



Miistakis  
Institute



MIISTAKIS INSTITUTE 2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

**INNOVATIVE RESEARCH.  
ENGAGED COMMUNITIES.  
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES.**





## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear friends of the Miistakis Institute,

Well 2020 was a year. This past year has tested Albertans and all Canadians alike through the economic downturn and pandemic. The economic pressures for individuals, companies, and not-for-profit organizations have been unlike anything we have seen in previous downturns.

While this has been a hard year for the Miistakis Institute, we have stayed the course and have had a very productive year. The resilience of the Miistakis Institute staff in dealing with lockdowns, policy changes, and a rapid shift in the ways they do their work to comply with pandemic restrictions has been nothing short of remarkable.

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### THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC, WE HAVE SEEN JUST HOW IMPORTANT OUR WILD AND NATURAL SPACES ARE.

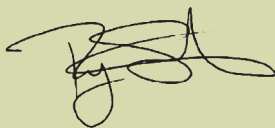
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We have seen more people get outdoors to enjoy our beautiful landscapes and increased recognition of their importance for our own health and well being, as well as increasing pressures on their use. While we should all have the capacity to enjoy these open spaces, we must not lose sight that with increased use, comes the need for increased management tools to ensure they are preserved for future generations. We have seen increased public awareness and desire to implement and effect change through nature-based solutions, and to meaningfully address climate change and its impacts.

As part of Miistakis's commitment to reconciliation and decolonization the staff and Board of Directors participated in Indigenous awareness training this year. This training was eye opening and informative. While it made us ask some difficult questions, it has created a foundation for continuous learning on the path towards reconciliation. This training has reinforced a commitment at the Miistakis Institute to listen and learn, and to reflect on how we as an organization can collaborate with, and support, Indigenous-led conservation efforts.

Despite these difficult times, as we look across our past and current projects and partnerships, we are optimistic. The Miistakis Institute is thankful for the generous support it receives from our donors, volunteers, and partners. So, we thank you for being part of our successes. As pandemic restrictions begin to ease, we genuinely look forward to actively engaging with you all on new citizen science opportunities, on conservation policy planning and development, and to catalyze community conservation efforts!

With gratitude,



**Ryan Smith**  
Chair, Board of Directors



#### WOODFROG

The wood frog can reach about six to eight cm in length, and ranges in colour from tan, to reddish or dark brown. It has a distinctive dark brown "mask" across its eyes. To keep from freezing in winter, they circulate glucose in their blood which acts as a sugary antifreeze.

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**We all know this has been an exceptionally challenging year.** With some light at the end of the tunnel and the prospect of better days ahead I reflect on this past year with pride and gratitude. I am proud of our team and our resiliency to get us through this unprecedented time.

A focus on diversity, responsiveness and adaptability – learned from healthy ecosystems – has helped us tremendously over the past year. We have tried our best to remain connected to our partners, with countless Zoom meetings, adapted workshops and altered project plans. I am grateful for our staff and board, partners and funders who have supported us through this difficult time.

While we have all been stuck in our home offices Miistakis has been busy remotely addressing conservation issues across the land base.

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**THIS YEAR HAS BROUGHT A SHARPENED FOCUS TO THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR NATURAL LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GREEN SPACES – FOR THE WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES THEY AFFORD, AS A REFUGE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING SOLITUDE AND CLEAN AIR AND WATER, FOR RESILIENCY TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE INCLUDING FLOOD AND DROUGHT, FOR HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE, AND FOR PLACES TO MEET UP WITH OUR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES DURING THE PANDEMIC!**

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Over the past year, Miistakis has continued to work to find innovative and collaborative solutions to ensure our natural landscapes continue to provide these benefits we so dearly depend on.

In our annual report we have included a [map](#) that highlights our work over the past year – some place-based and some more broadly applicable conservation work that focuses on protecting our natural landscapes. Consistent to all of our work is our approach to conservation – we focus on real-world conservation issues decision makers are facing, we get input and buy in from decision makers at the start, we target gaps in knowledge, policy, engagement and technology, we focus on science-based solutions and we collaborate with invested stakeholders. These projects highlight our work over the past year that included 24 conservation research projects with 59 partners that span our 6 research thematic areas.

I would like to thank our staff and Board of Directors for their hard work and perseverance during this challenging year. I would also like to thank all you, our partners, our funders and supporters. I look forward to our face to face gatherings again soon.



