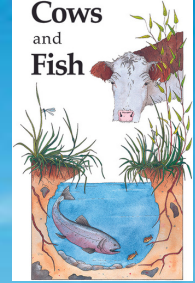


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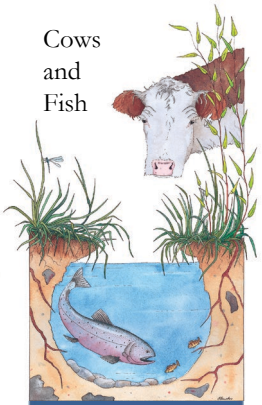
# THE COWS AND FISH NEWSLETTER

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# Caring for the Green Zone

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## Cows and Fish

### Why Develop Winter Watering Systems For Your Livestock?

By Norine Ambrose, Executive Director

Clearly livestock need water to survive, and enough good water, helps them thrive. Yes, livestock may be able to get this in frozen form: there are situations where they can survive or even thrive on snow, but it needs to be consistently available and of suitable type, which isn't always the case. Chopping a hole for water in a surface waterbody has its downside too.

Whether cow-powered frost free nose pumps, electronic eye activated drain-back systems on dugout wet wells, or the standard yellow 2 basin drinking box in many farm yards and corrals, there are more and more options for winter watering use [[Winter watering - agriculture.canada.ca](http://Winter%20watering%20-%20agriculture.canada.ca)].



*Setting up winter watering systems can allow use of areas normally unusable because of lack of water in winter, including swath grazing areas*

#### Top Reasons to Develop a Winter Watering System

##### Improve Livestock Distribution

Developing and providing water in winter helps you distribute or redistribute livestock away from sensitive or preferred areas and to prevent over use. This can improve riparian health as well as improve use of pasture, or stockpiled feeds (eg. swath or bale grazing) by influencing where your livestock spend their time, loafing, or eating

##### Improve Water Quality

This benefits livestock, as well as everyone else downstream or in the same watershed (not to mention fish living in the water)

##### Save Money

Clean and consistent water has a lot of economic benefits - healthier cattle gain more weight and have fewer vet bills. Avoiding corral cleaning and letting the livestock put the nutrients out on the land makes use of a great nutrient resource and saves money too

##### Access New Areas

New winter watering options often allows use of areas you otherwise couldn't use in winter. This might open up areas of use for feed (or feeding), shelter, or just more space for herd health reasons

##### Healthier Land and Water

Well managed water sources usually mean healthier riparian areas and more biological diversity, creating more stable forage production, and an improved ability to rebound from droughts and floods

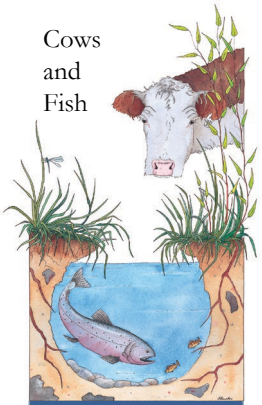
##### Safety and Animal Welfare

We often don't think about safety, but human and livestock safety is important for everyone's welfare. Providing regular, accessible water and eliminating drowning risk from breaking through ice-covered dugouts or other waterbodies saves a lot of worry in trying to rescue animals, as well as money lost when animals drown, or injuries sustained trying to pull them out of icy water



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## Cows and Fish

Finding ways to meet the challenges of having enough power away from yard sites, to pump water and keep it from freezing can be tricky—where solar powered troughs might have enough energy in summer, short, low sun days and snowfall may require increasing battery storage and frequent clearing of snow-covered panels. Other issues, like getting water to the trough, might mean deep trenching or use of wet wells, next to dugouts, to create a large enough vertical culvert reservoir to pump from. More often than not, winter watering systems are not portable because of these needs, but if you have the ability to put in a portable system, even for the shoulder seasons, it certainly gives a lot more flexibility, and more manufacturers are creating improved insulation in the portable systems to meet this need.

