

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Princeton, British Columbia

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Ministry of
Environment and
Climate Change Strategy



Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC Princeton Program reached many in the community through the town newsletter, articles in the newspaper, community events, kids programs, door-to-door canvassing, social media and the BC Goes Wild Weekend. It always holds a warm place in my heart when the kids ask me to come back again. A newly certified Junior Ranger asked me if he could have a uniform too. A teacher from one of my Junior Ranger presentations said she was so impressed she was going to recommend it to everyone. A new family in Princeton from Panama that had never experienced deer, bears or cougars in their yard before were put at ease with advice about removing attractants and wildlife safety. A retired couple new to Princeton was happy to learn it was not a good idea to put your garbage out the night before. It is in these venues and conversations that a new way of living, a WildSafeBC way, is being learned through consistent messaging and exposure provided by myself as Princeton's WildSafeBC Community Coordinator. Although there are still more venues and conversations to be had, many in our town have learned how to keep the wildlife wild and our community safe.



Figure 1. Some of WildSafeBC's Community Coordinators from around British Columbia. From left to right: Carolyn Blank, Jen Callaghan, Johanne Lamoureux and Caitlyn Mellor.

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) gave a total of 8 presentations in the Princeton Community to over 295 participants including:

- John Allison Elementary
- Summer Fun kids day camp
- Cubs & Scouts

Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

Door-to-door canvassing was well received and reached 684 people. The WCC approached it by speaking to recent animal activity and letting people know it was a good idea to look outside before they go out or let their pets out. The WCC also discussed attractants such as garbage, fruit and berries, birdseed and pet food that draw wildlife into our community.

Public Displays and Events

The WCC attended every major public event in Princeton such as the summer markets (fig. 2), Canada Day, Princeton Traditional Music Festival (fig. 3), RCMP Musical Ride and Fall Fair.



Figure 2. WildSafeBC Coordinator at the summer market.



Figure 3. WildSafeBC display at the Princeton Traditional Music Festival.

The WCC reached 1114 people and enjoyed speaking with current and new residents of Princeton and it was a wonderful opportunity to explain the WildSafeBC program. Conversations focused on the mandate of WSBC and its goal of reducing human-wildlife conflicts. It was also a good opportunity to learn about current wildlife activity in town and give advice to new residents who have never had wildlife in their backyards before.

Social Media and Press

Princeton's local newspaper, The Similkameen Spotlight, printed many of the articles the WCC wrote in the "to the editor" section. Town hall mails out a couple of info newsletters a year and a leisure guide and included WildSafeBC advice and images. Social media such as Facebook was relatively quiet until recently. The increase sightings and conflicts with black bears were the topics of many online discussions and the WCC directed people towards solutions and advice provided on the Princeton WildSafeBC Facebook page.

Bear in Area Signs

When black bear activity began to pick up in Princeton, the WCC put up all three of the WSBC "Bear in Area" signs in locations with multiple reports on WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) (fig.4). Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service's RAPP line are uploaded daily to WARP and are available to the public on WSBC's website. After being up for five days, the WCC would move the signs to keep the message fresh. Unfortunately, it appears two of the three signs were stolen.

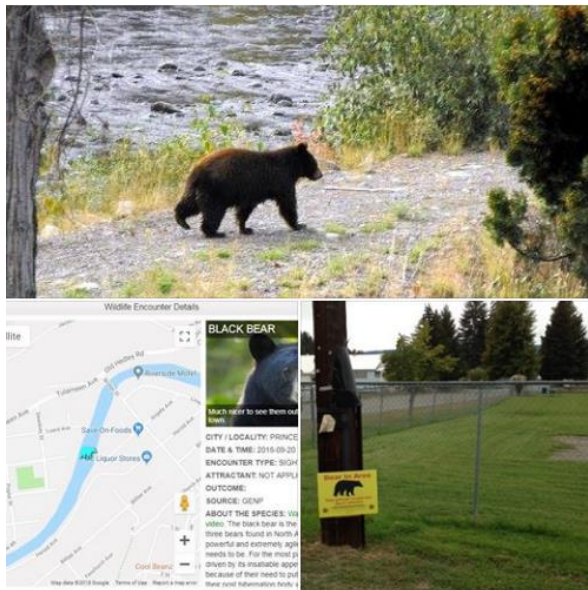


Figure 3. "Bear in Area" sign and a screenshot of the WARP report.

Partnerships

The WCC made connections with our bylaw officer Stephanie Palmer (fig. 5), Town Councillors Doug Pateman and Rosemary Doughty, and the Mayor of Princeton, Frank Armitage Mayor. The WCC also worked with the Recreation Coordinator for Princeton Nadine McEwen and the Conservation Officer Tyler Kerr. Other connections included Andrew Walker a biologist from the Province of BC, Vermillion Forks Field Naturalists (VFFN), Princeton Garden Club, Royal Canadian Legion #56, Visitors Centre, Princeton and District Chamber of Commerce, Cubs and Scouts of Princeton and Lisa from the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society.



Figure 4. The WCC for Princeton with the local bylaw officer Stephanie Palmer.

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

In speaking with the community the WCC was able to help exchange names and numbers of people who had fruit on their trees that they didn't want and people who were interested in picking free fruit. While doing door-to-door the WCC answered questions and recommended the removal of fruit and other attractants that were not being harvested.

Challenges for the 2018 Season

Challenges for the 2018 season involved bears, cougars and coyotes being discussed on Facebook and not necessarily being reported to the Conservation Service.

It is a challenge to help people understand the importance of removing attractants around their homes when many in the community enjoy seeing the deer. With the arrival of bears in the fall, more people started to understand that these same human foods were also leading to human-bear conflicts.

There was a lack of interest from schools when there were first shown the Junior Ranger Program. However, after presenting to the two classes the WCC works with regularly, the program became highly recommended and the WCC has received more requests for the presentation.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

Now that the community has heard of the great presentations that WildSafeBC Princeton offers, the WCC believes there will be more demand for them in the schools next year.

When the WCC started engaging in conversations in our local Facebook pages, she was able to connect with a new group of people, answer their questions and direct them to the Princeton WildSafeBC Facebook page. As well, she worked on increasing acceptance of using the RAPP line for reports of dangerous wildlife (bears, wolves, cougars and coyotes) in urban areas or in conflict. Next year it may be a good idea to spend some time commenting on local wildlife issues online earlier in the contract to generate more interest in the online platform.

Princeton is in need of some bylaws to encourage residents to secure their garbage inside and to pick their fruit and berries. The WCC had conversations with other Community Coordinators that provided examples for Princeton that could be tailored to the community and implemented.

Princeton would benefit from a welcome package for new homeowners that would help educate people who have little experience of living in bear country.

An idea to pursue in 2019 is the creation of a check list of attractants to remove from residential yards that could be included in the tax forms mailed out to every resident.

The WCC believes a bear spray demonstration would be well received.

Acknowledgements

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