on appropriate representation of skills and community linked to our purpose.

Linking Strategy to Action

1. Government Relations

Action	Context
Liaise with key government officials at both the municipal and provincial level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Councillor Rhind to understand best ways to work together in her last term (October 2022). • Understand who the key contacts are at city hall (bureaucrats and elected representatives). • Work with Steve Black and Public Work department to ensure bear resistant garbage cans are input into the roll out of compost pick up and a new garbage truck. • Consider seeking a CBT grant to support the development of a multi-year government relations plan.
Liaise with other community agencies to determine common issues that are linked to municipal and provincial policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share strategic intent with other community agencies. • Seek to identify common issues and intersects where a change in policy or infrastructure at the municipal level will have mutual benefit.
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of government contacts • Consistent attendance of municipal liaison at Bear Aware meetings • Evidence of influence (city budgets, city support of stakeholder sessions, bylaw enforcement) • Creation of Advocacy group (other community agencies)

2. “Be the Bear” Knowledge House

Action	Context
<p>Improve knowledge-sharing through technology internally and externally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and identify any IT needs or improvements (systems or people with data analysis skill sets) • Remain current with emerging technology that may support delivery of programmes • Identify and risks associated with using technology (cyber-security or technology failure)
<p>Develop a plan to increase community and media awareness using key messages for target audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get better at “telling the story” of Bear Aware. • Leverage data to demonstrate results. • Prepare Board and volunteers with messaging scripts and resources (telling a consistent story). • Ensure that communications material is consistent across all mediums (language is understandable).
<p>Use new and existing community events, sessions, workshops to provide education about Bear Aware services and programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with indigenous and other specific populations to increase understanding of Bear Aware and its purpose. • Work with youth organizations and schools for presentation educational materials, launch a jr. rangers program, collaborate with the high school food program and the Gleaning Project. • Attend Community events (farmer’s markets, Garlic fest, Woodstoke, LUNA, etc). • Host two garbage night tagging campaigns.
<p>Promote Bear Aware citizenship in Revelstoke</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote gleaning project. • Promote support of different populations in the community (garbage, gleaning, coaching on the phone, linkages to other agencies when further support is needed). • Increase use of social media, online surveys, online publications to get message out/seek feedback with stakeholders.
<p>Key Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of increased use of technology to support Bear Aware programmes/messaging • Minimal IT incidents/IT risk remains low • Number of events attended/invited to • Increase in volunteer activity in non-Gleaning related projects • Increase in compliments regarding Bear Aware activities • Evidence of perception shift - increase in “first call” and timing of “first call”

3. Community Partnerships

Action	Context
Strengthen Stakeholder/Partner Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work on our Partner/Stakeholder Constellation diagram (identify new partners, identify inter-relationships between partners/stakeholders) • Continue to highlight where we share similar cross-community issues with partners/stakeholders • Design strategies and prioritize ways to connect with partners/stakeholders to learn more about them and obtain feedback about our work • Implement tactics for Board stewardship of our partner/stakeholder relationships
Key Measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of increased quality in partnerships • Evidence of increased participation in Community Development Plan (ie being “in the loop” first versus hearing later) • Increase in positive feedback from partners • Evidence of Board members taking responsibility for/stewarding relationships with partners (ie decrease in Community Coordinator’s time associated with these activities)

4. Fund Development

Action	Context
Create a Fund Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify dollar objectives for grant-based and non-grant based revenue • Identify donor trends (corporate, community, individual, foundations, funders) • Identify strategies for new donors and new donor/donor retention • Identify strategies for in-kind, third-party events and legacy giving
Create a Fundraising Committee of the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define terms of reference for the committee • Identify skills needed in the committee
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase annual grant based revenue to \$70,000 by 2025 • Secure annual private/corporate/foundation donations of \$10,000 by 2025 • Increase numbers of new donors • Increase in donor retention • Establishment of legacy giving programme

