

June 2009

Central Edition — City of Red Deer to Drumheller

## THE SPIRIT OF WATER First Nations and Watershed Management

*Phil Boheme, Alberta Environment*

Over 50 people attended the RDRWA General Meeting on March 13, 2009 in Penhold, Alberta to learn about the First Nations history, culture, traditional land use and respect for water. Norine Saddleback, of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance introduced the Spirit of Water theme and highlighted the First Nations beliefs regarding the creation of the earth. Battle River Watershed Alliance representative, Carol Wildcat presented the Story of Nipi (Nipi = Water) and commented on the effects of the Treaties to share resources in Alberta with the First Nations. Ms. Wildcat emphasized the importance of learning more about each other and working together as neighbours.

Norine Saddleback, Carol Wildcat and Leonard Standing On The Road, also a representative from Battle River Watershed Alliance, took the time to answer questions regarding their band councils, First Nation consultation processes, and the need for developing relationships and mutual understanding. Ms. Saddleback also provided an overview of the governance structure for the 18 First Nations in Alberta. She introduced the audience to First Nation's use of symbols, their focus on language preservation and youth education.

Representatives from the First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group (TSAG), Chantelle Cardinal, Denise Verreault and Amy Cairns shared information on their Source Water Protection and Aboriginal Inland Habitat programs as well as Water Action Plan Communications. For more information on TSAG go online to [www.TSAG.net](http://www.TSAG.net).

The Spirit of Water meeting provided attendees with a broader understanding of First Nations focus on protecting their culture and traditions as well as the environment.

Carol Wildcat summed it up best, "Nipi (water) is life."

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### Definition:

#### "reach" verb

1. to stretch out or put forth; extend; reached out an arm
2. to succeed in getting in contact with or communicating with people

#### "reach" noun

1. the stretch of water visible between bends in a river or channel
2. range of scope or influence

**Red Deer River Watershed Alliance—ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
Friday, June 19th  
Harvest Centre—Westerner Park—Red Deer  
10 am—3 pm  
Accomplishments, Upcoming activities, Elections for of Directors,  
Results of the State of the Watershed Report, and more...  
Register by June 12th—Call 403-340-7379 (\$10 registration fee)





## THE RDRWA STATE OF THE WATERSHED EXHIBITED

Andy Whitman, RDRWA

From May 25th-27th, the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (RDRWA) hit the road to showcase its comprehensive State of the Watershed (SoW) Report. A requirement for Watershed Planning and Advisory Committees under the Alberta government's Water for Life Strategy, the RDRWA contracted Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd. to undertake the project. After 15 months, the report was complete, with an analysis of each of the 15 sub-watersheds within the watershed.

The showcase kicked off in Red Deer with a presentation for municipal officials. Beverly Anderson, the Executive Director of the Alliance, welcomed nearly 40 guests before Tracy Scott of Ducks Unlimited—and the Chair of the Steering Committee for the SoW—reviewed the context in which the report was framed.

The report took a “systems approach,” said Scott. “It is a process; it is the first step in a long process of managing the watershed.”

Finally Jay White of Aquality presented on the indicators in the watershed, revealing how they were chosen and what their significance was.

Red Deer's municipal presentation was filled with questions from officials wanting to know how they could use the report—all part of the crucial ‘relevance’ factor that Scott stressed. The answer was clear and would be repeated throughout the next three days: the report was a tool to help government and residents make informed decisions.

Later that night the doors opened to the public, where almost 30 people from the city and surrounding area, including members of the press, came to learn about their watershed.

“Anybody who lives, works, and plays in the watershed is a stakeholder,” Anderson stated.

And the crowd was concerned about their water-

shed.

One lady captured the passion of the audience, asking “Why isn't this being made a government priority?...[This] should be hitting the news.”

The issue of data gaps was addressed by one who asked how much hindrance the data gaps were to developing the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP), the next step in the aforementioned process.

“More indicators will most likely confirm what we already know,” White answered. Anderson added that part of the reason for the report was to identify the data gaps so that they could be addressed.

Regardless, Scott said that, “[we have] a good grip on the task ahead of us.”

Next, the RDRWA team visited Hanna. Unfortunately they had a low turnout as another function, the Bill 36 presentation, took the attention of the town.

However the key questions were asked, affirming Scott's call for quality over quantity.

One landowner questioned bluntly, “What does this mean to me?”

The final stop on the RDRWA SoW Report showcase was in Sundre. Here, for both the municipal and public presentations, a quieter crowd offered a more intimate approach and a successful showcase.

Over the three days themes repeated—like the vast land connected by water, the diverse people were connected by similar issues. Municipalities wrestled with balancing environment and economics; citizens sought to either have their voices heard by their representatives or learn how to action themselves.

The release of the report gave both stakeholders a new tool—information. And hopefully, armed with that wealth of knowledge, it will not take a crisis to realize the true value of their watershed.

## SCHOOL DAYS

Jolene Burge, RDRWA

This summer the RDRWA summer staff, Jolene Burge and Andy Whitman, are attending different schools in the Watershed to get children interested in water and raise water consciousness. “We have already been to three schools this summer, with more soon to come.”

