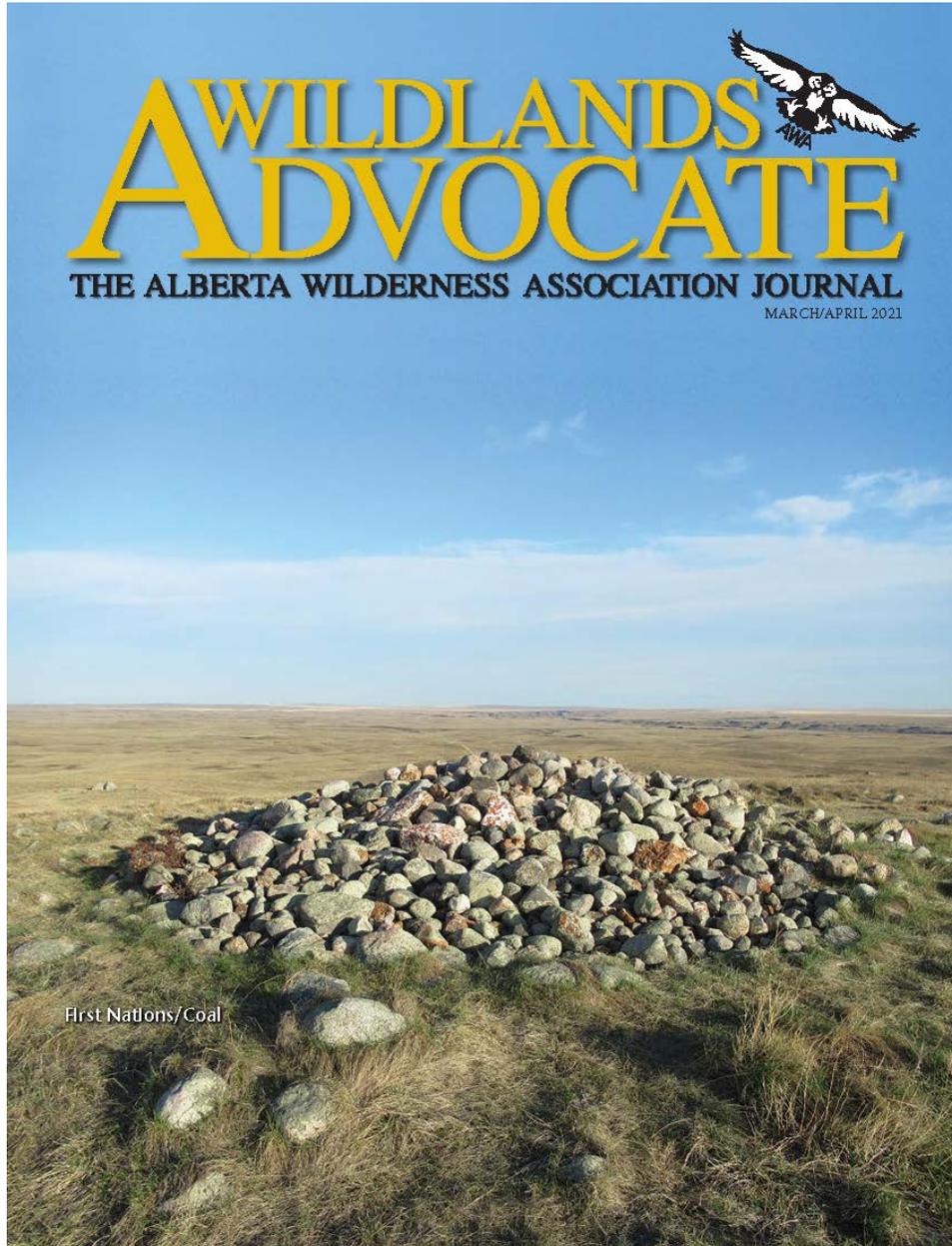


The Spring Issue of Wild Lands Advocate

May 14, 2021



I hope you're in a forgiving mood. The spring issue of *Wild Lands Advocate* is now [online](#).

There are as many reasons as there are days of the week for the lateness of this issue. Most of them are good ones...but that doesn't change the facts that this issue is very late and your editor takes responsibility for that. The proverbial buck stops at his desk in his COVID cave.

Two, in some places overlapping, themes animate this issue: First Nations and coal. The issue starts with David Suzuki's reflections on how decolonization, in order to succeed, requires major changes in how most of

Canadian society thinks and how it acts. Our relationship to the land rests at the heart of both requirements.