Aside from the logistical and practical issues, the other big issue is cost. Wintering systems should definitely be considered an investment – in herd health, safety and sustainability of an operation. While government programs vary, the Alberta Agriculture's Water Program [[Water \(alberta.ca\)](https://water.alberta.ca)] is still accepting applications for cost-share funding until March 31, 2023. In addition to reaching out to Cows and Fish, consider contacting your local county or other groups supporting stewardship, because improving water quality through riparian grazing management often includes livestock watering systems and cost-share programs are out there.

Check out more resources by other experts on cost calculations and the benefit of watering systems on the [Beef Cattle Research Council website](https://beefcattle.ca).

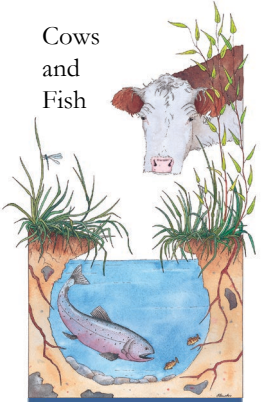
More details on different kinds of livestock watering systems can be found here: [Winter water systems for cattle - Canadian Cattlemen](#).



*Those lucky enough to have free flowing springs may have enough flow to tap them into troughs, with extra water returning to the natural flow route (be sure to get appropriate Water Act approval before developing any water source).*



*Watering bowls with motion sensors can be powered in various ways, such as solar and wind in this example.*



## Cows and Fish 30th Anniversary Speech

Written by Kerri O'Shaughnessy and Kelsey Spicer-Rowe

*Celebrating three decades of riparian stewardship*

On November 25, 2022 we celebrated thirty years of riparian stewardship with many of our closest friends, family, partners and land stewards at the Cattail Crossing Golf and Winter Club near Edmonton. Featured below is a speech written by Riparian Specialists Kerri O'Shaughnessy, who is celebrating 24 years with Cows and Fish, and Kelsey Spicer-Rowe who has been with us for nearly 23 years.

**Kerri:** "Pearls of wisdom have punctuated our careers with Cows and Fish. These pearls have been cultivated in conversations at kitchen tables with landowners; fostered streamside while assessing riparian health; discussed on long road trips with colleagues, as well as with partners in community halls and board rooms around the province...in Fort Vermilion and Manyberries, Lloydminster and Peers; along the Oldman River and the Peace River; around that unnamed wetland in Red Deer County and by that unnamed tributary of Dogpound Creek near Cremona; oh and there was that pothole in the Hand Hills and that wet meadow deep in the foothills along that rutted up road that we had to hike in on..."

**Kelsey:** "We don't have all night, we need to keep this moving"

**Kerri:** "Oh right, over to you!"

**Kelsey:** "In addition to the pearls of wisdom hard earned and learned by the people of Cows and Fish, these insights have also been imparted naturally as lessons from the lands we have been invited to explore. As we parkour over logs, duck under willows and wade into streams, the flow of the river, a change in the plant community, the shadow of a beaver's influence and the flicker of fish in the stream leave an imprint. All of these pearls, those learned from partners and supporters and riparian-loving landowners, and those learned from the land, are the essence of Cows and Fish. A partnership, a collective, a blending of ecology and wisdom."

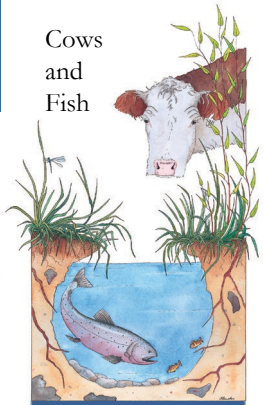


*Kelsey Spicer-Rowe & Kerri O'Shaughnessy giving their speech at the Cows & Fish 30th Anniversary Gala*



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Cows and Fish



Co-founder of Cows & Fish, Lorne Fitch, featured in the centre of this picture in a blue shirt, smiles at a joke directed at him during the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala



Executive Director Norine Ambrose making a speech at the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala

**Kerri:** “Kelsey and I are sporting pearls tonight, just for the occasion! We can’t gift you all precious jewellery, but we can continue to give and receive pearls of wisdom like this one, from Tanaka Shozo, who is considered to be Japan’s first conservationist and was ahead of his time in his understanding of watersheds in the 1880’s:

*“The care of the rivers is not a question of rivers, but of the human heart”*

**Kerri:** “With that, a toast – to our enduring partners, supporters, members and landowners who continue to lead by example with heartfelt care for rivers and wetlands and neighbors; who exhibit ecological curiosity to advance the science of our understanding of natural systems; who have journeyed with us on this Cows and Fish adventure for 30 years so far and we hope will continue to do so for another 30 years (at least) as we add more precious gems to extend our string of pearls.”