They give a presentation about the watershed, riparian areas, invertebrates, and water use. The presentation is interactive; students are challenged with questions, and in return we are challenged by their questions. We leave plenty of material, including Communication/Education Committee’s watershed poster. “We have made up some really cool folders that the kids really like.” They contain fortune tellers (with dreamy outcomes like ‘bog’, ‘fen’ and ‘marsh’), Leo the Leopard Frog tattoo, an RDRWA booklet and the folder itself with information about the water cycle on it.

Then we take the students out into the field to do some Alberta Water Quality Awareness (AWQA) Days testing. This means going down to the local river and getting a little wet. The children have fun and are very responsive to this. The AWQA Days kit tests for dissolved oxygen, turbidity, pH, and temperature. While we are testing the water, we talk about why we are testing these parameters, and the different vegetation that we can find in riparian zones.

It’s all in a day’s work, but we can hardly call it work—we have too much fun getting the word out to children (and their teachers too).



*Jolene and Andy reach out to Alberta students to raise awareness about our close relationship with water.*



## GREEN COMMUNITIES GUIDE

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, the Land Stewardship Centre of Canada (LSCC) launched its Green Communities Guide to an interested audience at the Red Deer Public Library. In attendance were city workers, various stewards, developers and county officials.

Pam Vust, the Environmental Initiatives Co-ordinator with the City of Red Deer, spearheaded the train of presenters.

She explained a number of initiatives, including the water conservation plan that aims to reduce total per capita use by 20% of 2006’s usage by 2012. Some current initiatives Vust shared included public education, a utility bylaw for water efficiency,

and their popular toilet rebate program. She also hinted how the City will work with the RDRWA on the coming IWMP.

Next, Ernie Ewaschuk of the LSCC briefed the Guide. With a rapidly growing population that saw a 10.4% increase in 5 years (2006 census), he stressed the importance of the guide as a way of furthering green development.

“[We’re] growing out, not growing up,” Ewaschuk noted, “Don’t you think it’s time we grow up?”

The guide was developed to help not only municipalities and developers, but citizens who care about the environment.

It provides knowledge and tools to improve, manage or conserve environmental conditions. It is also meant to provide communities with innovative approaches to develop environmental strategies or progress low impact development.

A survey was done to see what environmental issues impact Alberta most. From that the appropriate tools to address the needs were developed and researched. The guide presents case studies, mostly from Alberta, so that it can be useful to Albertans. It is available online at [landstewardship.org/greencommunities.asp](http://landstewardship.org/greencommunities.asp)

## NEWS TO USE ...

- **The RDRWA's State of the Watershed Report** is available in full online, at [www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca)
- **Red Deer County's Off the Creek Program** is a new cost-shared program announced by Red Deer County intended to help interested landowners implement actions on their land to conserve and improve water quality. Some eligible projects include riparian fencing, developing off-creek watering systems, creating permanent cover buffer zones and building bridges or other crossings. For more information, contact Ken Lewis, Conservation Coordinator with the Red Deer County at 403-342-8653.
- **The Medicine River Watershed Society (MRWS)** has partnered with the Eckville Co-op Association for a three-year riparian fencing initiative for landowners in the Medicine river Watershed. A 10% discount from the retail price of posts, wire and staples is sweetened by the chance to win a \$1000 donation towards the purchase of an off-creek watering system.
- The MRWS have also announced their annual **Wallace and Carolyn Kreil Stewardship Award** in the amount of \$2000 to a person, group or business who implement sound environmental stewardship practices within their watershed. Details for either program are available through MRWS members Garth Yeomans (403-746-5990), Keith Pregoda (403-746-2796) or Warren Miller (403-728-3543).



*A creek in Sunde runs low on water but inspires high enthusiasm. RDRWA took students of River Valley School to this reach of creek that feeds into the Red Deer River to do some Alberta Water Quality Awareness (AWQA) Days water-testing.*

## Upcoming Events

**June 5th**—Sylvan Lake Environmental Expo (2 P.M.—7 P.M.) at the Railway Park.

**June 6th**—Rockyford Urban Xeriscape Site Plant Dig (10 A.M.—3P .M.). Presented by the Rosebud River Watershed Partners. Composting seminar at 10 A.M., weed & invasive species seminar at 11 A.M., plant dig at 1-3 P.M. Contact Claudette at 403-533-0008 for more info and to pre-register.

**June 7th**—Red Deer River Clean-up. Kerry Woods Nature Centre, 12 noon

**June 8th**—The Medicine River Watershed Society's General Meeting + BBQ

**June 19th**—Red Deer River Watershed Alliance's Annual General Meeting (10 A.M.—3 P.M.) at the Harvest Centre-Westerner Grounds, Red Deer, AB. Check the [www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca) website for details. (\$10 registration fee)

**June 21st**—Aboriginal Day. See the 'Events' link under 'Arts, Culture & Heritage' on the [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca) website.

**June 25th**—Alberta Stewardship Network's Annual General Meeting. Fort MacLeod, 8:30 A.M.—4:30 P.M.

**July 8-11**—4th National Stewardship & Conservation Conference: Strengthening Stewardship...Investing at Every Step. MacEwan Conference & Events Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB. For more information, visit [www.stewardship2009.ca](http://www.stewardship2009.ca).