**Danah Duke**  
Executive Director



### BEAVER

The largest rodent in North America, an adult beaver can weigh up to 32 kg and measure up to 1.3 m long including its tail. To waterproof themselves they rub castor oil, produced from a gland near their tail, through their fur using their split toenail (grooming claw).





## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

**The Miistakis Institute** envisions a world where communities have genuine access to the science and research they need to make choices that promote healthy landscapes.

The Miistakis Institute brings people and ideas together to promote healthy communities and landscapes.

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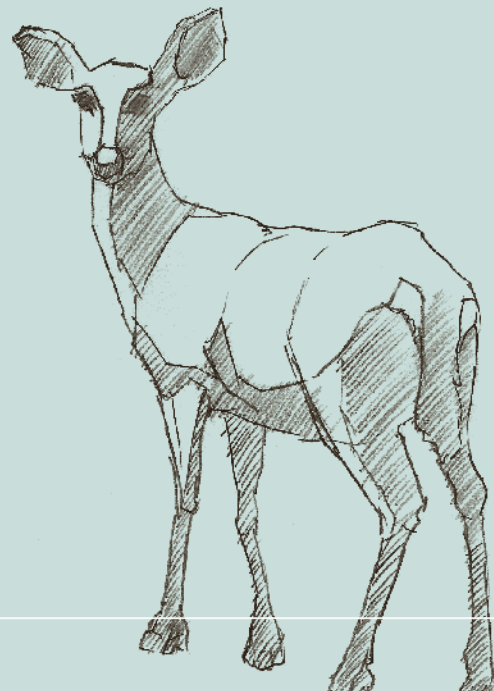
**WE STUDY THE LANDSCAPE, SO WE CAN HELP PEOPLE MAINTAIN IT;  
AND WE CELEBRATE INNOVATIVE RESEARCH BY MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE  
TO COMMUNITIES AND DECISION-MAKERS. OUR PARTNERS ARE LEADING-EDGE  
SCIENTISTS, LIKE-MINDED ORGANIZATIONS, INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT  
AGENCIES AND INSPIRING COMMUNITY LEADERS .**

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MRU prides itself with supporting research and scholarship that addresses problems of concern in local and regional communities and promotes research with and not simply in these communities. The Miistakis Institute has been conducting environmentally-focused community engaged research for over 24 years.

In its early years Miistakis developed a specialized expertise in GIS data and transboundary spatial analysis, and this skill set remains. In addition to focusing on spatial analysis, Miistakis has expanded our breadth of research expertise to include research design, web-based mapping, fiscal analysis, land stewardship, policy research and analysis, community engagement, communications and wildlife ecology. This has been a result of recognizing specific environmental research data gaps and our research focus now encompasses the following thematic areas:

- [Transportation ecology](#)
- [Private land conservation](#)
- [Citizen Science for Conservation](#)
- [Human Wildlife Coexistence](#)
- [Municipalities and Conservation](#)
- [Conservation Planning and Policy](#)



### **WHITE-TAILED DEER**

The white-tailed deer is the most widely distributed and the most numerous of all North America's large animals. It is recognizable by its habit of flourishing its tail over its back, revealing a stark white underside.



## MIISTAKIS AT MRU

The Miistakis Institute holds a formal affiliation with Mount Royal University. The objective of the affiliation is to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between the Institute and Institute researchers and the University and University researchers in mutually beneficial activities, including, but not limited to applied environmental research, spatial and environmental analysis, environmental management, related social-ecological practice and analysis.

As MRU's only affiliated research institute, the Miistakis Institute plays a unique role at Mount Royal University. We are an independent not-for-profit charitable organization that works closely with MRU staff and undergraduate students to find innovative solutions to complex environmental challenges, and apply those in real-world efforts to advance conservation and environmental outcomes.

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**MRU PRIDES ITSELF WITH SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP THAT ADDRESSES PROBLEMS OF CONCERN IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES AND PROMOTES RESEARCH WITH AND NOT SIMPLY IN THESE COMMUNITIES.**

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Miistakis takes an interdisciplinary approach to all of our research and we are able to enhance student exposure to interdisciplinary research through student internships, student mentorship and student volunteer opportunities. We are able to provide integrated work learning experiences by providing employment opportunities, both short and longer term, for students across campus. Most directly, Miistakis provides opportunities for students to enrich their academic experience through participation in applied research projects. While adapting to offering remote opportunities to students, this year we were able to offer employment positions to 5 MRU students.



