

**PARK WARDEN SERVICE ALUMNI SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ des ANCIENS des GARDES de PARC**

Winter 2025-26 Newsletter

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Our Mission Statement

(Revised and approved January 12, 2026)

The mission of the Park Warden Service Alumni Society (PWSAS) is to “Maintain a communication link with former Park Wardens, Park Naturalists/Interpreters, Resource Conservation Section personnel and other staff who were involved with visitor safety, backcountry management, natural resource management (i.e. wildlife, vegetation, fire, aquatics), cultural resource management, law enforcement and communication and education duties and other related duties by fostering fellowship and comradery through PWSAS communications, volunteerism, extensions, oral histories and social activities.”

Activities of your Executive

The oral history sub-committee is looking for oral history interviewers without which it cannot carry on that project. They are following up on several leads at the present.

The Alumni's strategic plan sets out a five-year plan for the Alumni. It has gone through several reviews and revisions and was finalized at the January 12th, 2026 board meeting. It sets out the following five goals for the Alumni Society:

1. To continue the oral history project. To do so requires funding over and above the society's annual income. The funding requirements for this project are modest but they can mount up as the society's goal is to complete ten Oral Histories each year. PWSAS is very fortunate this year to have funding in the 2026 budget to undertake 18 oral history interviews.
2. PWSAS will not require a grant for the Oral History Project this year due to having funds carried over from last year's Oral History Budget, combined with the generous donations

received this year. In the past we have applied for government grants. For quite a number of years in the past we have received grant funding from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation program. The federal Documentary Heritage Communities Program is on hold this year; but we intend to apply if it is offered again.

3. An ongoing goal has been to increase membership as, obviously, members are passing away. We have been reaching out with some success to current Park employees now doing work formerly done by “Wardens” with some success. There has been very little interest shown by retired wardens who worked outside the Mountain Parks in joining as, apparently, they don’t identify with the mountain park experience. PWSAS wants to change that belief.
4. Continue holding annual mini-re-unions. These have been highly successful and their popularity promises to continue.

Salmon Arm Mini Re-union

For this year’s reunion we have switched to a 4-day format (May 5 – 8) to accommodate the booking of the Elks Hall for “The Wardens” concert on May 7th.

All reunion events, including the concert, will be held among the towering ponderosa pines at the beautiful Salmon Arm Elk’s Hall and Campground. As always, there will be plenty of free time for socializing too. Rain or shine - we’ll be comfortable, as this campground features large landscaped gathering areas and a huge roofed shelter, with tables and a kitchen, to host all of our planned meals and activities. For non-campers there is a wide range of Salmon Arm hotels and motels located within 5 - 10 minutes of the Elk’s Campground. Currently, we are pursuing motel discounts for alumni. See the Reunion details on the last page of this Newsletter.

For those of you on a tight schedule, arrival and departure dates are flexible. No matter which route you travel towards Salmon Arm, there are many provincial, private, and National Park campgrounds to take advantage of on your way. Please consider making the reunion a stop in your holiday plans.

Let’s keep rekindling old friendships and memorable stories! Contact Alan and Lisa by phone or e-mail, (e-mail and phone number are located on the last page of this newsletter) to indicate your interest, to reserve a suitable campsite, and to ensure your participation in this year’s reunion. Please pass this information along to others! We are looking forward to seeing you again and to meeting many new alumni faces at the Elk’s Campground in Salmon Arm May 5th- 8th.

The P.W.S.A.S. newsletter is published 2 or more times yearly for members of the society. Articles, membership enquiries and other matters may be sent to the society at the addresses top of page one.

Executive:

President – Dave Reynolds
Vice-President – Cliff White
Secretary-Treasurer – Marie Nylund
Membership – Marie Nylund

Directors: (2 & 3 year terms)

Dale Portman
Jim Murphy
Scott Ward
Colleen Reynolds
Alan Westhaver
George Lukiwski
Brian Spreadbury
Perry Davis

Regional Representatives

Mountains – vacant
West Coast – Pete Clarkson/Bob Hansen
North & Yukon – Tom Elliot
Prairies – vacant
Ontario – Allan Gibbs, Dan Reive
Eastern Canada – vacant

Anyone interested in serving as a Regional Rep. or as a director please contact the society

BUFFALO LESSONS How Buffalo Returned to Banff National Park. By Karsten Heuer.

