

# Karsten Heuer

October 31, 1968 - November 5, 2024



Karsten Heuer will be remembered for making the most of what turned out to be a shortened life. He died peacefully, in his backyard writing shack in Canmore, at the age of 56 with MAiD (Medical Assistance in Death) after contracting Multiple System Atrophy, a rare and poorly understood neurological disease.

Karsten was born and raised in Calgary, where his recently immigrated German parents, Sigrid and Harry, took him and his sister, Erica, on many hiking, fishing, camping, and ski trips, introducing him to the mountains. He studied ecology at the

University of Calgary and moved to the Bow Valley after graduating, where he became a wildlife biologist for Parks Canada for the next 30 years. The last nine were a career highlight for him; he was privileged to lead the reintroduction of wild bison to Banff National Park. He wrote a short book of the lessons bison taught him called *Buffaloed*, which will be published posthumously by Greystone next fall.

Karsten was known for marrying big conservation issues with big, human-powered adventures. In 1998-99, he hiked 3,400 km from Yellowstone to the Yukon to highlight the need for wildlife corridors. In 2002, he followed a herd of 150,000 caribou across part of the Yukon and Alaska to their calving grounds, which are threatened by oil development. His lifelong partner, Leanne Allison, whom he met in kindergarten, accompanied him. Two-and-a-half years after having their only child, Zev, the couple walked down the street from their Canmore home and launched their canoe on the Bow River, setting off across Canada on a trip that explored the settings of one of their childhood heroes', Farley Mowat's, books. Five months later, they landed in front of the famous author's Nova Scotia house and met the aged man himself. Leanne's film about that journey, *Finding Farley*, won the Grand Prize at the 2009 Banff Film Festival, where the couple also recently received the 2024 Summit of Excellence Award.

Karsten received many other awards for his conservation work and his writings. He recently donated the proceeds from Y2Y's Ted Smith Award to Bow Valley Engage, a local group he led, to continue to advocate for responsible development. The funds will help their #Savegrizzcorridor and Stop TSMV campaigns. People can donate in Karsten's memory via non-tax-deductible e-transfers to [bowvalleyengage@gmail.com](mailto:bowvalleyengage@gmail.com) or visit the group's [website](#). Funds will be used for ongoing litigation.

A simple memorial service to celebrate Karsten's life will take place at the CreekSide Hall at the Seniors Centre in downtown Canmore on November 16, 2024, 3-6 pm. All are welcome.