

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

A YEAR OF FINDING RESILIENCE &
ENVISIONING A DIFFERENT PATH FORWARD



📷 Joern Rohde



Association of
Whistler Area Residents
for the Environment

1989 - 2021

REFLECTIONS ON 2020

This is AWARE's first written annual report and what a year to start! Reflecting on 2020 brings a mix of emotions - a sentiment which we know is shared by many in the community.

As an organization, AWARE went through many of the same challenges as others - with program 'pivots' to online delivery, temporary team layoffs and challenges reworking a model we had been rapidly growing over the last 5 years. As with many disruptions though, there was also opportunity, and thanks to social media (and zoom!) we connected with new audiences and hosted online events bigger than we would normally have in person. Operational challenges aside, our focus remained the same - putting those resources we did have to the highest and best use for the Whistler community and nature.

From the early stages of COVID, there was increased recognition of the value of time spent in nature. Nature provided safe spaces to stay active, an abundance of activities for those off work, space to let go of the stresses of the moment and boost our mental health - and all for free. Yet this also put pressure on natural areas, waterways and wildlife as the knowledge-base and sheer number of people getting outside exponentially shifted. In response, we increased AWARE's advocacy efforts, with a focus on supporting those with broader networks than our own, to feature educational messaging about how to tread lightly.

At the same time - with the pandemic impacting every aspect of economic and social systems - potentially transformational questions emerged around how COVID is creating an unprecedented opportunity for society to build back intentionally - to become more equitable, more climate resilient and more aligned with natural limits.

As we look towards recovery in Whistler, we hope AWARE's work is creating meaningful impact through our programs and elevating collective recognition that:

- As a community whose tourism economy is grounded in nature-based experiences, we must do more to give back to nature and to safeguard the ecosystems and habitats that support wildlife and non-anthropocentric values; and
- As a community where the need to address climate change is broadly accepted but repeatedly presented as a challenge, we can use this moment to reframe and recognize that mitigating and adapting for climate change in all aspects of how we live, work and play isn't a side-issue and will be vital to Whistler's future success.

The good news is that we know what needs to be done and we are a community that can act fast for the collective good - so our team reflects on 2020 with deep gratitude, cautious hope and a determination to stay focused on delivering solutions and giving nature a voice.

We are grateful to be able to operate on the shared, unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh and Lil'wat Nations and we look forward to creating meaningful connections to the rightful stewards of this beautiful land in the years ahead.

MEET OUR TEAM

All of AWARE's programs are people-powered and throughout the challenges of 2020 our Board and staff team rallied, to transition to online formats wherever possible, and to navigate new needs and conversations that were emerging as a result of COVID and its knock on effects.



CLAIRE RUDDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Executive Director, Claire is responsible for delivering AWARE's strategic goals. This role includes: securing grants and funding; designing future community programs; developing partnerships and deepening collaborations; day-to-day management and advocating for positive change relating to conservation, climate and community sustainability.



KRISTEN JONES
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Kristen delivers a number of AWARE's core programs including: Zero Waste Workshops in schools throughout the region, the GROW Greenhouse and Garden program, and Whistler Nature Camp, which moved online for the 2020/2021 year.



NATASHA WAY
PROJECTS COORDINATOR

Natasha is involved with many of AWARE's programs, running behind-the-scenes efforts for online events, coordinating communications, and working on a wide mix of education, awareness and behavior change projects on topics ranging from wildlife protection to active transportation.



TANIELL HAMILTON
PROJECTS COORDINATOR

Taniell joined the team in Fall 2020, bringing experience in the areas of waste, climate and sustainability. Taniell now oversees our Climate Action Mentorship program with Whistler Secondary Students and is delivering a suite of waste reduction initiatives for Whistler businesses and properties.



KARA BAYLEY
ADMINISTRATION COORDINATOR

Kara is AWARE's one-day-a-week administrative rock, helping with bookkeeping, HR and payroll.

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



MELANIE TARDIF
President



PAUL DORLAND
Vice President



DIANA BOONE
Secretary



ROWENA DIGGLE
Treasurer



TANYA KONG



KIM MAITLAND



JEREMY VALERIOTE



LUIS ESCOBAR

STAYING CONNECTED... APART

Thanks to online 'pivots' and covid operating protocols we were still able to connect community and nature through events and programs targeted at a range of ages and interests. Below are some highlights....



GROW WHISTLER

Growing Food | Cultivating Health | Building Community



300+

PEOPLE KEPT ACTIVE & GROWING FOOD THROUGH COVID



ZERO WASTE EDUCATION

Connecting with students around reducing waste



1426

STUDENTS ENGAGED THROUGH IN PERSON & ONLINE WORKSHOPS



GRIZZLY BEAR WEBINAR

Educating the public about this keystone species



700

LIVE ATTENDEES AND SESSION RECORDING VIEWS



WHISTLER NATURE CAMP *ONLINE*

Inspiring the environmental stewards of tomorrow



40+

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES AND NATURE KIDS @ HOME



SUPPORTING COLLABORATORS

Advancing interest and appreciation for nature



219

ATTENDEES AT WHISTLER NATURALISTS VIRTUAL EVENTS

Regular Programs On Hold Through COVID:

Zero Waste Heroes // Kids Nature Club // EcoFLIX // Green Drinks & In Person Events

GIVING NATURE A VOICE

For over three decades AWARE has worked to give nature a voice.