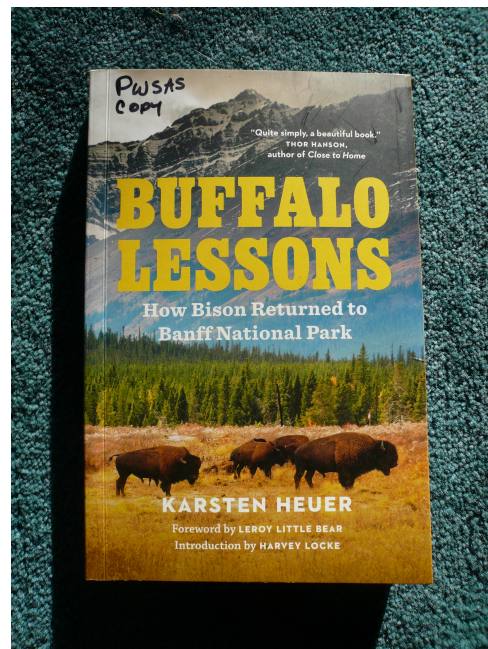
Foreword by Leroy Little Bear and Introduction by Harvey Locke.

To be published by Greystone Books in March 2026. The Warden Service received a complimentary copy courtesy of Greystone Books.

This book is an inside account by the person front and centre of the reintroduction of plains bison to Banff National Park starting in 2017. It is illustrated with colour photos of the buffalo in a mountain setting - on-site scenes made available to readers.

Karsten's life was coming to an end as he wrote this book as he makes clear but the tone is positive throughout. When recounting some serious setbacks in dealing with the buffalo or with parks management Karsten's approach was "How can we fix this?" You have to admire that spirit. As a matter of fact, the chapter titles "Learn From Failure," "Bluff When Necessary" and "Seize Opportunity" could be how Karsten lived!

Check your local bookstores or the Whyte Museum bookstore.



Simple Technology that made a Big Difference

Humans were riding horses long before there were stirrups but with their introduction the horse took



on a larger role in human affairs as the rider gained more control over his mount and more freedom in the saddle. The photo (from the Sept/Oct. issue of *Archaeology*) is of the earliest pair of stirrups yet known to archaeologists. They were found in the tomb of Feng Sufu, a General of the Northern Yan Dynasty and brother of the future Emperor. When Sufu died in 415 A.D. his brother had him buried along with many rich items including these stirrups. For two plain pieces of bronze, they must have been of considerable significance to have been included. Stirrups must have been in use well before the fifth century but none have yet been found

The Western Canadian Cowboy

This statement "The cowboy has been an integral part of Western Canadian Life for over a century" introduces Hugh Dempsey's 1995 book *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy: An Illustrated History*, a Fifth House publication. The book opens with the start of Alberta cattle ranching with a herd trailed from the United States to the McDougall Morleyville property in 1875. The finale is the heavy blow struck by the "disastrous winter of 1906-'07." The history then jumps ahead and ends at the Calgary Stampede in 1912 which Dempsey says was "an admission that the golden years of the cowboy had passed" with the influx of settlers and the break-up of the big ranches. It's a solid not a flashy book. Dempsey (1929-2022) was the author of several of Western Canada's history books. He was well qualified and knew details as even the photo captions make clear. These numerous black and white illustrations cover a wide range - close to all - activities of early cowboy life in Western Canada when the range was open and the text proves it was a rich and colourful history.

Fate of Heritage Buildings Uncertain

The Owen Creek cabin is presently on hold for any intervention and decommissioning. As part of the process, KYLL staff were first required to complete a Federal Heritage Resource Office (FHRO) evaluation. That evaluation resulted in Owen Creek designated as a “Recognized Building”. This put a hold on decommissioning – until – fast forward to September 1, 2025, there was a change to Cultural Resource Management policy. Protective measures in place for FHRO designated buildings loosened, and “Recognized Buildings” OUTSIDE National Heritage Sites take less of a process to get approval for demolition. The issue is that LLYK has limited dollars to maintain operational buildings so there is less priority to maintain a non-operational buildings like Owen Creek cabin.

