

Alberta Trappers Association  
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### **Chris Wilke Memorial Scholarship**

From the big game species that roam the fields and forests of Alberta to the trout and char that inhabit our headwaters, there is one constant. The conservation efforts are funded through Hunters, Anglers, and Trappers. It's a sense of duty that's engrained in our blood and culture founded by our life experiences and passions that were passed down from our Father, Mother, Grandparents. Wildlife management is based on a sustainable harvest and uses to protect the resource for future generations. Trapping Fur-bearing animals is no different. We have a clear set of rules and regulations similar to hunting or fishing to ensure this. However, trapping, hunting, and fishing are about more than practical hands-on wildlife management. It's about the connection we share with the environment.

Like many of you fellow outdoorsmen and women, I find peace in the solitude of the woods. The feel of the cold crisp mornings against your face. The intimate wildlife knowledge you gain through all the mistakes you make along the way—the eventual success of the first harvest of that target species. We have a relationship with wildlife that most people will never understand. It's our love for these species we chase that ensures we work towards conserving them. We manage species through targeted wildlife management units, seasons, and limits. This ensures populations stay relatively constant, protecting the species from disease outbreaks and overpopulation. We are the stewards of the environment like the First Nations before us. We are the boots on the ground for providing supporting information such as logbooks to support wildlife regulations.

Trapping not only helps to keep balance but also echoes our national heritage. Canada was built upon the fur industry. My First Nations ancestors used fur-bearing animals for food, medicine, and clothing. Perhaps even more importantly, these animals held a spiritual connection to the land for the people. The teachings we learn from this connection is something we should all strive to protect. Especially as society continually advances requiring more and more natural resources to sustain us. We must continue to be the gold standard for conservation

involvement, to protect this heritage as societal pressures continually question our ethics and morals.

Currently, I'm finishing my 2-year Conservation Biology program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. I have been accepted to the University of Alberta to attend their Conservation Biology program to finish my BSc. Looking forward, I hope to continue my academic journey by finishing a graduate program specializing in wildlife management. I hope this education, combined with my passion for trapping, hunting, and fishing, will give me the opportunity to work as a wildlife biologist for the Government of Alberta. I hope to be a voice for all trappers, hunters, and anglers in the province, ensuring future generations can enjoy the outdoors as we have.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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