In 2020, the onset of the COVID pandemic added new advocacy needs relating to: increased demand for nature-based experiences and longer-term recovery strategies for Whistler. In parallel, we saw increased demand relating to many of issues we have been continually active on (waste, bears, forests, wildlands, climate action, etc).

The main avenues of our advocacy work continue to be through participation on advisory committees, partner working groups, inputting into policy development at all levels of government, as well as position statements, letters and conversations with decision makers and the community.

As AWARE's events-based social enterprise - which helps fund our advocacy work - remains on hold we want to thank all those who supported our advocacy-specific online fundraising campaign at the end of 2020.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

CLIMATE ACTION AMBASSADORS GROUP

Convening known climate advocates from early stages of Covid

RMOW'S COVID WHISTLER RECOVERY WORKING GROUP

Ensuring wildlife, natural area and climate goals are embedded into recovery

WRWG - TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY SUB-COMMITTEE

Focusing on longer-term recovery in relation to Whistler's economic driver

COVID RELATED LAND USE TRENDS

Educating and building understanding to activate change

ONGOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Building understanding and awareness of opportunities to activate change

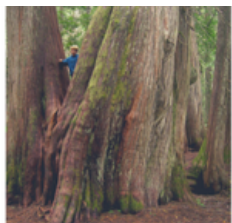
CONSISTENT COVERAGE

COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

CITIZENS LEADERSHIP GROUPS

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

RESPONDING TO CONCERNED CITIZENS REPORTS

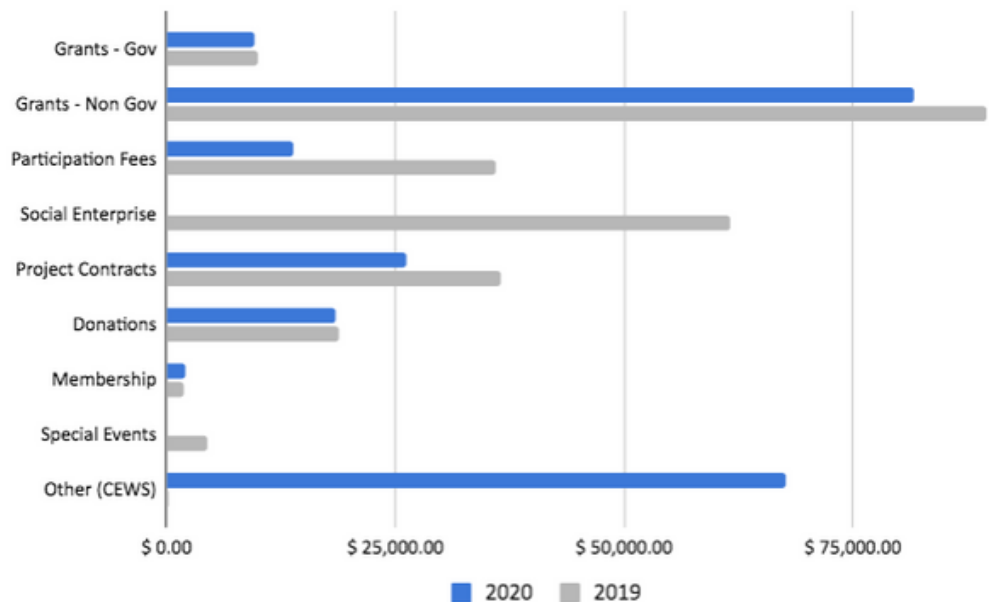


2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

As for many organisations, businesses and members of the community the COVID pandemic meant 2020 was a challenging year from a fiscal perspective.

Revenue streams we had been working to grow year-on-year like our Zero Waste Heroes social enterprise, program participation fees and project related-contracts were all reduced, but we also reduced expenses and thanks to the Federal support programs ultimately, AWARE closed the 2020 year with a small surplus.

2020 Revenue Sources (including previous year)



Key Stats:

Total 2020 Revenues: \$219,452

Down \$40k on previous year and \$80k on budget

Total 2020 Expenses: \$197,349

Down \$56k on previous year and \$80k on budget

\$18,000 Remains In Savings

10k of which is ring-fenced in relation to Emerald Forest Conservancy

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



"I really enjoy my daughter learning to 'farm'. From seed to stomach she enjoys all of the work we do. I also really like the socialization that being part of the growing community brings forth."

"The opportunity to grow your own food and know exactly how it has been produced! Everything tastes so much better when it is freshly harvested ..."

"I loved growing my own veggies, and the surprise of seeing what would come up. My favourite part was the smell of my tomato plants!"

"Good clean fun"



"I am so grateful to have the enthusiasm and expertise of AWARE staff in my classroom. As keen environmentalists already, I am delighted to see my students asking questions and working hard to make positive change in our community."

