

# Banff's Indigenous Experiences Map

This map is intended to be used for a walking tour around the townsite, and for cycling tours to the outlying sites.

Fall 2025, Version 2.0

**Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies**  
111 Bear St



**Vermilion Lakes Archaeological Site**  
\*outside of the map area

**Stewart Steinhauer Stone Sculptures**



**Buffalo Nations Museum**  
1 Birch Ave



**Cave and Basin National Historic Site**



**The Banff Trading Post**  
101 Birch Ave



**Banff Park Museum National Historic Site**  
91 Banff Ave



**Historic Luxton Home Museum**  
206 Beaver St



**Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity**

**Carter-Ryan Gallery**  
229 Bear St



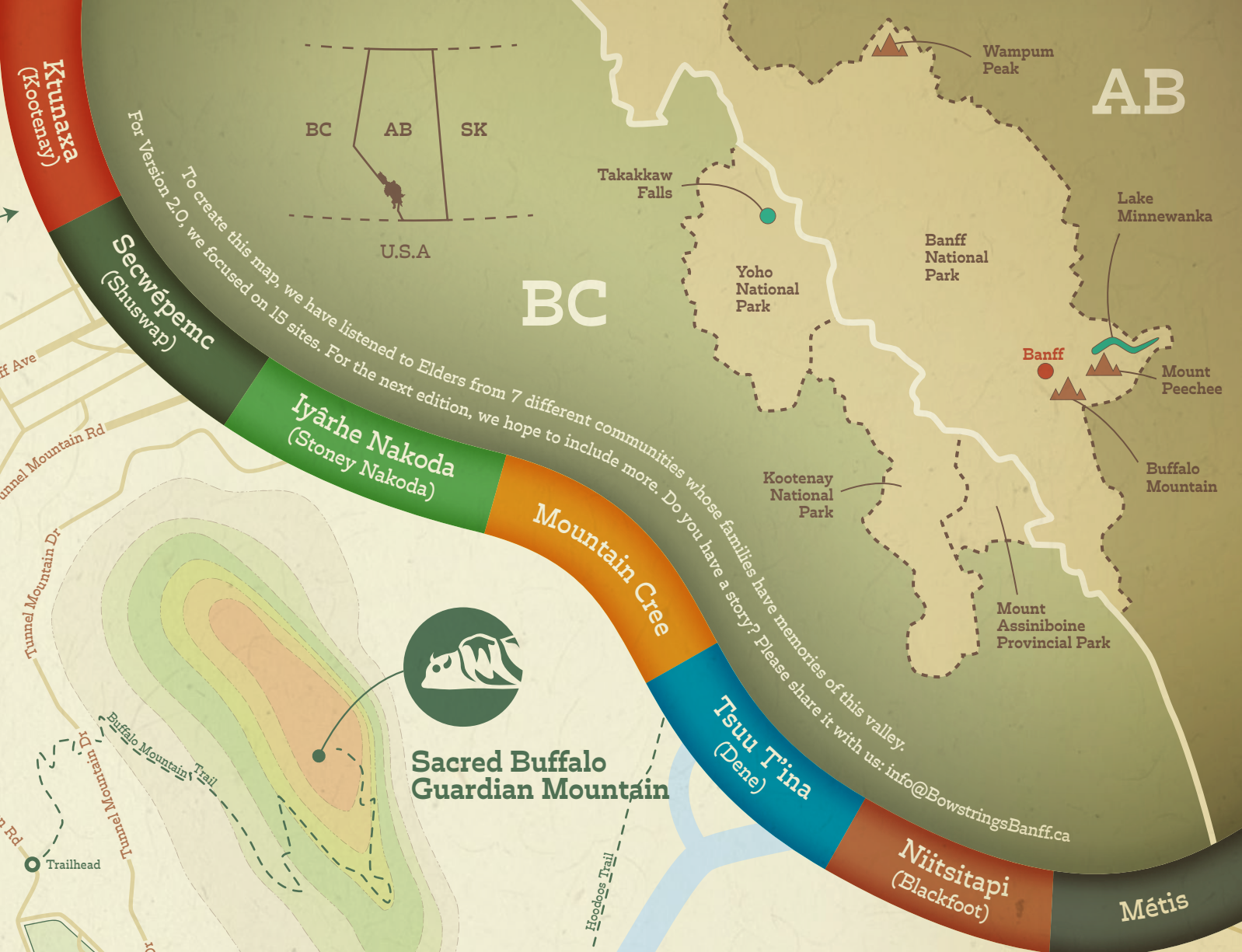
**Buffalo Skulls**  
211 Bear St



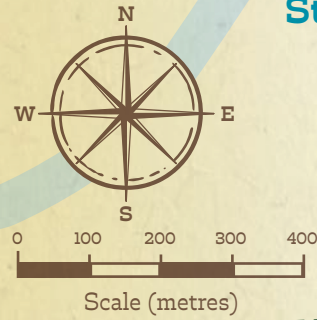
**Mt. Norquay Road Lookout**  
\*outside of the map area



