

Re-imagining the future of Canmore



By Robin Pollard and Tenaya Lynx

Today, we are reimagining our futures. We're imagining a healthy climate that will host thriving communities and vibrant ecosystems, where governments prioritise food security, affordable housing, and community care. Overwhelming issues like the current climate crisis, human-wildlife conflicts and decolonisation can be intimidating and so it is a true honour and privilege to remain engaged on a matter so close to our hearts.

As settlers on these Lands, our futures are entirely grounded on Treaty 7 Territory Lands of yā é Nakoda (Stoney), Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan) and Siksika (Blackfoot) Nations, and within Region 3 of the Métis Nation of Alberta. The futures we envision uphold and respect Indigenous laws, languages, and protocols, thereby honouring Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Part of our personal accountability work comes from UVic Cherokee Professor Jeff Cornassel, who teaches us that when people introduce themselves, they are introducing what you can expect from them on these lands and how they will remain responsible and accountable. We have been raised by our parents and our community. These connections to place and community are why we became involved and advocated for the Three Sisters wildlife corridor that passes through our hometown, Canmore, Alberta.

In 2016, when Three Sisters Mountain Village (TSMV) submitted Area Structure Plans to the Town, our mentors encouraged us to engage in the municipal process. We raised awareness with youth and spoke about the significance of the proposed developments, namely their impacts on Canmore's affordability and encroachment on significant East to West

wildlife corridors in the Yellowstone to Yukon Region.

Canmore residents struggle to find solutions to human-wildlife challenges and face a multitude of social justice issues, such as classism, unaffordable housing, and expensive cost of living. It is discouraging to feel the increasing financial pressures of living in a tourist town and seeing loved ones leave. TSMV, and other developers, build luxurious homes when long-time community members are being forced out from unattainable living costs.

Grounding ourselves in this reality reminds us of the future we are working towards. A future that is healthy for the people, lands and waters that surround us. A future that upholds consensual and reciprocal relationships between places, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Our imagined future is in our collective reach. It can be realistic, and in our opinion, it should be more realistic than capitalist practices of "progress" which encourage profit over people.

In holding space for creating a dynamic and healthy future, we also believe in the importance of imagination which shapes our world and how we engage with it. There are so many structures around us that are imagined and yet have incredibly tangible effects. Enough people have decided that the social constructions of patriarchy and white supremacy are real, and that makes them real. Reimagining what is real in a way that centres on joy, equity, and coexistence with the planet is possible and can have tangible effects on our futures.

Our imaginings include a liveable future, perhaps a thriving and healthy future! They include affordable housing, food and

job security, and the possibility of working in our hometown. They include access to natural spaces in a way that respects Indigenous relations to the land and water. These ideas should not be radical.

There is fantastic work being done reimagining our future in the Bow Valley. The "Resilient Canmore" group's work is not yet public but is one example of people coming together to build relationships amongst historic adversaries, helping people envision a better future.

We hope to leave you with the recognition that there is nothing too outrageous, too radical, and too out of reach for our futures. Everyone has gifts and can contribute. It is this diversity that is so necessary to create a future where all living beings, the earth, and the water are respected. ♣

Robin is a student at UVic and grew up in the Bow Valley. Robin is passionate about creating connections with people and is guided by a deep love of the environment.

Tenaya Lynx is also a UVic student, studying geography and social justice. Tenaya's love for animals and community comes from her childhood in Canmore.

Editor's Note: On May 17, 2022, the Land and Property Rights Tribunal of Alberta overturned Canmore Council and approved Three Sisters Mountain Village Properties Ltd.'s development. Opposition continues and next steps are pending. A \$161 million dollar lawsuit from the developer against the Town is ongoing.