

**ALBERTA INSTITUTE  
FOR WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 – 2027

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## Executive Summary

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) has created this Strategic Plan of 2022 to guide our operations by determining the goals of the organization, and how we will prioritize our resources. This document will provide guidance to AIWC, its Board of Directors, management, employees, and volunteers in pursuit of its vision and mission.

AIWC has been operating in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation since 1993. The organization is a non-profit, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association accredited animal hospital with limited resources, that has experienced a great amount of growth over its 29-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 and intends to make a positive impact on wildlife conservation, rehabilitation, and our co-existence with wildlife.

This document targets four main objectives of AIWC:

A focus on fundraising efforts to ensure continued financial viability of the organization;

Improve infrastructure of the AIWC facility;

Properly manage human resources of AIWC to ensure retention of knowledge and foster internal harmony;

Increase public awareness of AIWC and proper wildlife conservation 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 being a leader in the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. We are entrusted stewards, providing expert advice and education, fostering an appreciation of wildlife.

## Core Values

### STEWARDSHIP –

At AIWC we are responsible **stewards** of the organization securing the growth, sustainability, and legacy of wildlife.

### ACCOUNTABILITY –

At AIWC we are **accountable** to our wildlife and human communities, including our donors, members, staff and volunteers, industry colleagues, and ourselves.

### COMPASSION –

At AIWC we are fostering the co-existence with, and **compassionate** and ethical treatment of wildlife.

### IMPACT –

At AIWC we are maximizing our **impact** through education, outreach, and social awareness.

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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.

## 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.

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

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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 radius 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 1,761 animals being admitted in 2021. On average since 1994 over 1,000 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 20 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 150. 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, sea, 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 AIWC 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 AIWC was asked to assist with the oiled animals that were brought to WildNorth in 2020.

To keep current with rehabilitation techniques and knowledge, AIWC became 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, You Tube, 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.