**Cascade Mountain Meadow**  
\*outside of the map area

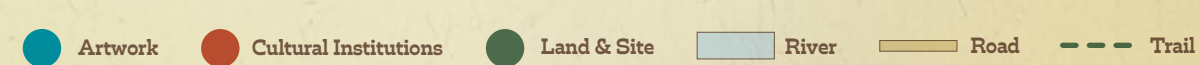


To create this map, we have listened to Elders from 7 different communities whose families have memories of this valley. Do you have a story? Please share it with us: [info@BowstringsBanff.ca](mailto:info@BowstringsBanff.ca)



**Kekuli Site 1 - Bow Valley South**

**Acknowledgement**  
Drawn to Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain and the Healing Waters, Indigenous Peoples from many language groups have come here for millenia to meet in peace.  
The Bowstrings Heritage Foundation and its founders are grateful to have worked collaboratively for twenty years, with Elders and knowledge sharers from both sides of the Rocky Mountains, to assemble Banff's Indigenous Experiences Map. We invite contributions and improvements.





### Buffalo Nations Museum

1 Birch Ave

What strikes you about the architecture of this building? Built by Norman Luxton in 1953 to resemble a defensive palisade characteristic of trading forts used by the Hudson Bay Company, he provided it to showcase the heritage of First Nations of the Northern Plains and Canadian Rockies and the role of the Hudson Bay Company. Presenting traditional and contemporary exhibitions, it is now run by the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society, founded by Chief Walking Buffalo and other notable Indigenous community members. The Society continues its vision to have a centre for peace and education on the banks of the river.



### Carter-Ryan Gallery

229 Bear St

From the Little Red River Cree Nation, Jason Carter is an Indigenous painter, sculptor, illustrator, and public artist with a gallery located in Banff. Bursting with lively colours, his multi-layered and strategic lines are instantly-recognizable fixtures that portray the area's deep connection to wildlife and landscapes.



### Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain

This site is also known on the government's official maps and by Parks Canada as "Tunnel Mountain". To many First Nations, this mountain is named after the sleeping buffalo that it resembles, and which has guided them for thousands of years. From the east, the people of the buffalo followed the trail to the Healing Waters. When they saw Buffalo Mountain they knew they were one day's walk away. From the west, as the people of the salmon followed the old trails to the Springs, they understood their journey was nearly complete once the mountain came into view. The mountain plays a significant role in the creation stories of some Indigenous communities.

### The Banff Trading Post

101 Birch Ave

Commissioned by Norman Luxton in 1903, the Banff Trading Post provided space for First Nations to sell and trade goods with settlers and tourists. Tourism growth coincided with a time when First Nations were increasingly excluded from Banff National Park's boundaries. The handwork of Métis and Indigenous women was adored and in demand. This helped both financially and to keep their traditional practices alive during challenging times. Today, Indigenous craftspeople continue to sell their handmade moccasins, beadwork, and dreamcatchers to locals and tourists at The Banff Trading Post.



### Historic Luxton Home Museum

206 Beaver St

Owned by the Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation, this museum displays Indigenous artifacts collected by and gifted to Norman and Georgina Luxton, Banff's prominent tourism pioneers. Through displays of Indigenous beadwork and art, the museum highlights relationships between this notable family and local First Nations during Banff's early days. The deep respect they held for one another led to the building of the Buffalo Nations Museum.



### Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity

Renowned for its Indigenous Leadership and Indigenous Arts programs, Banff Centre played a major role in the Indigenous cultural renaissance after World War II and continues to support community through a wide range of residencies, workshops, talks, and events. Among significant Indigenous artworks in Banff Centre's permanent collection are the public sculptures that take the form of the elk, caribou and moose antlers by Brian Jungen (Dane-zaa), titled *The ghosts on top of my head* (2010-2011).



### Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

111 Bear St

Founded in 1968, Catharine Robb Whyte and Peter Whyte envisioned a centre for art that would build community, similar to the art museums near her home in New England. Initially named *Wa-Che-Yo-Cha-Pa* by Chief Walking Buffalo, Catharine understood the phrase to mean "Anything you see, anything you do, it's perfect. Doesn't matter what you do or what you see. All there, would draw influence." Honouring these connections, the museum houses Indigenous artifacts and hosts exhibitions, many about the Stoney Nakoda, whose ancestral homelands encompass Banff.



