

ALBERTA INSTITUTE **FOR** WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 – 2030

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AIWC is located on and services all human and wild residents of Treaty 7 territory. As treaty people, we believe we have a responsibility to care for the lands we inhabit, along with all creatures living on the land with us.

Executive Summary

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) has created this Strategic Plan of 2025 to guide our operations through implementation and maintenance of the strategic objectives and directives identified herein. The information provided was developed through a comprehensive and thoughtful strategic planning process and is intended to provide AIWC management, staff, volunteers and the Board of Directors with decision-making guidance in the pursuit of its vision and mission.

AIWC has been operating in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation since 1993. This non-profit organization is an Alberta Veterinary Medical Association accredited animal hospital with limited resources, that has experienced significant growth over its 32-year history. Its operations are managed by an Executive Director, with oversight by its Board of Directors. Both in governance and in operations, AIWC strives to be ethical, accountable, and compassionate. AIWC is a steward of Alberta's wildlife with a history of making a positive impact on wildlife conservation, rehabilitation, and co-existence with wildlife.

This document targets AIWC's four main objectives:

1. Focus on fundraising efforts that provide the resources necessary for operational stability and future growth.
2. Invest in leading edge infrastructure to ensure that AIWC represents the gold standard for wildlife rehabilitation.
3. Create a work environment that will attract and retain skilled and reliable staff and volunteers.
4. Expand public awareness initiatives to ensure our position as a leader of wildlife education and rehabilitation.

With a focus on these four objectives, AIWC will experience success in the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife and expand our reach in the community through education on wildlife.

Vision

Preserving the legacy of wildlife.

Mission

AIWC is committed to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. We provide expert advice and education that fosters an appreciation of wildlife.

Core Values

STEWARDSHIP

As stewards of wildlife, we are committed to ethical and responsible care that ensures the well-being of wildlife, the trust of our stakeholders, and the sustainability of AIWC.

INNOVATION

At AIWC, we embrace innovation by seeking best practices and implementing creative solutions. This drives continuous improvement and shapes a sustainable future that will confirm our position as an industry leader.

LONGEVITY

At AIWC we ensure the longevity of our organization by managing resources wisely, maintaining financial sustainability, and strengthening our foundation to give Alberta's wildlife a second chance.

INTEGRITY

At AIWC we are committed to a culture of respect and teamwork that harnesses our passion to act with integrity while supporting stewardship, innovation and longevity.

Guiding Principles

Definition of Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife conservation is the protection of wild animals within their natural habitat ensuring their long-term survival. It is the prevention of exploitation, destruction, or neglect of wildlife and their habitats, especially from the damaging effects of human activity.

In both urban and rural locations our interactions with wildlife are increasing. These interactions bring to light the changing landscape that wildlife encounters as their natural habitats intersect with the continuing expansion of our human presence.

It is when these interactions result in injury, disease, abandonment, or orphaning that wildlife rehabilitation is necessitated and plays a key role in wildlife conservation.

Definition of Wildlife Rehabilitation

Wildlife rehabilitation is the treatment and temporary care of injured, diseased, and displaced indigenous wildlife and the subsequent return of healthy animals to appropriate habitats in the wild.

(National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association)

Wildlife rehabilitation involves species-specific techniques for animal handling, surgical and medical care, nutrition, housing, and release. It blends veterinary medicine, animal behavior and environmental and animal ethics with public service and education. It provides a platform for educating the public about wildlife and environmental issues, inspiring care, respect and stewardship of wildlife individuals, populations, and habitats.

Code of Ethics

As a member of The National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, AIWC conforms to the following Code of Ethics:

A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to achieve high standards of animal care through knowledge and an understanding of the field. Individuals must make an effort to be informed of current rehabilitation information, methods, and regulations through participation in continuing education.

A wildlife rehabilitator should be responsible, conscientious, and dedicated, and should work continuously toward improving the quality of care given to wild animals undergoing rehabilitation.