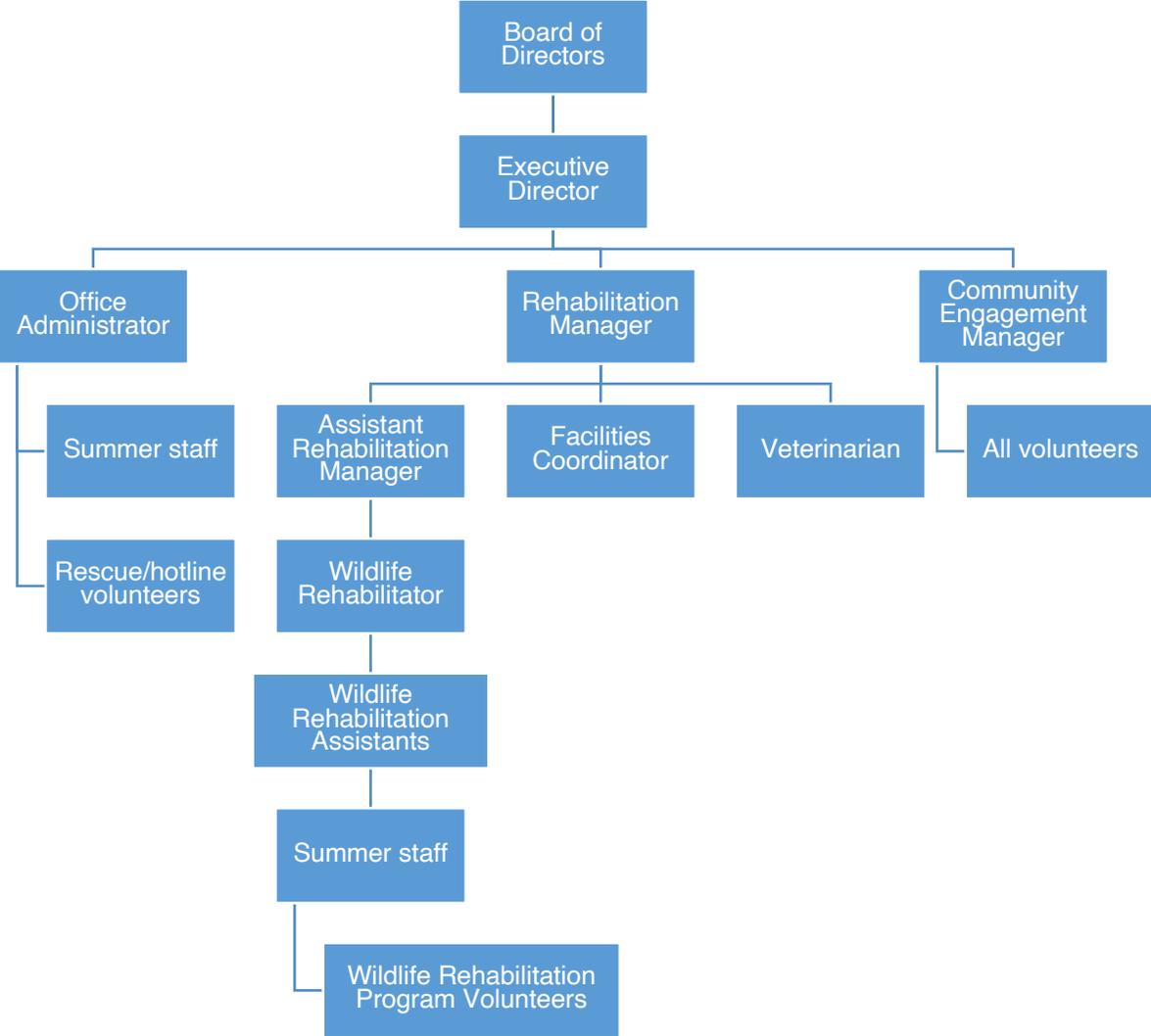
## Management

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

## Staffing and Volunteers

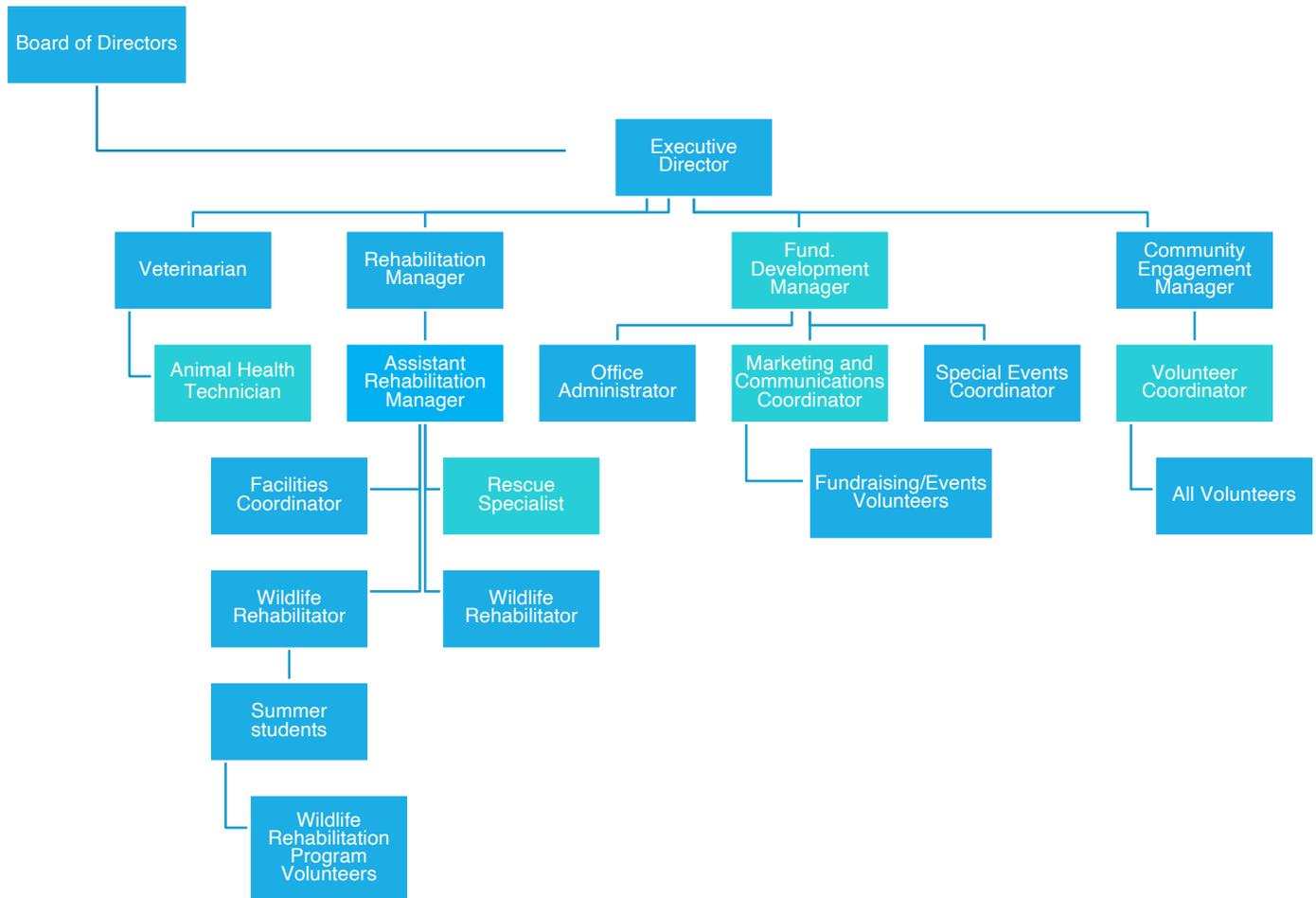
Reporting to the executive director in the operation of AIWC are a full-time veterinarian, rehabilitation manager, community engagement manager, wildlife rehabilitators, office administrator, and facilities coordinator. Rehabilitation staff are managed by the rehabilitation manager. Education and outreach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