**Kelsey:** “Some of these pearls have seemingly been created out of a grain of sand (or sediment) and are unique to the individual, while other pearls exist in concentric layers indicating a cooperative of both time and space have had influence on them. Kerri and I have had the privilege of time spent with Cows and Fish, and our partners, to acquire wisdom (with the help of many of you) and to share it. Like this little gem, “none of us is as smart as all of us.” Or, as Lorne would say, “This is a patient person’s business.”

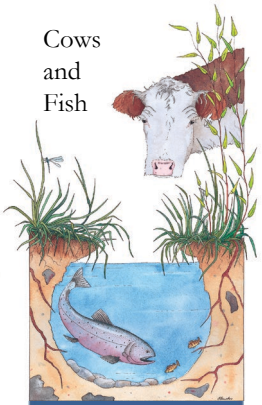
**Kelsey:** “The pearl, with meanings of purity, honesty, and wisdom, is the traditional 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary gift. How fitting, for an organization that has united a Cow and a Fish, *by the power vested in the riparian area*, and that is now marking it’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of establishment. But it’s not just Cows and Fish marking this milestone, our members, partners, supporters, and landowners we’ve worked with over these 30 years are celebrating it with us. Pearls are described as admirable, fine, rare and valuable – just like our partners!



Thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Cheers to 30 more years of Cows & Fish!

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Cows and Fish

## Cows and Fish at 30: Meet the Board

By Norine Ambrose, Executive Director & Kerri O'Shaughnessy, Riparian Specialist



*Cows and Fish co-founder and board member, Lorne Fitch (left), and rancher Quentin Stevick (right) along with staff, partners, and other board members attended a tour with ranchers, who were showcasing their stewardship projects*

In this, our 30<sup>th</sup> year, we are taking time in our newsletter to profile our members – those organizations and individuals that have ensured our success with pragmatic actions, shared interests, and strategic connections. In this issue, we are profiling the remainder of our current Board members: one of our long-standing partners who are somewhat newer members, the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF); our members at large that are independent; and our Government of Alberta members.

Municipal Agricultural Fieldmen (Ag Fieldmen) have been a keystone in Alberta's agriculture community since 1945. This long standing relationship with agriculture producers has helped the development and delivery of the Cows and Fish program since our early days. It was, and continues to be, Ag Fieldmen's connection to the people in their county, and their understanding of local

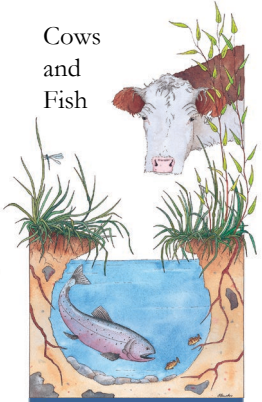
knowledge that presents a unique opportunity to bring the Cows and Fish program to the agricultural sector since Ag Fieldmen implement programs supporting priorities set by their Agricultural Service Boards, including using education and awareness related to weeds, soil and agricultural pests. Because of this, they share many common themes with Cows and Fish on agricultural stewardship, best practices and conservation; and they bring knowledge about regulations in these areas as well.





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## Cows and Fish

In addition to their strong community connections, members of the AAAF have also helped connect us to funding and additional local partners as well as help find producer champions that we can profile to demonstrate what is working or not working for them in riparian management. In 2018, the AAAF, the provincial Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, joined the board, with Derek Vance currently acting as their representative.

The Government of Alberta has been a long time supporter of Cows and Fish from the very beginning.

