

May 2007

BEAR WITH US



CES students pet Kuma, a Karelain Bear Dog

CAN BEARS AND HUMANS COEXIST IN CARDSTON COUNTY?

Bears have been on the landscape for thousands of years. However, due to expanding populations and increasing energy needs, the habitat of the grizzly bear has decreased drastically over the past century.

However, the establishment of national parks such as Glacier National Park and Waterton Lakes

National Park where bears can exist in a protected environment, has allowed bear populations to in-



crease again in these areas. Now visitors can go to the park anytime in the summer and see this majestic animal rummaging for food in bushes along the hills and roadsides.

Bears out of the park are increasing as well. Cardston is a small town nestled in the foothills 30 miles east of Waterton Lakes National Park. Small

communities surrounding Cardston make up Cardston County. Mountain View, Beazer, Boundary Creek, Leavitt, Hillspring, Glenwood, Kimball, the Community Pasture (cattle grazing land), and some areas on the Blood Reserve have seen a huge increase in bear population over the past five years due to their unique location near both provincial and federal parks.

What is the reason for this increase of bears in Cardston County?

These communities are in a unique spot. Waterton Lakes National Park form their western border, Glacier Park, the southern, Police Provincial Park, Payne Lake Provincial Park and Pole Haven Wilderness to the south. As the parks fill to capacity with bears, they begin to spill over into ranching lands, and other places inhabited by humans.

Another possible reason for this influx could be that more and more people are

inhabiting these wilderness areas.

Bears live to eat. People help provide that food thus creating bear attractants which bring the bears in conflict with humans.

Are there other reasons we need to explore? Should we find out why this is occurring?

Certainly we are grateful bears are still on the landscape. Would we respect our wilderness as much and value its beauty as a place of hallowed solitude if the great bear was no longer with us? Would the forest ecosystem itself be effected by the loss of this amazing animal?

Can bears and humans coexist in Cardston County?



Kassidy, Makenna and Hannah see what a grizzly feels like close up. Lyle Lester, a Fish and Wildlife officer, brought this bear in to educate students.

We invited special guests into our class to help us understand the perspectives of different people in our community And of course - the bear's perspective.

In the following pages we will try to share our journey of learning with you.