A wildlife rehabilitator must abide by local, state, provincial and federal laws concerning wildlife, wildlife rehabilitation, and associated activities.

A wildlife rehabilitator should establish safe work habits and conditions, abiding by current health and safety practices at all times.

A wildlife rehabilitator should acknowledge limitations and enlist the assistance of a veterinarian and other trained professionals when appropriate.

A wildlife rehabilitator should respect other rehabilitators and persons in related fields, sharing skills and knowledge in the spirit of cooperation for the welfare of animals.

A wildlife rehabilitator should place optimum animal care above personal gain.

A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to provide professional and humane care in all phases of wildlife rehabilitation, protecting the

welfare, respecting the wildness, and maintaining the dignity of each animal in life and in death. Releasable animals should be maintained in a wild condition and released as soon as appropriate. Non releasable animals have a right to euthanasia.

A wildlife rehabilitator should encourage community support and involvement through volunteer training and public education. The common goal should be to promote a responsible concern for living beings and the welfare of the environment.

A wildlife rehabilitator should work from a foundation of sound ecological principles, incorporating appropriate conservation ethics and an attitude of stewardship.

A wildlife rehabilitator should conduct all business, activities, and communications in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, compassion, and commitment, realizing that an individual's conduct reflects on the entire field of wildlife rehabilitation.

*“The love for all living creatures
is the most noble attribute of man.”*

Charles Darwin

AIWC History

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) was incorporated in April 1993 and began recording patient admissions in 1994 with the admission of a red-tailed hawk found in a cow pasture in Dogpound, Alberta, who was emaciated and had a wing fracture. Located 45 minutes north of Calgary, near Madden, Alberta on 9.7 acres, and known as Rockyview Wildlife Recovery until 2004, AIWC has grown over the years into an accredited wildlife hospital, having received accreditation from the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association in 2009. In 1994 there were 111 animals

admitted for treatment and that number has increased to be as high as 2,064 in 2020 with 1,774 animals being admitted in 2024. On average since 1994 over 1,600 animals are admitted to AIWC for treatment every year.

AIWC's hospital building was originally a church in Didsbury, Alberta that was relocated to its current site and transformed into the hospital centre in 1995. The Annex building, which houses the administrative offices and functions as the onsite education classroom and volunteer training centre was later added in 2009.

Rehabilitation enclosures that suit a variety of species and rehabilitation needs have been added to the site since 1995 and now number 28 outdoor enclosures with a varying number of in hospital suites depending on need.

Since inception AIWC has received into care over 260 native species; the annual average number of different species admitted is approximately 138. Some of the lesser-known species admitted to AIWC have included Calliope hummingbird, marbled godwit, bushy-tailed woodrat, tiger salamander, American dipper and Say's phoebe. Annually the percentage of patient admissions by general group has remained consistent with the higher percentages being songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors, followed by mammals, shore, or game birds, and lastly reptiles and amphibians.

Some AIWC patients have arrived by airplane for treatment. From the Northwest Territories AIWC has received peregrine falcons, bald eagle, ravens, and black bear, while from Ontario a great horned owl and a wood frog, that was found on an airplane, were admitted to AIWC for care, and from Lethbridge came a northern flicker.

AIWC has long played a part in local disaster response. In 2000 AIWC received an injured and orphaned fawn following the Pine Lake tornado. In 2005 AWIC was one of the responders involved at the

Wabamun Lake oil and chemical spill, and in 2012 sent a volunteer team to the Plains Midfield Glennifer Lake pipeline spill. Most recently, in 2020, AIWC was asked to assist WILDNorth with oiled animals that were brought to them from the Fort McMurray area.

To remain current with rehabilitation techniques and knowledge, AIWC is a member of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. AIWC has presented at conferences of and been published in journals of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. In 2009 AIWC hosted the Alberta Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and facilitated the 2010 workshop with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre at the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Since then, AIWC staff have been active presenters at the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the Mayor's Expo in Calgary.