Our founders, Lorne Fitch and Barry Adams, were working for the province as a fisheries biologist and range management specialist when the idea of the Cows and Fish project (as it was referred to 30 years ago) was born. As the Cows and Fish concept grew from a project to a program, to a charitable society, key people in Alberta's government departments related to agriculture, rangelands and the environment have connected us with office-space, funding, and other partners who have helped make Cows and Fish what it is today. We are grateful for the in-kind and financial support we receive through numerous and diverse grants. Government of Alberta representatives on our Board, Craig DeMaere, Craig Johnson and Shelley Woods, are non-voting members that provide input, support and guidance, as do all of our Board members.

Independent members are individuals with an interest in our vision and mission, who bring a unique personal perspective to the Board. Often these individuals start as a representative from an organization and remain on after that role ends. Sometimes they are linked with the agriculture community through their own operations, while at other times they are people with a strong commitment to stewardship and creating healthy watersheds, with a community focus in mind. These independent members remind us that ultimately it's up to individuals to make informed



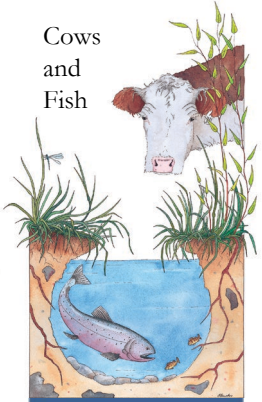
*Board member Craig DeMaere (right), who represents the Government of Alberta, speaking with rancher Glen Hall (left) during a tour in September*

decisions about what happens in our communities and landscape, and that our work is about fostering that stewardship. Currently, Peg Strankman, Lorne Fitch and Trish Tetz contribute their time and ideas as independent members. In 2021, a long-term independent member, Gordy Cunningham, stepped down after serving 13 years – we thank him and each of our independent members for volunteering their time.

Alberta

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Cows and Fish

## Riparian Fun Fact

By Tonya Lwiwski, Riparian Specialist

Ever wonder how some creeks and rivers are able to continuously run through the fall and winter months, even when the precipitation that falls is frozen? It's all about a giant "invisible" sponge! Can you guess where that sponge is? Healthy riparian areas are the sponge that can help store water in times of plenty, such as during a spring melt or rainfall during the summer months (Image A), which is then returned to the surface when there is less water available, during the winter, for example (Image C).

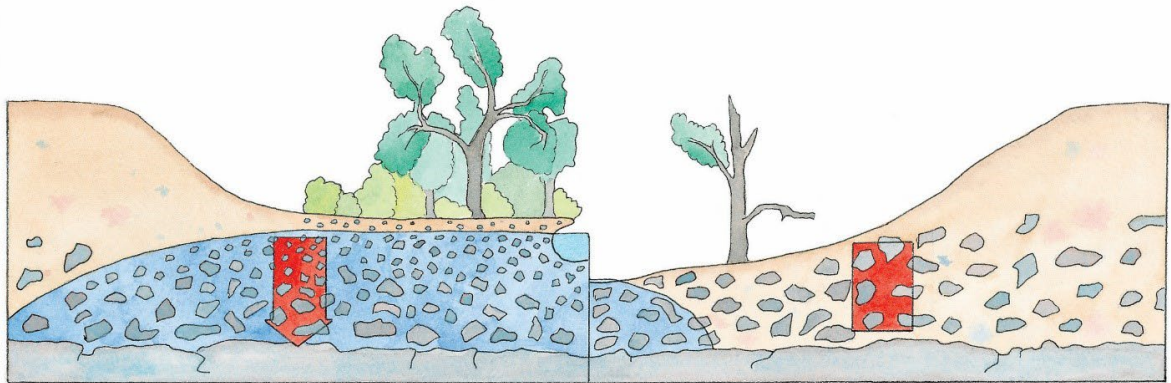


Image A

Image B

If a riparian area is unhealthy (e.g. compacted soils, or no vegetation to help slow water down), water is unable to be stored and flows quickly overland and subsequently downstream, leading to little water stored (image B) and overall lower (or no) flows during drier times (Image D). The sponge isn't really "invisible" but does go unnoticed, right under our feet!