### COYOTE

Coyotes are the epitome of a reliable "eco-thermometer" for any community where they inhabit. Known as North America's song dog, their brilliant vocalizations have graced ancient lands since the Pleistocene era.



Advanced **amphibian conservation** in the City of Calgary and demonstrated the **value of citizen science**.



Informed **urban biodiversity planning** and public understanding of **human wildlife coexistence**.



Supported Alberta municipalities in their environment and conservation work by **providing access to well-researched resources**. (THROUGHOUT ALBERTA)



Supported the maintenance of **municipal natural infrastructure systems**. (THROUGHOUT ALBERTA)



Supported the **private land conservation community** by designing a database to track privately conserved land in Alberta.



Demonstrated the **contribution of private land conservation to support natural landscapes**.

Informed **municipal road mitigation beneficial management practices** for wildlife.

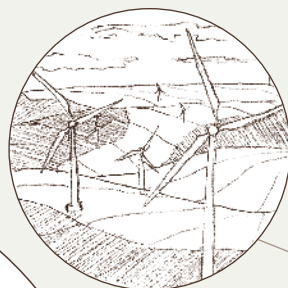


Enhanced students' exposure to **interdisciplinary conservation research** through student internships, student volunteer opportunities, class lectures and case studies.

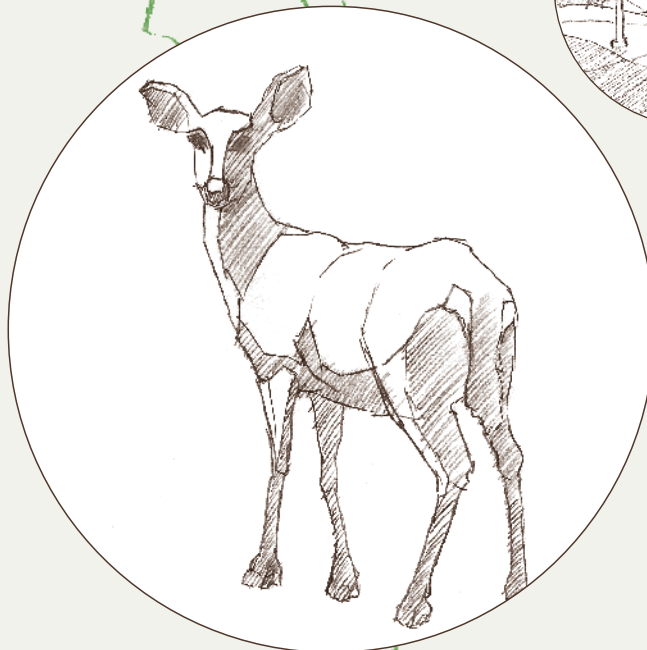


Enhanced **watershed resiliency** through improved **coexistence with beavers**.

Identified **renewable energy zones** for rural Alberta municipalities in consideration of high valued ecological, agricultural and cultural lands.



Improved cost effectiveness consideration for **highway mitigation for wildlife**.

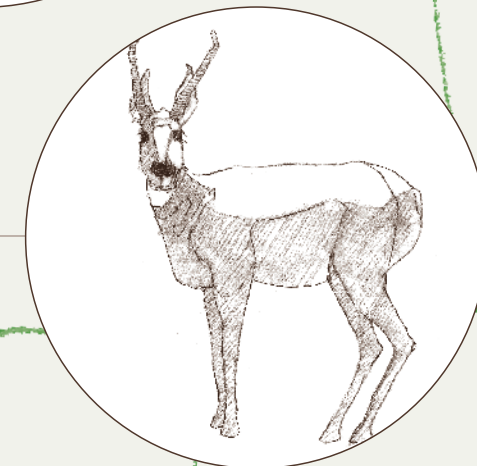


Elevated **ecological connectivity** in rural municipal planning.

EDMONTON

CALGARY

HIGHWAY 3 MEDICINE HAT



Identified priority locations for **highway mitigation to support pronghorn migration**.





## INDIGENOUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Miistakis is a Siksikaitsitapi word that translates to ‘backbone of the world’.**

Piikani legend holds that Napi (Old Man) looked down upon a world of water from Nínaiistáko (near the Alberta/ Montana border). He created the prairie first, followed by a mountain backbone (miistakis) as places for his animals to dwell.