# Organization Structure – current – 2022



## Organization Structure – future

Highlighted positions are not yet created.



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*“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 —

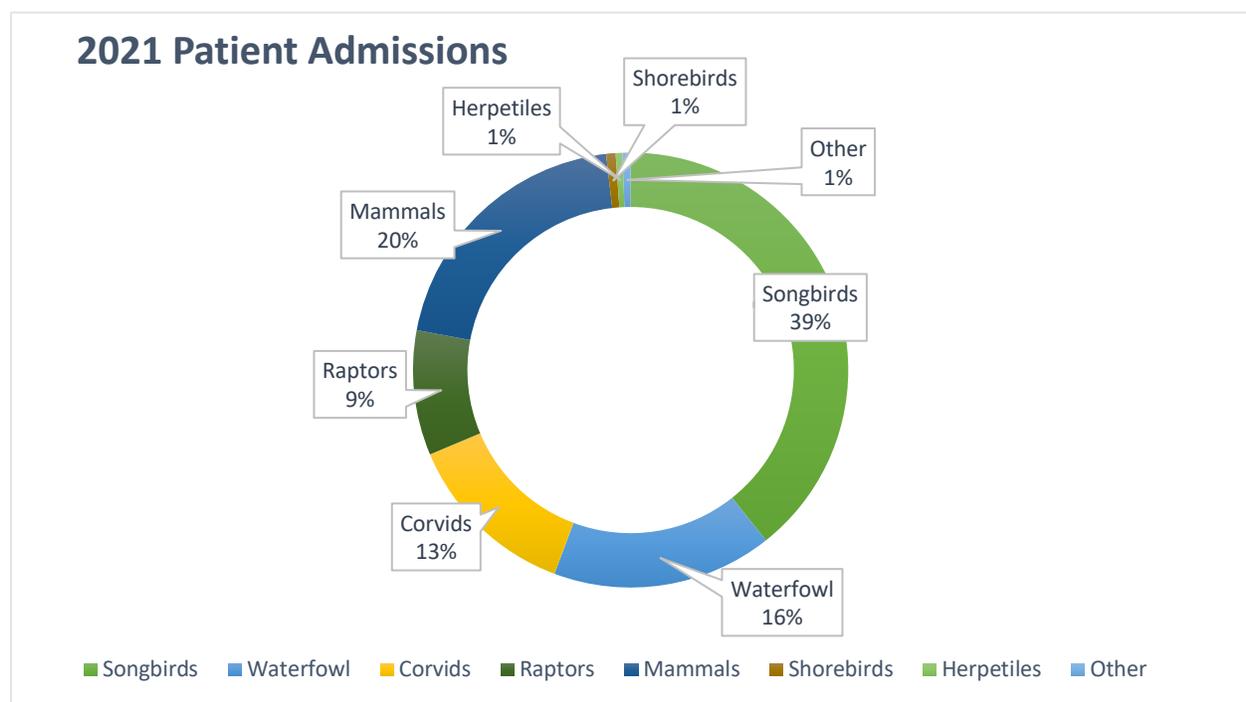
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# Analysis and Trends

## 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 1,000 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 2021, AIWC treated 1,761 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 6,800 wildlife related calls, providing assistance and information to support the wellbeing, and in some cases, the survival of the animals.