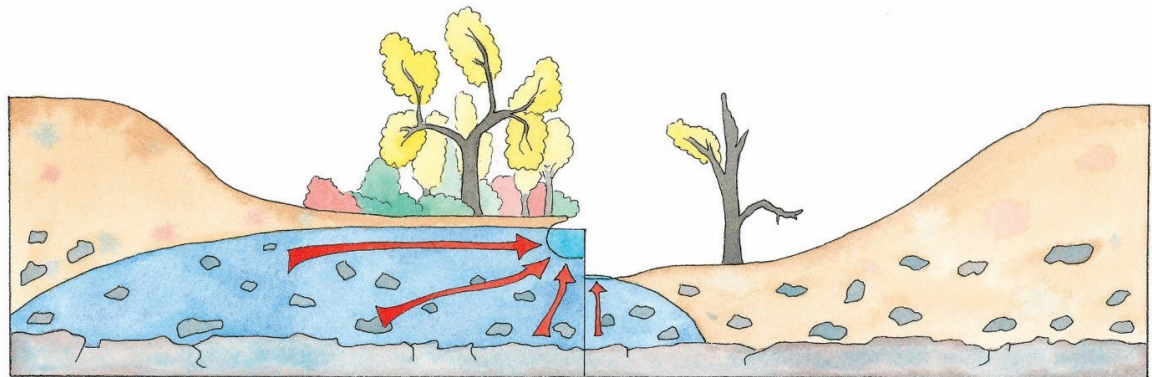
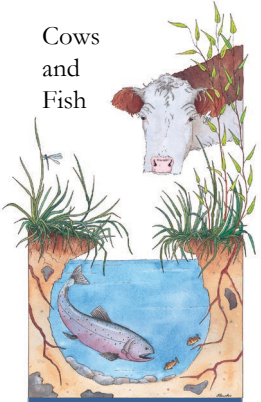


Image C

Image D





## Upcoming Events

### **2023 Ranching Opportunities Conference**

**Date:** February 9, 2023

**Time:** 10am - 3:30pm

**Location:** Olds College

**Description:** Ranching Opportunities is a conference designed for producers involved in or interested in the profession of managing livestock. [Register here](#)

### **Riparian Management Workshop**

**Date:** February 23, 2023

**Time:** 12pm - 4pm

**Location:** Darwell Centennial Hall, HWY 765 Darwell

**Description:** Join us for a workshop focusing on agricultural management strategies & tools for healthy riparian areas. [Register here](#)

### **Living with Beavers Workshop**

**Date:** March 18, 2023

**Time:** 3pm - 6pm

**Location:** Clearwater County

Save the date for the Living with Beavers Workshop in Clearwater County this March! Please email Riparian Specialist, Jennifer Caudron for more information: [jcaudron@cowsandfish.org](mailto:jcaudron@cowsandfish.org)

### **Working with the Land: Stewardship Workshops**

**Date:** February 8, 2023

**Time:** 6pm - 8pm

**Location:** High Prairie Legion, 4721 51 Avenue High Prairie

[Click here to RSVP](#)

**Date:** February 9, 2023

**Time:** 6pm - 8pm

**Location:** Smith Community Library, 1005 9 Street Smith

[Click here to RSVP](#)

### **The Original Grazing School for Women**

**Date:** March 17, 2023

**Location:** Flat Lake Hall, M.D. of Bonnyville

**Description:** The Original Grazing School for Women promotes sustainable agriculture, long-term livestock management strategies, environmental education and networking with like-minded women. [Learn more](#)