AIWC's accessibility and outreach has continued to grow since 1994. Initial access for reporting animals in distress or gathering 'let them be' information was via the phone hotline. AIWC extended its reach by launching its first website in 1999, completing the most recent revamping of the website in 2020. As recognition and interest in AIWC grew, memberships were initiated and newsletters, the Recovery Review and Talons and Tails, began publishing for members and the public. These newsletters remain the primary correspondence with the membership today. However, AIWC's presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, in addition to its increasingly visited online blog, garner a level of interest and appreciation for AIWC that only social media can afford.

Governance and Human Resources

Board

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation is governed by a board of directors elected by the voting membership of the organization at the annual general meeting. The board may have up to 11 members serving two-year terms, and functions in a governance role.

The board consists of several committees including executive, finance, compensation, and strategic planning, with the bylaws allowing for formation of other committees as required.

The board of directors meets every four to eight weeks. Regular contact with and monthly reporting to the board is maintained by AIWC's executive director.

Management

AIWC is managed by an executive director who reports to and takes direction from the board of directors.

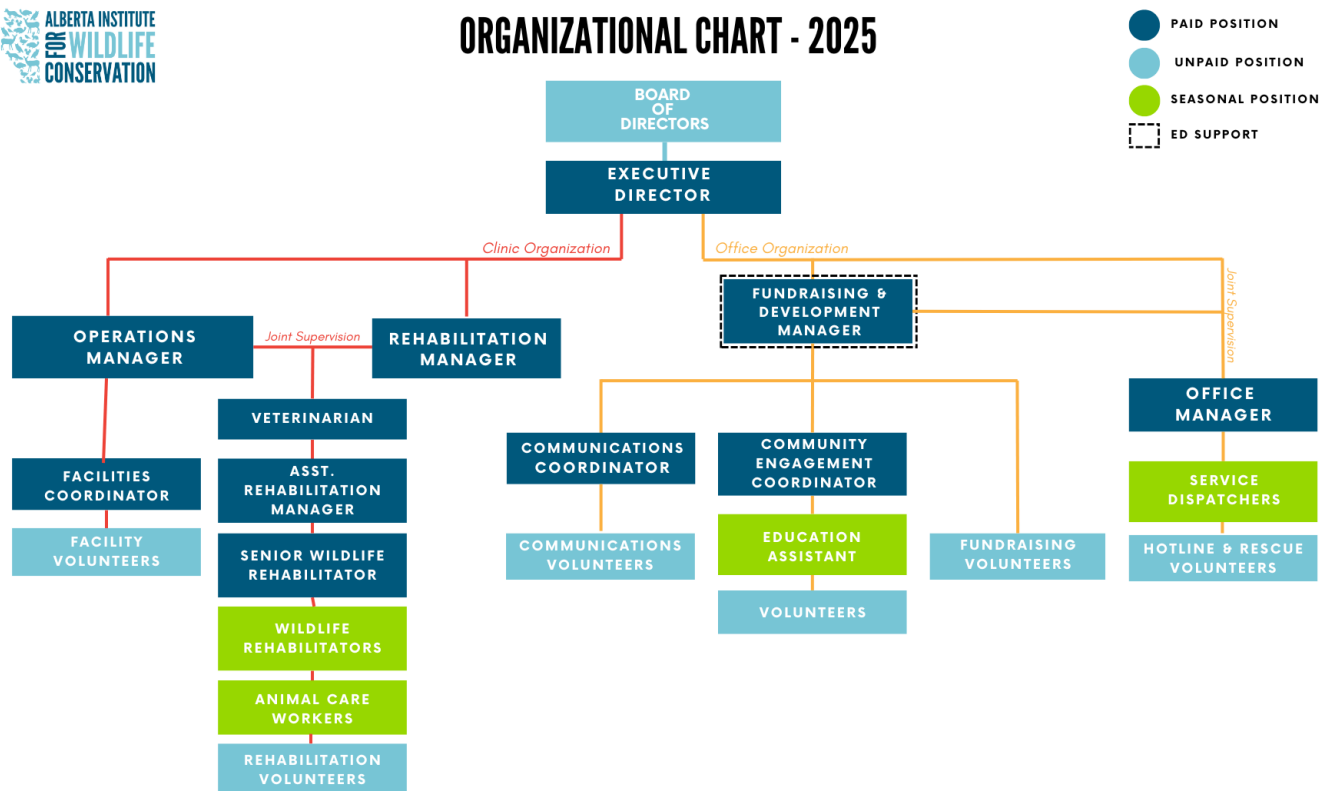
Staffing and Volunteers

Reporting to the executive director in the operation of AIWC are a full-time veterinarian, rehabilitation manager, operations manager, office manager, communications coordinator, community engagement coordinator, wildlife rehabilitators, and facilities coordinator. Rehabilitation staff are managed by the rehabilitation manager and operations manager. Education and outreach programmes are overseen by the community engagement coordinator, who is additionally responsible for volunteer recruitment, intake, and training prior to assignment within the organization.

Organization Structure – 2025



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART - 2025



“When we return wild animals to nature, we merely return them to what is already theirs. For man cannot give wild animals freedom, they can only take it away.”

Jacques Cousteau

Analysis and Trends

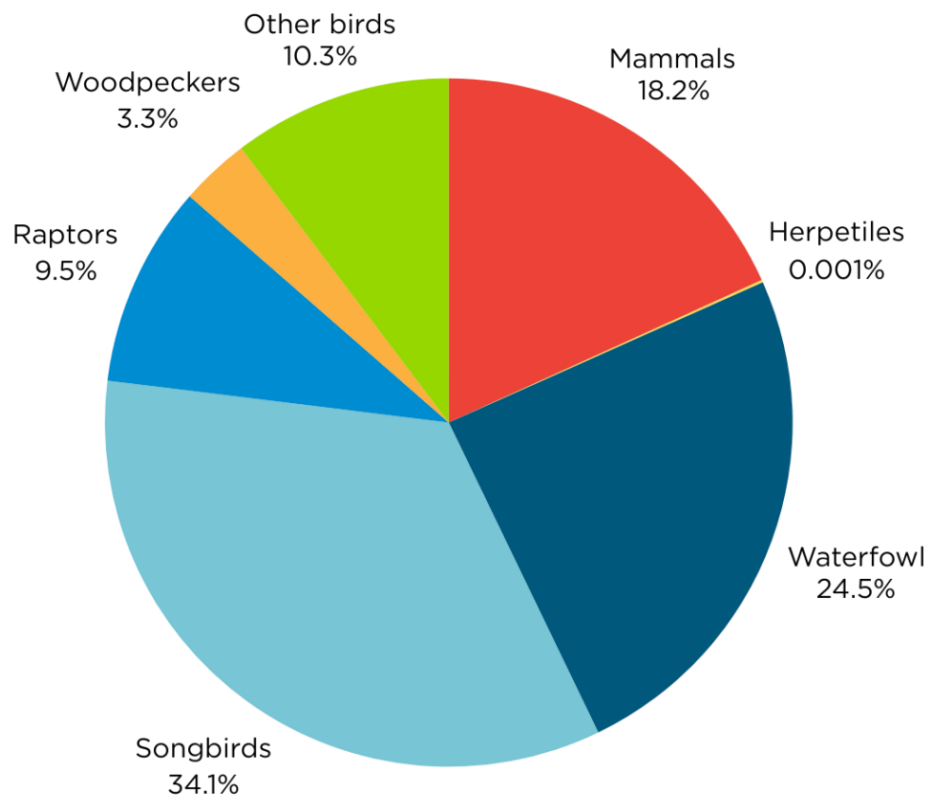
Current Operations

Since 1993, the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) has been a champion for the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife. Accredited through the Alberta Veterinary Medical

Association, AIWC serves the needs of Alberta's diverse wildlife in Calgary and southern Alberta. As a registered charity, AIWC relies on charitable donations and dedicated volunteers to support the more than 1,600 varied animals in need of care every year. AIWC welcomes Alberta's injured, orphaned, and oiled wildlife, small and large, from hummingbirds to bear cubs and moose calves.