When Miistakis was first formed in 1997, the work of the institute focused on the Crown of the Continent ecosystem. The Crown of the Continent is a geographical area centered on the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and stretches along the axis of the Rocky Mountains spanning southwest Alberta, southeast British Columbia and northern Montana.

Miistakis is committed to doing its part to address the legacy of broken promise and rebuild the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

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**MIISTAKIS HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE RECONCILIATION OF  
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE  
IN CANADA BY SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND PAST WRONGS AND  
CO-CREATE NEW PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION.**

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Reconciliation requires a consideration and integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, that includes and respects Indigenous communities, rights, and knowledge leading to better scientific and community outcomes.

Miistakis’s office is located in the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which includes the Niitsitapi (Siksika Nation, Piikani Nation, Kainai Nation), the Tsuut’ina Nation, the Îyârhe Nakoda (Bears paw First Nation, Chiniki First Nation, Wesley First Nation) and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. Our conservation work today takes place on many different traditional Indigenous territories. We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.



### **SAOKIAWAKAASI (PRONGHORN)**

Saokiwakaasi is the last wide-ranging native mammal on the North American prairies and is found nowhere else in the world. In Canada, it lives on the western mixed- and short-grass prairies.





## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

# Statement of Financial Position

*As at March 31, 2021*

	2021	2020
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash	\$ 278,988	\$ 395,768
Accounts receivable	54,246	93,252
Accrued project receivables	69,774	16,393
Goods and services tax recoverable	1,605	4,126
Prepaid expenses	4,375	6,584
	408,988	516,123
Investments (Note 2)	420,607	364,063
Equipment (Note 3)	17,497	12,428
	\$ 847,092	\$ 892,614
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 22,694	\$ 26,072
Wages payable	26,817	23,273
Deferred contributions related to operations (Note 4)	236,300	336,006
	285,811	385,351
Deferred contribution related to equipment (Note 6)	692	924
	286,503	386,275
<b>Net assets</b>		
Invested in equipment	16,805	11,504
Internally restricted (Note 6)	380,000	380,000
Unrestricted	163,784	114,835
	560,589	506,339
	\$ 847,092	\$ 892,614

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

# Statement of Operations

*For the Year Ended March 31, 2021*

	2021	2020
<b>Revenue</b>		
Foundation and other grants	\$ 407,749	\$ 433,070
Government grants	378,261	391,064
Services	39,118	127,594
Donations	32,677	39,909
Temporary wage subsidy (Note 10)	8,250	-
Interest and other income	402	6,199
	<b>\$ 866,457</b>	<b>\$ 997,836</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Wages and benefits	\$ 606,888	\$ 575,398
Subcontract	184,217	269,179
Professional fees	37,585	23,376
Supplies	10,189	16,928
Insurance	6,879	6,712
Internet and web domain	6,277	5,965
Software	5,803	2,744
Travel	5,573	26,696
Amortization	5,021	3,920
Telephone and utilities	3,653	2,983
Advertising and promotion	991	57
Training	863	3,641
Workshop	467	17,501
Interest and bank charges	203	128
Endowment (Note 8)	-	27,840
	<b>\$ 874,609</b>	<b>\$ 983,068</b>
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures before undernoted items	\$ (8,152)	\$ 14,768
<b>Other income (expense)</b>		
Unrealized gain (loss) on investment	41,937	(24,052)
Gain on investments	12,271	5,160
Dividend income	8,194	4,885
	<b>\$ 62,402</b>	<b>\$ (14,007)</b>
Excess of revenue over expenditures for the year	<b>\$ 54,250</b>	<b>\$ 761</b>

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

# Statement of Changes in Net Assets

For the Year Ended March 31, 2021

	Invested in equipment	Internally restricted	Unrestricted	Total 2021	Total 2020
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 11,504	\$ 380,000	\$ 114,835	\$ 506,339	\$ 505,578
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures for the year	(4,789)	-	59,039	54,250	761
Purchase of equipment	10,090	-	(10,090)	-	-
<b>Balance, end of year</b>	<b>\$ 16,805</b>	<b>\$ 380,000</b>	<b>\$ 163,784</b>	<b>\$ 560,589</b>	<b>\$ 506,339</b>



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