## 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 two large flight-conditioning spaces for raptors, five songbird enclosures, a pasture and corral for young deer and moose, a shorebird enclosure, aquatic bird building, outdoor aquatic mammal enclosure, two outdoor waterfowl enclosures, two aerial insectivore enclosures, and four mammal enclosures. In 2019 two of the large mammal enclosures were refitted for rehabilitation needs specific to black bear cubs. This initiated a full assessment of the durability and longevity of existing enclosures, which in turn affected the design and pending build of new enclosures including an industry leading bear cub enclosure, raptor recovery runway and ungulate corral.

## Our People

The AIWC team is comprised of seven full-time staff, two part-time staff, and more than 140 volunteers.

## We believe in developing awareness through education.

Through outreach programming, we work to create strong co-existence between Albertans and wildlife. In 2021 our education team delivered 125 wildlife education programs and presented in person at 5 onsite booths, reaching more than 5,160 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.

## 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 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

- Engaging and retaining donors

- Financial management and resource utilization

- Infrastructure – updating aging facilities

- Environmental impact of operations

- Outreach – education programs and social media

- Public perception and reception

- Compassion fatigue

- Responsiveness to change

- Staff structuring – departments and disciplines to comply with strategic directives

- Team mental health

## 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:

- Collaborative industry relationship development

Demonstrating lead industry standard of ethical care in wildlife rehabilitation

Developing lead employment principles

Environmentally conscious land use planning

Donor recognition and relationship enhancement

Legacy endowment planning

Increasing and expanding scope of education programs

Establishing trustworthy social media knowledge platform

Inviting corporate social responsibility and citizenry

Mobile treatment clinic capability

Social awareness and funding campaigns

## Risk Assessment

Internal and external factors can create risk scenarios for AIWC that may fall into any one, 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 risk AIWC is willing to undertake in advancement of the organization. Each identifiable risk will carry a probability of occurrence and level of potential impact; however, AIWC identifies as having a low to moderate risk tolerance:

Risks AIWC is compelled to avoid -

Board, staff and volunteer turnover or burnout

Fewer public sector grants available

Government regulation of animal species being treated

Infrastructure damage or demise

Lack of understanding and respect for wildlife  
Unsound management of financial resources  
Loss of accreditation  
Poor economy resulting in decreased donations  
Poor implementation of strategic directives  
Failure to maintain operational policy directives  
Poor public relations and media

Risks AIWC is willing to undertake –

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 addressed with training, recognition, policies, planning and procedures. All risk probability and impact will be monitored at the executive and board level with regular review and oversight.

## Emergent Trends

Wildlife rehabilitation is a developing 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 is 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 Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, 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 develop, increasing importance can be 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.

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*“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*

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# Strategic Objectives and Directives

## FUNDING

Objective: AIWC will dedicate resources and ensure development of recurring revenue from diverse revenue streams to fund capital projects and provide stability to resourcing operations.

Directives: AIWC will:

- create a plan to develop long term financial stability
- dedicate an expert resource to formulate an executable fundraising plan
- dedicate resources to bolster funding for and plan public awareness strategy
- continuously seek new funding and fundraising opportunities
- develop a legacy funding program

## INFRASTRUCTURE:

Objective: AIWC will be a leader in wildlife rehabilitation and education by investing in and developing state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Directives: AIWC will:

- complete a land use analysis and assessment of current and future needs
- initiate a capital campaign for long-term infrastructure investment

- complete major enclosures for bear, raptor, and ungulate rehabilitation
- upgrade existing clinic to leading-edge hospital facility

## HUMAN RESOURCES:

Objective: AIWC will attract and retain skilled team members.

Directives: AIWC will

- enhance support to team members by providing professional development opportunities and mental health resources, and conducting full review of current employee benefits
- review its succession plan, focusing on management positions
- resource new key roles, with priority on directors and staff, while supporting essential volunteer base

## 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
- establish a full-time public awareness, marketing, and communications role
- develop and expand education programs to reach new audiences
- increase knowledge-sharing with industry peers

## Key Performance Indicators

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

# in versus # out – rehabilitation success rate

Attendance at Community events and presentations

Education programs

Fiscal and Operational Stability – Longevity

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

Legacy building

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 as previously 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.

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*“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.”*

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Katherine Hannigan