Each year, the demand for our services increases. In 2024, AIWC treated 1,774 wild animals and helped hundreds more by assisting members of the public with wildlife-related issues, educating Albertans about natural wildlife behaviours and how best to live alongside our wildlife. AIWC also answered more than 7,100 wildlife-related calls, providing assistance and information to support the wellbeing, and in some cases, the survival of the animals.

2024 Patient Admissions



Our Space

Our wildlife hospital consists of a surgical suite, laboratory, x-ray room, and various care units. Outdoor enclosures support the rehabilitative cycle and include five large flight conditioning spaces for raptors, five songbird enclosures, a deer and moose enclosure, shorebird enclosure, a multipurpose enclosure, aquatic bird building, outdoor aquatic mammal enclosure, outdoor waterfowl enclosures, four aerial insectivore enclosures, and five mammal enclosures. In 2019 two large mammal enclosures were refit for rehabilitation needs specific to black bear cubs. This initiated a full assessment of the durability and longevity of the existing enclosures. This in turn affected the design and construction of an enlarged ungulate corral in 2023, and an industry leading bear cub enclosure, and raptor recovery runway in 2024.

Our People

The AIWC team is comprised of nine full-time staff, one year-round part-time staff member, three part-time casual year-round staff, and 125 volunteers.

We believe in developing awareness through education.

Through outreach programming, we work to create strong co-existence between Albertans and wildlife. In 2024 our education team delivered 111 wildlife education programs and presented at 19 onsite booths in person, reaching more than 5,347 members of the public. AIWC's education and public reach continues to expand. A positive outcome resulting from the pandemic shutdowns was that in person presentations quickly converted to virtual presentations and AIWC was able to reach audiences around the country. AIWC also has a strong social presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, with following and commentary daily. The website's blog was reinvigorated in 2021 to add a valuable education portal for news and timely information updates.

Strengths

After more than 32 years of operation in the field of wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release, the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation has established itself as a highly regarded and recognized industry leader. AIWC will continue to expand its capacity and presence through recognition, support and development of several key organizational and operational strengths:

- Financial position – sound resource management and planning
- Knowledge and expertise – trained and skilled staff and volunteers
- Fulltime veterinarian
- Dedication to and retention of volunteers
- Staff and board continuity
- Strategic planning, governance and partnerships
- Strong reputation – public awareness and confidence
- Government and industry accreditation and support
- Responsible land use planning
- Industry leading infrastructure design and development
- Resilience and longevity

Challenges

Operationally AIWC experiences the same challenges as other not-for-profit organizations that rely on individual and corporate donations, public sector grants, a small staff, and reliance on a large volunteer base. These challenges generally fall into categories of operations, funding, program delivery and strategy:

- Attraction, retention and motivation of staff and volunteers
- Board structure and succession planning
- Engaging and retaining donors
- Financial management – resource utilization and cost increases
- Infrastructure – facility and technology advancement demand

- Capital campaign – public recognition and support
- Environmental impact on operations – wildlife disease
- Outreach – education programs and social media
- Public perception and reputation of the organisation
- Compassion fatigue
- Mission drift
- Demand on programs and services – increasing patient loads
- Responsiveness to change in regulatory standards
- Organizational structuring – departments and disciplines to fulfill strategic directives
- Facility location – ease of access for staff and volunteers to rural location
- Team mental health – staff and volunteer burnout and turnover, loss of key individuals

Opportunities

Opportunities for growth and expansion of AIWC, as well as its social presence, outreach and impact become evident as the understanding of the need for wildlife rehabilitation increases. AIWC strives to promote this understanding and the coexistence with wildlife by:

