

Alberta Trappers Association
PO Box 6020
Westlock, AB
T7P 2P7

Chris Wilke Memorial Scholarship

Dear Selection Committee,

Whether it's glassing Rams across rugged peaks or chasing Mule Deer up the coulees in the badlands, this province is blessed with a vast diversity of landscapes not found anywhere else in Canada. However, the awe-inspiring wildlife accompanying these unique landscapes connects us through a community of biologists, hunters, trappers, and anglers that works towards conserving, protecting, and restoring these species and landscapes we've grown to love. This love is what connects our spirit to a place or species and establishes a sense of belonging. These activities also give us the profound ability to glimpse through the curtains of the ecological world. We start to see relationships between plant communities, ecotypes, topography, prey abundance, and natural and anthropogenic disturbance. As a result of this new way of seeing, we notice the environmental change as we have our hands on the pulse of that change.

In today's society, we are seeing the declining health of our environment through habitat loss resulting from increased urbanization, natural resource development, and climate change as our species' population continues to grow. This change has also been noticed in our groups outside our collaborative network. In recent years, new and old user groups have come to the forefront of these conversations about wildlife conservation. Non-consumptive user groups such as eco-tourists, wildlife photographers, and watchers are growing in numbers year over year. Often times outspoken about the ethical and moral justification for consumptive wildlife use. The Hudson's Bay fur ban shows the societal results of this. The fur trade defined this company's history in Canada. Similarly, Indigenous groups such as the Inuit have been criticized globally for their traditional fur seal hunting practices, which sparked an EU ban on importing seal fur from Canada, resulting in a massive economic decline for remote northern communities. Indigenous representation at the decision-making table has been pushed as communities have documented and spoken out about the decline in wildlife populations and habitat.

No matter your opinions, preconceived notations, or personal beliefs on how these other stakeholder groups interact with nature and wildlife, we all want the same thing, the continued persistence of wildlife populations for future generations to love and enjoy as we have. To guarantee that, we, as conservationists, need to put our differences aside and focus on our shared values surrounding wildlife. The sense of belonging, the life-changing experiences, and most of all, the love. We can learn from and respect each other's perspectives and complex value systems as we work together to enact meaningful change. My hope is that I can be at the forefront of this movement as a Provincial Wildlife Manager. I hope to be a voice for all trappers, hunters, anglers, and all other conservationists in this province. Currently, I'm entering my final year as part of the Environmental and Conservation Sciences program at the University of Alberta. I also graduated from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology's Conservation Biology program. I will be expanding my diverse educational background as I look to join the University of British

Columbia community as a Master's student in Adam Ford's Wildlife Restoration Ecology Lab in 2024. I hope this education, combined with my passion for trapping, hunting, and fishing, will give me the opportunity to shape conservation, protection, and restoration plans in the future to ensure the wildlife we love stays in these landscapes of Alberta.

This province has been my home my entire life, and as a result, I feel a duty to the next generation to ensure they're given a chance to experience it as I did. I do my best to give back to the wildlife community through volunteering/mentoring. I serve as part of several wildlife-based committees, including the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society as their Student Director and the local Delta Waterfowl chapter. These positions allow me to organize community-based events to unite like-minded individuals for the betterment of wildlife through conservation projects such as Delta Waterfowl's Henhouse project. I hope to positively influence students' early career development through programs such as Native Student Professional Development Program, where I serve as the coordinator. I also strive to pass my passion for wildlife to anyone willing to listen through hunting and fishing mentoring programs such as Delta Waterfowl's University Hunts Program, AHEIA's hunting mentorship program, and ACA's Kid's Can Catch Events. I have also started a provincial University Hunting Mentorship Program through the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society targeting environmental and conservation students to ensure they have the opportunity to understand and experience the activity and bring those values forward with their careers. I do this because we need to re-establish people with those long-lost connections and relationships to the outdoor world to conserve wildlife.

Remington Bracher
Bracher@ualberta.ca
(587) 830-1650