Then Alvin First Rider tells us about one Kainai Nation project designed to rebalance his Nation's relationship with an historical keystone prairie species – linnii or bison. With the participation of a number of partners, the Kainai have released a small herd of linnii on the northern section of the Blood Reserve. This initiative is born from the 2014 Buffalo Treaty, a treaty designed to honour and revitalize the First Nations/linnii relationship.

The next article takes us 1,000 kilometres north to Dene Tha' territories. Chief James Ahnassay and environmental scientist Matt Munson introduce you to the Dene Tha's interest in establishing an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). IPCAs are novel on the Canadian conservation landscape and could figure importantly in reconciliation efforts. The proposed IPCA would centre on Mbe'cho (Bistcho Lake) where Dene Tha' ancestors lived thousands of years ago.

This issue also features a conversation with Dene Tha' Chief James Ahnassay, the third recipient of a 2020 Wilderness Defenders Award. Chief Ahnassay delivered his Martha Kostuch lecture as a conversation with AWA Director Cliff Wallis. James and Cliff first discussed growing up in Habay and then Chateh and the petroleum industry's arrival in the Hay-Zama region. Through his discussion of several profound moments in his life, James offered those of us who attended the lecture through Zoom an appreciation of the dramatic changes petroleum made in the lives of the Dene Tha'. James' leadership was instrumental in realizing several conservation milestones in northern Alberta – the creation of the Hay-Zama Lakes Wildland Park in 1999 and the twinning of Hay-Zama with Inner Mongolia's Dalai Lake Nature Reserve in 2008. Looking ahead James hopes for a future where Dene Tha' youth acquire the combination of traditional knowledge and western science he sees as vital to being good stewards of the First Nation's lands.

Two articles point to the overlap between First Nations interests and coal. The first of these traces the evolution of First Nations' views of coal mining from the eve of the Grassy Mountain hearing in October until now. The initial support for/non-objection to Grassy Mountain has now transformed into opposition. This shift was signalled in the comments members of First Nations left on the public registry of the Grassy Mountain Coal Project. They joined members of other Canadian and Albertan communities in forming a nearly unanimous public front against this project. Those comments are discussed in the second of these two articles.

Roberta Rees and Lorne Fitch enrich the spring issue's examination of coal. They offer you powerful, personal testimonies for why Alberta shouldn't let the resuscitation of coal mining darken the future of the Eastern Slopes.

I also contribute to developing the coal theme by offering a retrospective on what has taken place between May 2020 and February 2021. So too does my editorial. There I suggest that while former Premier Notley's private members bill is far better than what the Kenney government is serving, it doesn't go far enough. The world has changed in momentous ways since 1976 and it's time for provincial politicians of all parties to recognize that. These changes dictate that the "modern" coal policy Energy Minister Savage craves

should be a “No Coal Anywhere” policy.

Two AWA Freedom of Information Requests provide the meat for articles about two of Alberta Environment and Parks Minister Nixon’s initiatives: Optimizing Parks and the new sandhill crane hunt. Although AWA had hoped for more and/better information than what the government supplied, we believe that information received strengthens importantly the informed critiques AWA has directed at both policy changes.

The 2021 season of Adventures for Wilderness is well-underway. This issue reports on some of this year’s past adventures as well as several upcoming opportunities. If you would like to participate – physically and/or financially – please visit the dedicated Adventures [webpage](#).

I want to close this message by mentioning the art you’ll see in this issue. Jared Tailfeathers (Sikohm Kokomii – Calling Crane) is our featured artist in this issue. Jared is a multi-talented member of the Kainai Nation whose impressive works span a variety of genres in the visual and performing arts.

In the Association News section you also will find the art of Bev Mazurick. The threats coal mining pose to species-at-risk inspired Bev to start her own fundraiser to help AWA’s work on coal and the Eastern Slopes. There you’ll see the four linen, 5 by 7, note cards Bev has created. Bev will be donating all of the net proceeds from the sale of her cards to AWA. If, in your letters to politicians, you want to raise the threats mining poses to species-at-risk, it’s hard to imagine a more appropriate medium than Bev’s beautiful cards. I hope you’ll support her generosity and AWA’s work by purchasing these cards.

- Ian

Urquhart

Editor



Dedicated to the conservation of wilderness and completion of a protected areas network, AWA inspires communities to care for Alberta’s wild spaces through awareness and action.

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