- Ongoing tracking and evaluation of strategic directives and objectives
- Collaborative industry relationship development – strategic partnerships
- Demonstrating industry-leading standards of ethical care in wildlife rehabilitation
- Developing lead employment principles
- Environmentally conscious land use planning – design and development of new wildlife clinic
- Increasing intake and treatment capacity with new clinic facility – lead industry standard as potential teaching facility
- Expanding permitted species treatment

- Donor recognition and relationship enhancement – financial stability attracting increased donorship
- Legacy endowment advancement
- Increasing and expanding scope and reach of education programs
- Establishing trustworthy social media knowledge platforms
- Inviting corporate social responsibility and citizenry – expand corporate membership and engagement programs
- Mobile treatment clinic capability
- Oil and gas industry support and partnerships
- Social awareness and ongoing funding campaigns
- Being open to considering mergers and/or acquisitions

Risk Assessment

Internal and external factors can create risk scenarios for AIWC that may fall into any or a combination of types of risk such as operational, financial, reputational, regulatory, governance or strategic. Risk may also be identified as either risks that AIWC is compelled to avoid, or risks AIWC is willing to accept and mitigate in advancement of the organization. Each identifiable risk will carry a probability of occurrence and level of potential impact, however AIWC's risk tolerance is currently low to moderate:

Risks AIWC is compelled to avoid:

- Board, staff and volunteer turnover or burnout
- Fewer public sector grants available – lack of funding
- Breach of government regulation of animal species being treated
- Infrastructure damage or demise
- Failure of onsite safety management – potential for injury, litigation or disease
- Lack of understanding and respect for wildlife – public value shift, compassion fatigue

- Unsound management of financial resources
- Loss of accreditation
- Poor economy resulting in decreased donations
- Poor, or lack of implementation of, strategic objectives and directives
- Failure to maintain operational policy directives
- Poor public relations and media

Risks AIWC is willing to accept and mitigate:

- Board recruitment
- Staff expansion
- High-needs animals
- Triage rejections
- Reputational exposure through social media
- External contractual commitments
- New infrastructure
- Capital campaign

Risk factors that are determined as manageable will be mitigated through training, recognition, policies, planning and procedures. All risk probability and impact that would not trigger the implementation of the Business Continuity Plan, will be monitored at the executive and board level with regular review and oversight.

Emergent Trends

Wildlife rehabilitation is an evolving discipline drawing on knowledge from conservation, ecology, wildlife biology, veterinary medicine, animal behaviour and habitat, epidemiology, ethics, public service, and education. The primary goal is to provide professional level, species-specific care to injured, orphaned or pollution-affected wildlife to return the animal to full functioning for release back into its natural habitat. In cases where physical and behavioural rehabilitation is not possible, the wildlife rehabilitators provide the humane service of euthanasia to end suffering.

As the awareness of wildlife rehabilitation as a career discipline increases “many schools offer degrees in biology, ecology, wildlife management, animal science, and other related fields. Within biology or animal ecology degree programs, several schools now offer areas of specialization in wildlife, wildlife care, and/or pre-veterinary medicine. Many schools offer classes related to wildlife rehabilitation such as wildlife management, behavior, ecology, field techniques, restraint, raptor physiology, and others. There are more than 60 colleges offering accredited veterinary technology or animal health technology programs in North America. Some schools are affiliated with or located near wildlife rehabilitation facilities where students can volunteer or extern. Valuable training and experience are gained by working with either a private wildlife rehabilitator or at a clinic or center.” (*National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association, NWRA*) The International Wildlife Rehabilitators Council (IWRC) also offers basic and advanced skills courses in Canada and the US and through online courses.

Volunteering and practicums bring people from diverse backgrounds to the field of wildlife rehabilitation with or without a specific education platform. It is sometimes the initial step into a directed career or related discipline involving the care and rehabilitation of wildlife. In a pioneering project with the University of Guelf’s School of Veterinary Medicine, a relationship was established with AIWC in 2020 for the annual placement of a veterinary medicine internship in wildlife rehabilitation. This placement offers an exposure to the field of wildlife rehabilitation not ordinarily part of a veterinary medicine curriculum.

