

Report to the David Elton Outdoor Fund from Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCAA) 2007

After attending the Outdoor & Experiential Learning Safety Management Workshop at Kananaskis Field Station in November 2006, the staff at Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCCA) recognized the need to improve our Safety and Risk Management Policies and Procedures throughout the organization. In March of 2007, we were approved for \$1500 from the David Elton Outdoor Fund to support a safety audit workshop to assist ASCCA in identifying gaps and setting priorities, in particular as related to activities involving youth, and communicating these to various stakeholders.

Project Rationale

Within the non-formal education industry, safety and risk management is paramount to ensuring future availability of programs to schools, and youth groups. We want to ensure that we meet or exceed safety practices within the industry and are in a position to communicate these to various stakeholders. In doing so, we are able to continue to offer safe, educational experiences to the community and further conservation efforts. It is recognized that such practices must be extended to other activities and stakeholders within our organization as well.

Project Activities

Due to a small number of staff in the Area, our expertise on current safety standards and practices is limited. With the funds provided by The Calgary Foundation we contracted a health and safety consultant, Rob Crooks from C2 Consulting Ltd. to facilitate a health and safety audit workshop. ON September 14, 11 participants including ASCAA staff and volunteers, and participants from 2 other stakeholder organizations identified, confirmed and prioritized the top 3 Health & Safety opportunities for ASCAA in order to strengthen existing policies and practices. Three priorities were identified as: 1) strengthening our current ASCAA policies; 2) hazard identification, assessment and control; 3) creating emergency response processes.

Project Outcomes

In 2008, the ASCAA formed a Health & Safety Committee comprised of our staff and volunteers, created a 3-year strategic Safety & Risk Management Strategy Plan, initiated the process of hazard identification, assessment and control, and developed a Health & Safety Policy. The audit and ensuing outcomes have strengthened our goal as an organization to promote safety and a risk management approach in all aspects of our operations. For our internal stakeholders, we have been able to generate discussion, create awareness, instigate new procedures, and communicate our commitment to safety within our organization. For external stakeholders, the participants in the audit workshop now have a better understanding of safety and risk management, specifically as it pertains to the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area. There was interest in conducting similar audits within their own organizations, hopefully in turn promoting safety within the greater community. We have continued to work with other organizations within the community to assist us in strengthening our Safety & Risk Management program based on recommendations from the audit workshop.