

2005 Final Report

Contract #: SC-340687-010

Dept. Code: 5110

Project #: 340687

Project Name: Bear Aware Rossland

For

**The British Columbia Conservation
Foundation**

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Background

The Rossland Bear Aware program has been running since 1999 after instigation by myself (Ann Quarterman), the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) and the City of Rossland. The City of Rossland has always supported the Bear Aware program in concept, with a representative on council and with grants of varying sizes throughout the years. BCCF recognized Rossland as a target community at the start up of programs in the West Kootenays and continues to support the community. I have been involved with the program throughout its duration, as a paid educator, volunteer and founding person. I strive to keep the program vibrant, relevant, and forward moving. Joanne Siderius, PhD., has been involved with the Rossland program since 2001. She has kept the program up to date with funding possibilities and has worked as an educator, supervisor and mentor. Together Joanne and I give the program a balance of scientific background, local knowledge, respect, support and consistency.

Fundraising

In 2005 matching funds of \$5,000.00 were obtained from the City of Rossland. Other fundraising activities included the selling of Bear Aware t-shirts, bracelets and playing cards. This retail venture continues through the local toy store, Jelly Bean Junction. In addition, we do special sales at all public displays.

Volunteer Management

Volunteers from past years were contacted and given the opportunity to continue supporting Rossland Bear Aware. As well, meetings were held to recruit new volunteers. Activities were matched to the volunteer's interests and strengths. One volunteer in particular, Susan Wrigley, has become a valuable asset to the Rossland Bear Aware Program. In conjunction with myself, Joanne Siderius and Gareth Cryer she developed a website, www.rosslandbearaware.org. With my assistance she intends to further use her skills to help update the display board. She donated her time to attend the Bear Smart Communities Workshop in Revelstoke with myself. Sue will be a great resource for the program. It is my intention to ask her to sit on our Bear Aware/Smart Committee. A great advocate for our program is Liz Arsenault, owner of Jelly Bean Junction, the local toy store. She supports the program by selling merchandise for us and as a commercial

artist she is developing display artwork for us. My goal is to have in place as the program “Champion” as she is well known, respected, liked and approachable in the community of Rossland.

Next year plans are being formulated to approach the Rossland Secondary School to have 2-4 students do their community and work experience hours with Bear Aware. This program will allow a full fruit tree survey to be completed as well as a resident survey of the program and they will help update and further development the Bear Hazard Management Plan.

Educational Material

A flat screen LCD television and DVD player were added to our educational material this year. This allows the playing of various educational DVDs at display days and in presentations. This educational resource often draws people to the display or keeps them there longer as they become interested in the program that is running. A goal still being implemented is to have the unit accessible to everyone in Rossland so they can view the DVDs anytime. A suitable location is still being scouted.

In addition, new photos and educational material has been added to our display unit and our presentation resources. These items include game sheets, games, information sheets, and series of photos that capture people’s attention.

Program Delivery Specialist Hiring Process

The hiring process of the Program Delivery Specialist was done in a very short time frame of a few days. Using contacts within the community a call for interested applicants’ resume was put forth. Of the resumes received three candidates were interviewed. Joanne Siderius and myself carried out the interviews using the questions from the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) so that all candidates were asked the same questions. Two candidates were both very qualified and after much careful deliberation Gareth Cryer was the successful candidate. He has proved to be a great worker and lead the program very well over his six month contract. His infusion of energy and creativity was an asset to the program and he led many initiatives and programs. (His report is attached).

Allowing the hiring process to be conducted on the local level is definitely an asset to the program. Having local knowledge in terms of potential candidates and what a particular community program needs in its program delivery specialist makes for efficient and successful search and hiring process.

I strongly recommend that in any community where there is a Bear Aware program in place and/or a Bear Aware Committee the search should be conducted locally. The position should also be changed to a 12 month part time contract. This will allow for a more effective, efficient, consistent and sustainable program. The hours can be tailored to the needs of each community. For example in Rossland 100 hours/month in the

months of May, June, September, October, when bear activity is high and residents are around, 60 hours/month in July and August, when residents are often away, 50 hours in April to get the program rolling as bears are coming out of hibernation, 30 hours/month from November to end of March to work on updating displays, educational materials, presentations and to fundraise so that the program can be sustainable. This would keep the program at the same staffing level of 780 hours.

Public Education

Many public education events and presentations were made. These have been outlined in Gareth Cryer's final report (attached). In addition, a display and fundraiser day was held on December 3rd at Rossland's Rekindle the Spirit of Christmas celebration. A second presentation of the year was made, by request of staff, at the daycare facility in town. This facility has been an advocate for teaching the young residents of town about bears and bear attractants and they reinforce the presentations made by Bear Aware throughout the year.

A key area this year and in years to come is the new developments being built in Rossland. Of four bears killed this season, three were killed in the new development area at Red Mountain. Education of contractors and developers is being undertaken. Waste management approaches are being discussed with developers and the city to minimize the impact these developments have on bears and their habitat. This work will continue and should be a key focus area for the next several years. These developments attract a high proportion of out of town owners who will need to be educated on living in Bear Country, as well as, many short term renters who will need to be advised as how to manage bear attractants during their stay.

Conclusions

Having a consistent person at the helm of the program has kept the program alive in this small community. At the same time, it has been valuable to allow new blood into the program via the Program Delivery Specialist to infuse the program with different ideas, approaches and strengths.

After seven years the program is still very much supported in the community. Progress towards goals has taken longer than originally thought especially in the area of municipal bylaws and amendments to the Official Community Plan. Bearproof garbage cans have finally become a reality in Rossland after six years of effort. The Rossland program shows that for a community to become and remain Bear Aware it is necessary to continue the program over many years and approach the programs' goals from as many angles as possible. Good working relationships with City staff and Waste management contractors is also key. Work with City Councillors must be ongoing and means renewing the effort every time a new council is elected. City Councils face a multitude of requests for funding and resources and Bear Aware must ensure councillors understand the program and its benefits for the community. Volunteers will come and go over this kind of

timeframe and so the new volunteer recruits must be sought every year. Amazingly, however, we do have a few volunteers in this program that have helped for over 5 years!

Consistency, longevity and being community driven are key ingredients in a continuing and successful Bear Aware program for any community. The table from the Wildlife Complaint Line shows how Rossland bear attractants have been reduced over the last three years as complaints have dwindled. This shows the effectiveness of the program more accurately than bears killed in the area.

Recommendations

1. Make the BCCC position year round with varying hours per month depending on the needs of each individual community. This will allow for a more effective, efficient, consistent and sustainable program.
2. Having one or more people in the community that stay with the program over the years is key to keep the program going within a community. They know the needs of the community on a grass roots level and can help direct the program and any hired staff. They can serve to hire coordinators (program delivery specialists or other positions) as funds become available ensuring an effective, efficient hiring process.
3. Continue the matching funds program as it creates a higher motivation level for local government to contribute funds.
4. Merge Bear Aware and Bear Smart under one umbrella to facilitate implementation of both programs.
5. Develop new educational material for all programs to use that are different from the now standard stickers, magnets, bumper stickers and posters. This will inject new vitality and interest into the programs at the local level.
6. Utilize students to undertake a fruit tree inventory of the town, a resident survey, and to help with the management conflict plan.
7. Create a phone line at City Hall for a Bear Aware hotline for questions, queries and bear sightings.