



MH Interpretive Program

Managed by Grasslands Naturalists; Based in Police Point Park
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Chief Interpreter's Report – June 2022

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For: 2022 Annual General Meeting of the Society of Grasslands Naturalists

Now nine months into my role as Chief Interpreter, I must say that I'm incredibly proud of how the new interpretive team has grown over such a short period of time. These past several months have been filled with learning – not only about local natural history, but how to mesh and grow as a team. As we begin summer, it feels like we are more unified than ever and really starting to hit our stride.

Staffing & Volunteers

By the time this report is read at the June AGM, we will have 7 staff working at the Nature Centre – 3 full-time, 2 part-time, and 2 summer students. We will 'hire' Bethany Klein full-time during the summer months using our 2022 Young Canada Works grant. She will return to high school and resume part-time employment with us in the fall. Ayla Wikjord will also join us as a full-time summer student through the Canada Summer Jobs grant program.

We are fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers and are working on a way to more effectively organize their contact information and contributions. We haven't had many opportunities to utilize our volunteers throughout the pandemic, but we are slowly starting to seek assistance from our wood cutters and special event volunteers.

Programming & Displays

Even as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, operations at the Nature Centre are certainly starting to pick up. The park is bustling once again and we are getting more visitors returning to the Nature Centre. Over the past few months, we've had many more bookings from school and community groups looking to secure field trips. Teachers were excited to welcome us back in their classrooms and we have enjoyed working with their students again. As we head into the summer months, our attention will shift towards providing more public and family programs. Interpretive Program staff are eager to share their ideas for new programs with our community. In addition to offering public programs, staff will also be focusing on learning, improving and expanding our school program offerings for Fall of 2022. This work will take careful training and thoughtful evaluation.

Our team has been working hard to maintain and grow the community connections that the previous interpretive team established over many decades. CHAT News is beginning to feature our stories once again and we continue to promote our programs using a variety of mediums. Summer programming will also include partnerships with YMCA kids groups, the City of Medicine Hat Community Development Department, and the non-profit organization Ever Active Communities.

At the end of June or early July we also expect the leafy spurge-devouring goats to return to the park. We hope to use this opportunity to expand the public's understanding of invasive species and natural control methods. Throughout the summer we will also be hosting invasive species workshops using the Land Stewardship Centre grant we've secured.

At the beginning of May we launched our *Stories in Stone* display that was created by Drake. So far the public has really enjoyed exploring the geology and paleontology of Medicine Hat through this exhibit! It will remain up until the end of July if you haven't had a chance to stop by to see it yet.

I have been working on updating the Interpretive Program's website. Be sure to check it out if you're curious about what programs and displays are upcoming. Of course, you can also find us on Instagram and Facebook @policepointpark or contact us by phone or email. You can also find little bios of each of our Park Interpreters in the *About Us* section of the website, in case you haven't had the opportunity to meet everyone on our new team yet.

Finances

Grants continue to be an important part of our operating funds. Of course, grants are not always guaranteed. Although we apply to many, we sometimes only receive approval for a portion of them. Funding for some grants has also been more restricted since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nature Canada contributed over \$6900 to our staff wages for Grace and Bethany this winter through their Winter Youth Grants.

We received approval for \$5050 from the Young Canada Works grant this year, which has allowed us to 'hire' Bethany Klein full-time during the summer months. We have also received \$4500 from the Canada Summer Jobs program and have used that funding to hire Ayla Wikjord for the summer.

We have secured an \$8000 dollar grant from the Land Stewardship Centre that will go towards invasive species workshops this summer.

We also have approval for \$3495 from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation to help us purchase biofacts and supplies for our interpretive programs.

We have received a total of \$2500 from the Kiwanis Club of Medicine Hat as support for Kiwanis Family Month in February and for our year-round school programming.

In May 2022 I began working on the details for an online donation platform for the Interpretive Program. We expect to formally launch this soon and hope it will amplify the number of donations we receive on an annual basis.