

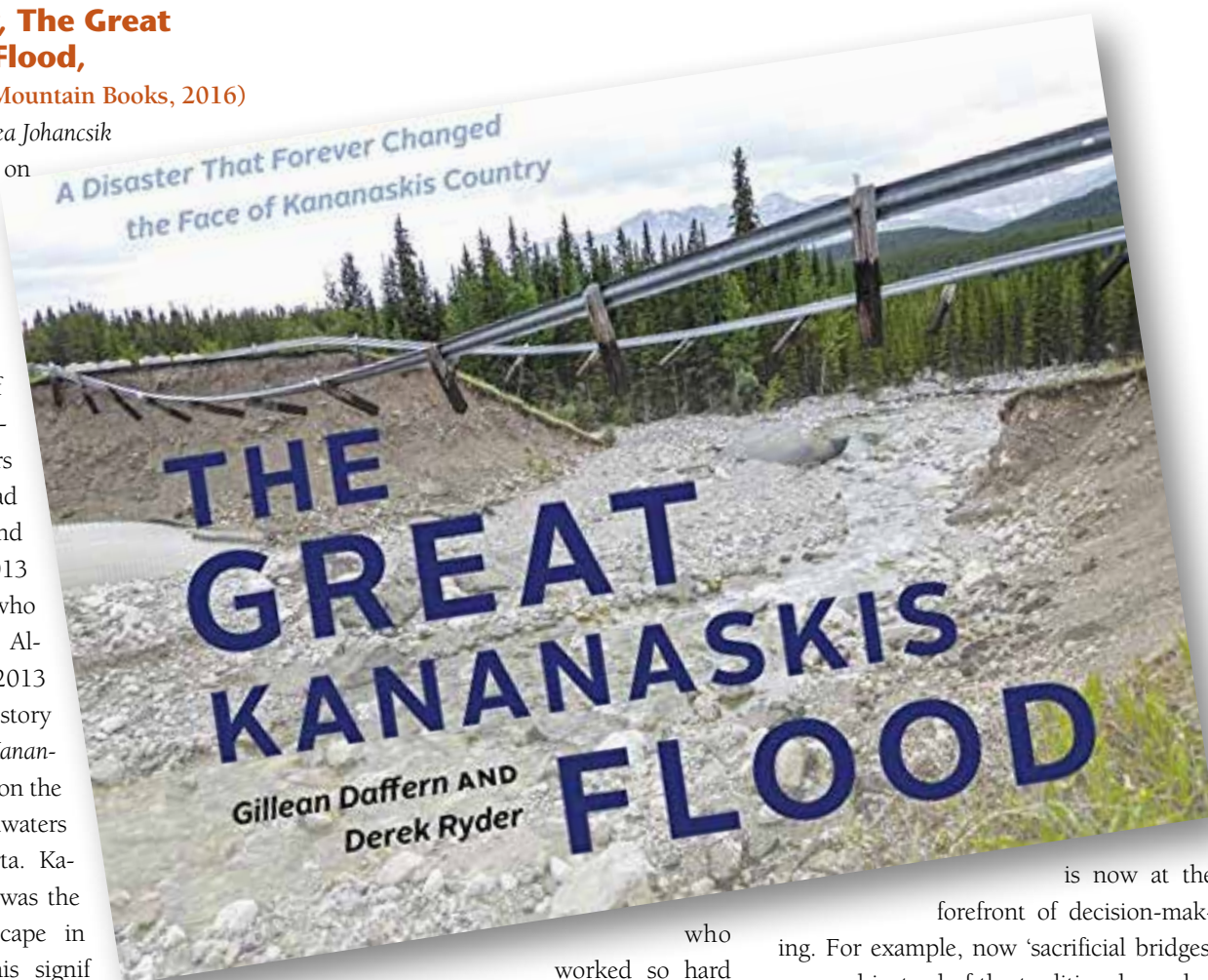
## Gillean Daffern and Derek Ryder, *The Great Kananaskis Flood*,

(Victoria: Rocky Mountain Books, 2016)

Reviewed by Andrea Johancsik

In a new take on a coffee-table book renowned guidebook author Gillean Daffern and Derek Ryder, the chair of Friends of Kananaskis, offer readers a 190-page spread of photographs and stories from the 2013 Flood. Everyone who was in southern Alberta during the 2013 Flood may have a story but *The Great Kananaskis Flood* focuses on the stories in the headwaters of southern Alberta. Kananaskis Country was the hardest hit landscape in Alberta during this significant event. The book appeals to our very human connection to stories and visuals and is a must-have for every Kananaskis-lover and those who want to nurture long-lasting memories of the Flood.

The book's short introduction tells the story of the people most directly affected by the flood in the backcountry. Derek Ryder told me the idea for the book came from the realization that collectively the soon-to-be contributors were sitting on a treasure trove of photographic records of the flood. Because the Alberta government declared Kananaskis an emergency zone, there were few photographs taken during the flood. Parks staff, recreationists, and local area residents had to make fast decisions in the emergency, seek shelter or evacuate, and in some cases camp out until helicopter rescuers could arrive. These stories bring attention to the first responders and heroes of the day and highlight the efforts of everyone



who worked so hard in the aftermath to restore Albertans' favourite trails and campgrounds.

Discussion is light on some of the larger land-use problems that arguably exacerbated the intensity of the flood and the resulting destruction. The book mentions that inexpensive backcountry bridges became washed out and created logjams, worsening clogging and damage, but doesn't discuss whether bridges and developments should be rebuilt in the floodplain. However, the book intends not to comment on political matters, but will instead spark the reader to ask the essential questions that volunteers and staff had to consider in the aftermath: Where is it appropriate to rebuild? Did our human footprint make the flood worse? Will this happen again, and what will happen when it does?

Ryder assured me those crucial questions were being answered by land managers and volunteer organizations during rebuilding, which is still ongoing. Sustainability

is now at the forefront of decision-making. For example, now 'sacrificial bridges' are used instead of the traditional wooden bridges and they are designed to break up and break down so logjams aren't a risk. Friends of Kananaskis are also putting up interpretive signs to highlight flood impacts on popular trails.

A map showing the location of trails, roads, and bridges displayed in the photographs would have given the book an ounce more impact. But the readers who are most likely to enjoy this book are probably buying it because they know and love the trails already.

A typical coffee table book may be placed strategically in the front living room to show off pristine local landscapes to out-of-province visitors. This is not your typical coffee table book, but the photos and stories here of this natural disaster are no less awe-inspiring. Plus, it's a great excuse to share your favourite flood story when your in-laws walk in!