"The Zero Waste AWARE workshops are an activity the class looks forward to each year. They come away from the workshop filled with many valuable questions and also a revived determination to make changes in their own lives."

"My class is much better at knowing how to sort their recycling and compost."



"I really enjoyed seeing and hearing you share your wealth of knowledge. Thank you so much for your enthusiasm and contributions to conservation science. I really enjoyed this webinar. Very well organized and facilitated."

"Thank you for the wonderful webinar. Lots of great information! Time well spent!"

"Thank you so much for bringing this webinar to life. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to all the panelists and being able to interact by doing the polls. The information about the grizzly bears was very informative."



"Bike to school week motivated students to surpass themselves. They also gave each other challenges and I saw students who hardly rode their bikes wanting to participate!"

"Thanks for organizing the go by bike in Whistler. It finally got me commuting to WHCC a couple of days."

LOOKING AHEAD

AWARE HAS A NEW 2021-23 STRATEGIC PLAN

In Fall 2020, the AWARE Board proceeded with plans to update AWARE's Strategic Plan.

Why was this important? Because climate change isn't stopping for a global pandemic. Because COVID is changing the way people use the landscape and impacting biodiversity. And because with a long-standing nature-based tourism economy, there are vital conversations needed if Whistler is to stand a chance at building back to be a stronger, more resilient community.

For more detail on our goals and how we work towards them check out AWARE's new Strategic Plan at awarewhistler.org.

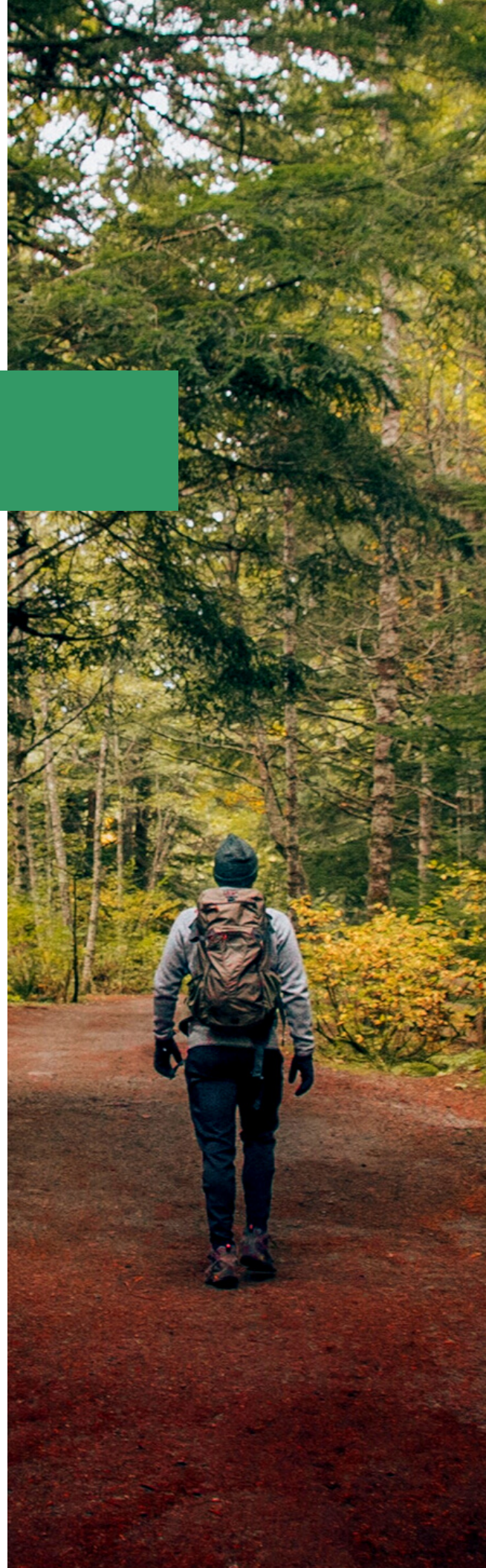
AWARE's programming and advocacy work will continue to centre around two high-level goals:

SAFEGUARDING HABITAT, BIODIVERSITY & WILDERNESS

SAFEGUARD HABITATS AND SPECIES
TO MAINTAIN CONNECTIVITY OF
ECOSYSTEMS, SUPPORTING
WILDLIFE AND HUMAN HEALTH.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT COMMUNITY

ENGAGE AND EMPOWER OUR COMMUNITY
TO MAKE SMART CHOICES, CONSUME
MINDFULLY AND CONSIDER IMPACTS ON
THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CLIMATE.



THANK YOU

Many have contributed to AWARE's work each year. It is a privilege to serve a community where people recognize the ability we each have to make a difference and what we can achieve together. Our profound thanks go to:

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Volunteers, donors, and members: Your engagement is the cornerstone to AWARE. We recognize your generosity and we thank you.

BUSINESSES & PARTNERS

The support and knowledge you have shared with us to help propel our collaborate efforts knows no bounds, and we are forever thankful.

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Endless gratitude to our funders and core partners, whose contributions have helped bring our programs and projects to life for the benefit of both people and nature.





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