OBITUARIES

Don Waters

Don Waters passed away on Tuesday, October 28, 2025. As the oldest child, Don grew up on an apple orchard near St George, Ontario, with his siblings, Kathy, Bob (Deborah) and Jane (Laurie). He is predeceased by his father, Don (2001) and his mother, Grace (2016). A math degree led to a brief time in the Toronto's insurance business. Don headed West for an Outward-Bound experience that changed his life forever. Don discovered his love of the mountains, nature and the outdoor life. Don's early Sunshine days on lifts and ski patrol, SRAWS (Roger's Pass avalanche forecasting), and the Warden Horse Trail Crew flowed into a lifetime of mountain work and adventures. He flourished skiing (downhill, touring and backcountry), whitewater kayaking, canoeing (day to multi day trips – like the Thlewiaza, Ellice, Nahanni, Thelon, Snake, Bonnet Plume rivers). Don also loved hiking, biking, horse trips, reading and travel.

Don's many years as a Banff Park Warden were a significant life experience nurturing his love of nature. He worked through the years of the multifaceted warden; being active in science, avalanche control, fire, vegetation, public safety, peace officer, backcountry patrols, wildlife and resource conservation activities. Don was a quiet, kind man with a great sense of humour. Many people benefited from his patient and through attention as a teacher and mentor. He was a strong protector of the innocent and vulnerable. He volunteered for the literacy project and served on the board of the Banff Library. Don supported many charities for the betterment of life for all.

Don is greatly missed by his partner, Sue Baker and her son, Shayne; her siblings, Colin (Deborah), Jenny (Jerry) and Wendy (Les) and their families; Don's siblings and three nieces, MaryLynne, Eugenie, Rosanne and their families; as well as the Western “family” of friends. Don made best of friends with Sue's dog Abby and they became inseparable. They will be having fun together again now. The many hikes, ski trips, ski days, holiday adventures and happy times hold wonderful memories.

A Celebration of Don's Life will be held in the spring 2026.

Kathy Calvert

Long time warden Kathy Calvert passed away peacefully at home in Cochrane on New Year's Day, 2026. She was predeceased by her parents, Don and Peggy Forest and survived by her husband, Dale Portman, her son, Les Perras, and two grandchildren, Hugh and Rian as well as by her brother Ken Forest, sisters, Susan and Sylvia Forest and many nieces and nephews.

Born in Edmonton she lived an adventurous and full life, exploring the wilderness with her father and twin brother Ken. As a child she learned to hunt, fish, hike, and camp, and after moving to Calgary as a

teen, she learned to ride horses, climb, and ski alongside friends in Canada's National Ski Team. She also became one of very few women climbers at the time. On top of that she was an excellent academic earning top marks in school and at the University of Calgary where she earned degrees in biology and later Master of Science.

In 1974, Kathy was one of the first three women hired by the Federal Government as park wardens and the only one of these to continue in this career, working as a park warden for 25 years. She mentored her male peers in technical climbing and search and rescue techniques and participated in many rescues herself in the earliest years of heli-sling rescues. In 1977, Kathy was part of the first all-female attempt to climb Mt. Logan, Canada's highest mountain, turning back just shy of the summit in bad weather.

Kathy and Dale Portman, also a warden, were married in 1983. Together they explored Western Canada's back country on horseback, skis, and canoes, and climbed many remote and difficult mountains. Kathy and Dale transferred to Jasper Alberta where Kathy spent many summers patrolling the North Boundary of Jasper National Park in the Willow Creek District. This entailed travelling alone with three horses and her dog for 17 days at a time. After retiring from the Warden Service, Kathy embarked on a prolific writing career. Her books were published by Rocky Mountain Books, and included: Don Forest: Quest for the Summits (about her father who was the first person to climb all 11,000-ers in the Rockies); Vertical Reference: The Life of Legendary Mountain Rescue Pilot Jim Davies; Ya Ha Tinda: A Home Place on the 100th anniversary of the federal government horse ranch; and June Mickle: One Woman's Life in the Foothills and Mountains of Western Canada. Kathy and Dale co-wrote the book Guardians of the Peaks: Mountain Rescue in the Canadian Rockies which was finalist for the Writers' Guild of Alberta award for non-fiction in 2006. Kathy was also painted landscapes that revealed her intimate knowledge of the mountain environment.