There is a direct correlation between the human encroachment into wild habitats and the increasing numbers of injured and orphaned wildlife presentations at wildlife rehabilitation centres locally, provincially, and throughout North America each year. Statistics and

reporting show not only these admissions, but the rising number of rehabilitated animals being released back into the wild.

Human interaction can also bring unexpected results as seen during the pandemic lockdown periods of 2020 when AIWC received into care its highest recorded number of animal intakes in a one-year period. Considered an essential service and operating throughout the pandemic, in 2020, 2,064 animals were treated by AIWC. These numbers reflect an increased awareness of wildlife as people, whose movements were restricted, made their way outdoors and became witness to the immediate presence and need of local wildlife.

As knowledge in the field of wildlife rehabilitation continues to advance, increasing importance is placed on the roles that awareness and public education play. In addition to the rehabilitation and administrative staff a centre will have for operations, it now also has communication, marketing, and education specialists to relate relevance and accountability of the organization, and the responsibility of fostering coexistence with and understanding of local wildlife.

“That is our hope. Because if we all start listening and helping, then surely, together, we can make the world a better place for all living things. Can’t we?”

Jane Goodall

Strategic Objectives and Directives

By 2030 AIWC will be positioned as an industry leader in wildlife rehabilitation. To accomplish this, we will focus on funding, infrastructure, human resources (staff and volunteers) and public awareness.

FUNDING

Objective: AIWC will dedicate resources and ensure development of recurring revenue from diverse revenue streams to provide stability to ongoing operations and to fund a major capital campaign.

Directives: AIWC will:

- hire a Fundraising and Development Manager
- increase monthly donors, grants, general revenue and major donors by 10%
- identify and retain a professional fundraising association
- market and communicate AIWC's Legacy Program

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Objective: AIWC will be a leader in wildlife rehabilitation and education by investing in and continuing to develop leading edge infrastructure.

Directives: AIWC will:

- accomplish the objectives of our capital campaign for a world-class hospital facility.
- renovate, expand and upgrade existing structures to improve quality and capacity.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

Objective: AIWC will create a supportive working environment that will attract, engage and retain skilled team members.

Directives: AIWC will

- continue to enhance support to team members by providing development opportunities and mental health resources
- identify and resource key roles with priority on directors and staff

- provide incentives and educational opportunities to attract and retain a reliable volunteer base
- review staff-to-volunteer ratio to determine/evaluate operational optimization

PUBLIC AWARENESS:

Objective: AIWC will expand its reach and presence in the community and industry, maintaining itself at the forefront of wildlife education and rehabilitation.

Directives: AIWC will:

- develop collaborative community partnerships
- develop and expand education initiatives to serve the community
- enhance AIWC's media and digital presence

Key Performance Indicators

The following key performance indicators will be used to measure how efficiently AIWC is operating, utilizing its resources, and how key activities are being performed in relation to the strategic objectives and directives.

Rehabilitation success rate - # in versus #out

Attendance at community events and presentations

Education programs – number and reach

Fiscal and operational stability – growth and longevity

HR activities – training, skills development and support of staff and volunteers

Legacy advancement

Media appearances and press releases

Memberships

Physical plant – infrastructure

Relationship building

Social media reach

Volunteer Retention, Engagement and Appreciation

Plan Review and Renewal

AIWC will review the strategic plan on an annual basis to the extent of the key performance indicators noted. This review will be conducted by survey and summary report by the board in conjunction with the executive director and key staff members.

Review of the strategic plan for the purpose of amendment and renewal will take place every three years. This allows time and opportunity for implementation of the strategic objectives and noted directives.

*“We don’t own the earth. We are the earth’s caretakers.
We take care of it and all the things on it. And when we’re done with it,
it should be left better than we found it.”*

Katherine Hannigan