5. Governance & Succession Planning

Action	Context
Establish a Governance Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly outline roles and responsibilities of the Board, Committees of the Board and the contract staff including policies related to code of conduct, decision making and conflict of interest. • Identify Workplace safety policies for Board, Contractors, Volunteers when working in the community for Bear Aware • Identify performance management framework for Board and contract staff • Identify Board and Committee skills and diversity requirements • Identify Board and Committee recruitment processes • Identify Board and Committee orientation processes • Identify any Board development/education related to governance and pursue means to improve Board competency related to governance • Reshape Board meeting agendas to encourage more discussion linked to strategy and goals versus transactional data
Create Board Succession Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand Board member terms and timelines • Identify gaps that will be created when terms are up and recruit to fill those gaps • Use Committees as a training ground for Board roles
Create Leadership Succession Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a long-term game plan for succession and transition at the Community Coordinator and Gleaning Coordinator levels
Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board member resumes submitted (understand current skills on the board) • Creation of skills matrix for the board (already identified: Biologist, Fundraiser, Lobbyist, Professional Educator) • Creation of diversity and inclusion policy (already identified indigenous representation, rod & gun club) • Development needs at the Board and Contract staff identified; budget allocated to training and development needs

APPENDIX

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Summary of SWOT Analysis

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Purpose:

1. Educating public on human/bear issues resulting in people being smarter around bears so that less bears get killed.
2. Reduce human/bear conflict.
3. Decrease death of bears that come into town.

Benefits of Bear Aware:

1. Reduction in bears being destroyed.
2. Notifications on Facebook/signage important.
3. Education re garbage and other attractants.
4. Knowledge house - number of bears, location of bears, hot spots in the town, fruit tree locations.
5. Support the Golden based conservation officers.

Wishes for Bear Aware:

1. Support from the city with all aspects of the bear aware programme particularly bear safe garbage bins.
2. Bear Proof garbage system, dump would be wild and bear aware would become unnecessary.
3. Local conservation officer.
4. Achieve Bear Smart Community Designation.

Results of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats Exercise

Strengths:

Bear Aware Board & Coordinator Perspective	Stakeholder Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly/safe charity to be involved with • Cause lends itself to funding • Effective at decreasing bear mortality in Revelstoke • Length of service to community and historical knowledge/context of bear/human relations in Revelstoke • Knowledge keepers of trends in development and impact on bears over the years • Maggie has an excellent reputation, well connected and exceptional in her role • Financially stable and ability to be flexible given low overhead/fixed costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education - materials, signs, social media, radio • Gleaning project • Maggie well connected and respected in community • Open to partnering with other community agencies/as-sociations • Help seniors access services through bear aware touchpoint (either gleaning or safety)

Weaknesses:

Bear Aware Board & Coordinator Perspective	Stakeholder Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession planning - board and staff • Seasonal nature leads to loss in momentum (exposure with donors, funders, interactions with government) • Perception that calling us means that bear will get killed • Lack of “boots on the ground” - one coordinator can only do so much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity - one employee can only do so much • Not sure of current board and role of board members, increase community engagement through committees of the board etc • Performance measures - are they reflective of success or strictly linked to bears destroyed? • Stakeholders not really sure of expectations of Bear Aware - attendance at meetings poor, could use more direction

Opportunities:

Bear Aware Board & Coordinator Perspective	Stakeholder Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community growth - could lead to potential new residents to Revelstoke being interested in joining Bear Aware at Board level; increase in skilled community members • Increase in environmental awareness amidst development • Increase use of social media and opportunity to reach different populations through Tik Tok - creation of Bear Aware persona (bear mascot, brand of Bear Aware) • Have credibility to be involved right aware with any new developments in Revelstoke (Golf Course at RMR, residential developments through community plan) • Identify city fruit trees as part of gleaning project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased linkage to the new food bank and commercial kitchen venture • Community engagement with city (funded/supported by city) to justify increase in budget for new disposal truck pick up (time sensitive) • Working with CSRD and City on new funding source from economic development • Increase capacity of Gleaning project - potential to link to city landscaping funding?

Threats:

Bear Aware Board & Coordinator Perspective	Stakeholder Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in dumping of garbage • Increase in vehicular traffic (impacts bear territory and movement patterns) • Political agendas • Loss of bear natural habitat and reduction in natural food sources • Increase in competition for funding - will we hit our “max”? • Increase in migration to Revelstoke, increase in transient workers • Increase in development • Increase in recreational activities • Increase in number of “dark window houses” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover of city councillor October 2022. • Timeframe of budget discussions and ability to engage community around increase in taxes related to bear proof garbage/infrastructure required for bear proof pick up • Unlikely that conservation officers will be relocated to Revelstoke in the next two years • Increase in density and increase in transient population • Political agendas