A celebration of her life and achievements is planned for the spring or early summer of 2026.

Thank you to everyone who has so generously donated to PWSAS in memory of Kathy; we are overwhelmed. At our next Board meeting, we will be discussing projects where these funds may be used to honor and preserve Kathy Calvert's memory.

Dorothy Maureen “Moe” Vroom (née Swainger)

“Moe” passed away peacefully at the Banff Mineral Springs Hospital on October 25, 2025 — just ten days shy of her 89th birthday. She was predeceased by husband Bill and her brothers Bob (Joanne) Swainger and Norm (Alice) Swainger. She had no children of her own but was a cherished aunt, great “auntie,” and an honorary grandmother to many neighbourhood children in the Porcupine Place neighbourhood where she lived. She is survived by her many nieces, nephews and extended family.

Moe and Bill shared a lifelong love for the mountains, the Warden Service, and their horses. Moe first came west from an office position with Husky Oil in Calgary before taking a summer job at Moraine Lake for Barbara Smythe. It wasn't long before Banff became her true home. She spent over 25 years working for the Warden Office, where she took great pride in keeping the team organized, and was known to enjoy the perks of heading out on horseback into the backcountry whenever the opportunity arose. She will be fondly remembered for her quick wit, her independence and her affection for the people and places of Banff that shaped her life. Donations in her memory may be made to the Banff Mineral Springs Hospital in Moe's memory.

Mike Carleton's Birthday Bash

There was a full-on birthday party for Mike to celebrate his 80th birthday at the start of the year. Eighty years old and going strong! The party was held at the Bill Warren Building in the Canmore Nordic Centre and was very well attended as the photo of just a local Canmore group shows.

Major Kent Griffiths also attended. He is a member of the Calgary Highlanders, the regiment Mike's dad and his uncle Ross were in during W.W. II. Major Kent and another Highlander, George, were in the Netherlands for the 80th anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands. George was there in 1945 and witnessed the German colonel signing the surrender papers. The past is not that far away!



JoAnne White, Patsy Murphy, Gord Antoniuk, Dave Dalman, Scott Diehl (occasional member of “The Wardens”) Scott Ward, Cheryl McTrowe, Bruce McTrowe (just visible), Jim Murphy and Cliff White.

ANNUAL PARK WARDEN SERVICE ALUMNI SOCIETY CAMPING REUNION.



2025 Reunion in Nanton.

The poster has been previously circulated and posted on Facebook and our Website. Here are the details:

DATES: Tuesday, May 5th to Friday, May 8th, 2026.

Camping fees: \$40 per night (fully serviced site), or \$25 per night (un-serviced site).

To reserve your campsite and to confirm your attendance, or for more information about the reunion or hotel accommodations, please contact:

Alan & Lisa by phone at (250) 430-7206 or my email at alan.westhaver@shaw.ca

May 5th, Tuesday: Evening take-out pizza social at 6 pm.

May 6th, Wednesday: Potluck supper.

May 7th, Thursday morning: Pancake breakfast compliments of PWSAS

May 7th, Thursday 5 pm: BBQ burgers, beans & salad compliments of PWSAS.

May 7th, Thursday, 7 pm-9 pm: The Wardens concert at the Elks Hall. Open bar - \$5.

May 8th, Friday: Morning coffee and break camp. Coffee is always on in the main shelter.

In keeping with the mission of the Park Warden Service Alumni Society, we welcome all former Park Wardens, Resource Conservation personnel, Park Naturalists/Interpreters, and other staff involved with natural and cultural resource management, visitor safety, backcountry management, law enforcement or education/outreach duties. The Reunion is a time to foster goodwill and comradery and to make new friendships.

JOIN US FOR A DAY, OR STAY FOR THE ENTIRE EVENT!!

Looking forward to seeing you in Salmon Arm!