### **Alberta Range Stewardship Course**

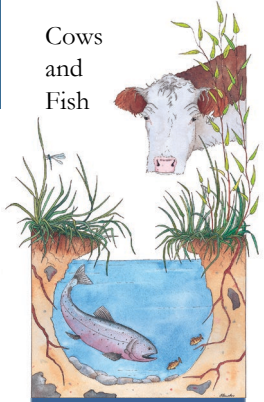
**Date:** July 5-6, 2023

**Location:** Cottonwood Ranch, Medicine Hat

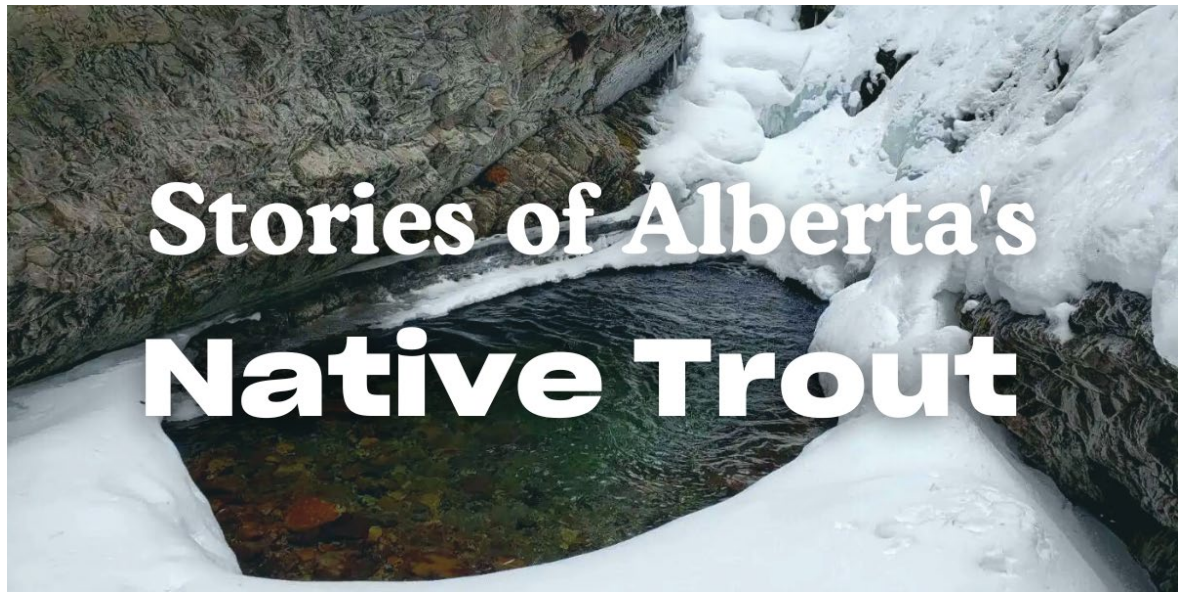
**Description:** Save the date! Course topics include hands on learning of range management, AUM and stocking rate calculations, range health assessments, and more. [Learn more](#)

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## Stories of Alberta's Native Trout

### Alberta Native Trout Collaborative

Cows and Fish is a member of the Alberta Native Trout Collaborative — a group of partner organizations working to advance native trout recovery in Alberta. [Click here](#) to read the latest blog on [albertanativetrout.com](http://albertanativetrout.com) called *What Happens to Trout in the Winter?* by Lesley Peterson from Trout Unlimited Canada. Missed the December article *Where Bison Meet Native Trout* by guest writers Elliot Fox from the Blackfoot Confederacy and Matt Coombs from Fintegrate? Not to worry, you can still read it by [clicking here](#).



Original development of our newsletter was graciously supported by **Alberta Ecotrust Foundation**, along with our many core [funders and supporters](#). As you may know, we rely upon grants to do much of the work we do, so if you want to suggest an opportunity, collaboration, or make a donation, please do!

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## Cows and Fish

### Have you worked with Cows & Fish in the past?

- Have you wondered how your riparian area scores now?
- Wanted to have an extension event in your local community?
- Have a riparian management story to share?

To increase the broader community's riparian awareness and expertise, we will deliver extension events with local partners, bringing together neighbours and sharing successes. If you are a landowner we worked with in the past, and want to reconnect with us, give us a call or email.

### We love hearing from you!

Please contact Norine Ambrose [nambrose@cowsandfish.org](mailto:nambrose@cowsandfish.org) or any Riparian Specialist, to follow up on any items in this newsletter. For full contact information, visit our website at: <https://cowsandfish.org/contact-us/>

### Cows and Fish

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Lethbridge, AB, T1J 2J8  
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A special thank you to our partners