### Mt. Norquay Road Lookout

Mt. Norquay is named after Manitoba Premier John Norquay, Métis, Canada's first Indigenous premier. A tall man, he was a powerful canoeist and skilled diplomat. He climbed part way up this mountain in 1886. From the lookout on Mt. Norquay Rd., one can see across the valley to the Healing Waters and the Banff townsite below. The visible remains of a kekuli (kiguli) are located close to The Juniper Hotel on the lower slopes. The Juniper has been a gathering place for Elders from both sides of the mountains for the past twenty years and displays significant Indigenous art from across Canada. Nearby is the earliest mine in the park, where early peoples chipped out chert for stone tools.



### Kekuli Site 1 - Bow Valley South

Described as kekulis (kigulis), pit houses, or earth lodges, these semi-subterranean buildings, covered with a vegetated wooden roof, harness the insulating power of the earth to protect inhabitants from the elements. "Banff was also long a site for a winter village of early Salishan speaking people," notes Kainai Elder Dr. Leroy Little Bear. "[They] likely used intermountain travel routes to hunt bison, sheep, tend seasonal agricultural plots of plants, and meet others." Dominion Archaeologist Harlan Smith protected this significant "housepit village" at the Banff Springs Golf Course in 1913. Comprising fourteen structures, these dwelling sites were Canada's first protected archaeological site until a golf course expansion in 1928 caused their destruction. These homes show the connection between communities across the mountains. The Bow Valley was a peaceful gathering place for many Indigenous Peoples.

### Stewart Steinhauer Stone Sculptures

An Indigenous artist with Cree, Anishinaabe, and Mohawk roots, Stewart Steinhauer has many sculptures dotting Banff's downtown: *Sleeping Buffalo* in Central Park; *Thunderbird and Eagle*, at Bear and Lynx Streets; and *Mistahiya* in front of the Whyte Museum. "For uncounted millennia before the beginning of the colonial period," Steinhauer says, "there was a Turtle Island; that is where my creative work springs up from. I work under the direction of the Rock Spirit." Then, as now, the lands around Banff inspire, provide, and sustain life for all who visit.



### Banff Park Museum National Historic Site

91 Banff Ave

The museum houses numerous Indigenous artifacts, including stone tools unearthed near the Vermilion Lakes. Dating back more than 10,000 years, these collections demonstrate that First Peoples have lived in the area for millennia. The museum is the oldest natural history museum in western Canada. By understanding how the land has changed with time, the museum also allows us to see how Indigenous communities existed and changed in the Bow Valley, while using the resources for their needs.



### Cave and Basin National Historic Site

Drawn to the medicinal and spiritual properties that flow from its thermal source, First Nations have visited the hot springs for millennia, including Stoney Nakoda members, who drew water from the springs four times per year. Following a pipe ceremony in May 2013, Elder Roland Rollinmud unveiled his multigenerational mural that showcases Stoney Nakoda's connection with this sacred space. The presence of the archaeological site, natural springs, and distinctive vegetation all emphasize this area's significance to Indigenous communities.



### Buffalo Skulls

211 Bear St

Dating back 6000 years, two buffalo (bison) skulls were unearthed during the construction of the Bison Courtyard in 2005. The archeological finds on the Vermilion Lakes show that for centuries the land around Banff provided the sustenance needed for all to survive in the mountains. Today, the skulls are displayed inside the Bison Courtyard and the Buffalo Nations Museum.



### Cascade Mountain Meadow

First Nations have hunted and gathered for millennia in the meadows of the mountain Stoney Nakoda call *Mini Hrpa* ("where the water falls"). After European settlement, surrounding First Nations gathered here for Banff's "Indian" Days festival (1894 - 1978), a tourism spectacle that let visitors tour tipis and pose for photos. Indian Days allowed Indigenous communities to visit their traditional lands for ceremonies, food, and spiritual connection after the 1885 creation of the Banff National Park restricted use and access.



### Vermilion Lakes Archaeological Site

Near the end of Vermilion Lakes Road, archaeologists have unearthed evidence of prehistoric shelters, hearths and stone tools, including leaf-shaped spear points. These findings corroborate First Nations' oral traditions that date their presence back more than thirteen thousand years. This diverse and varied region has long been important for animals, flora and Indigenous communities. The circle of life continues to guide the valley.

