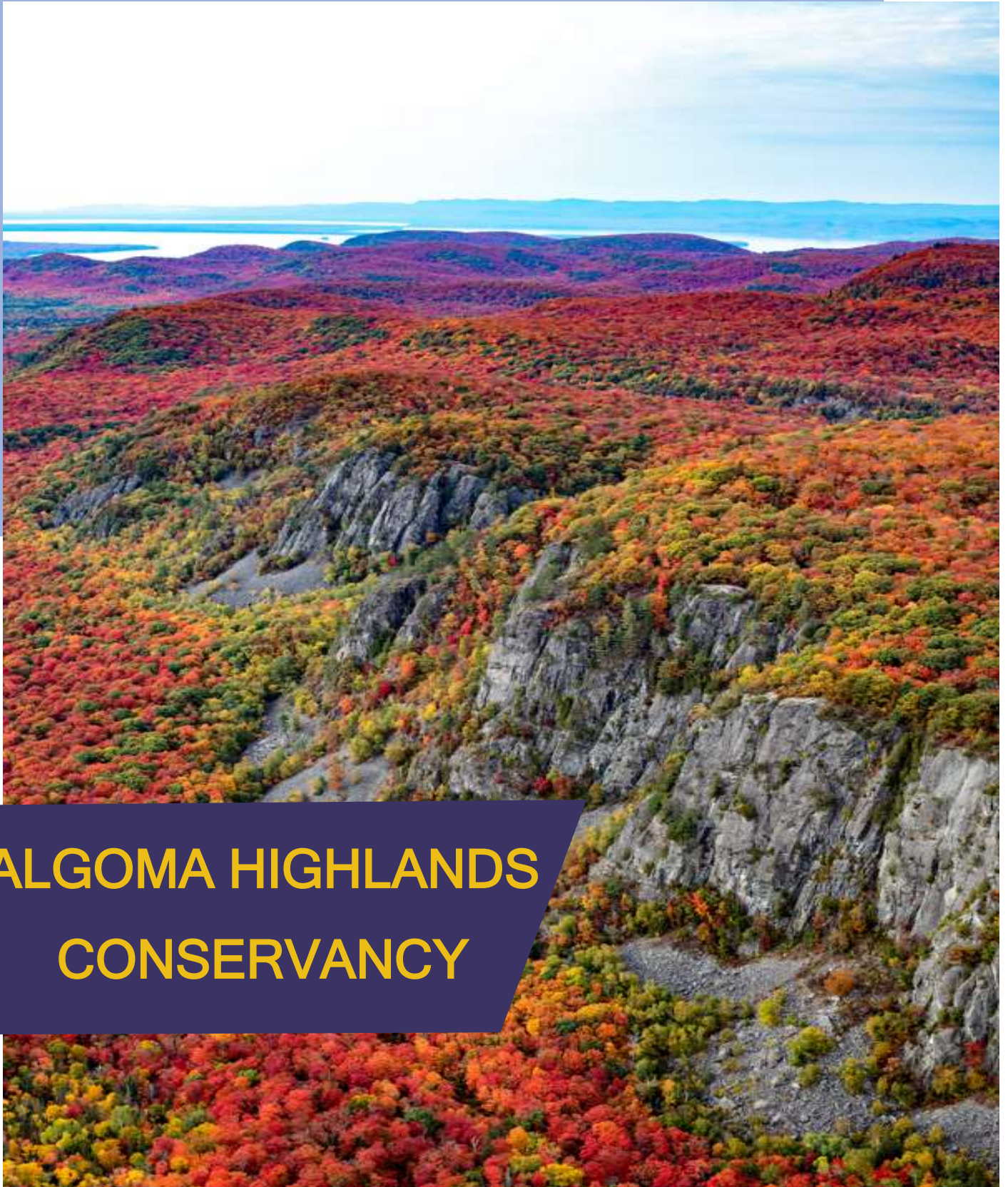


2021 ANNUAL REPORT



ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

Photo Credit, Tammy Fiegehen

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MISSION AND CORE VALUES

“Guided by core values of conservation, silent sport recreation, ecological research and environmental education, the AHC’s vision is to conserve and protect the unique beauty and ecological integrity of key areas within the Algoma Highlands region.”

CONSERVATION

Conserve the ecological integrity of the Algoma Highlands

SILENT SPORTS RECREATION

Facilitate low-impact, non-motorized recreational activities to foster appreciation of the natural environment

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Promote knowledge and understanding of protected ecosystems and the species that live within them

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Enhance public awareness and appreciation of environment

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kees van Frankenhuyzen, *President*

Brian Anstess, *Vice-President*

Sharon Sheeler, *Treasurer*

Laurie McBay, *Secretary*

Dave Fanslow

Ruth Koskenoja

Pam Jalak

Colin Wilson

Emily Hope

STAFF

Derissa Vincentini, *Administrator*

Nick Burkill, *Summer Student*



**Algoma Highlands
Conservancy**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends

2021 was another highly unusual year thanks to recurring waves of COVID-19. The many restrictions throughout the year continued to disrupt our plans, in particular the rollout of our new membership program with a calendar of guided trail-based activities. We used the forced gap to better prepare, and to deal with additional disruptions caused by the departure of several Board members, in particular our Treasurer, Sam Emerson.

On a positive note, our trails continued to attract thousands of users, with more than 6000 visitors recorded in the first 10 months of the year. Our network of trails and other trails, on neighboring Astina and crown lands that are maintained by the Stokely Creek Lodge ski resort, hosted the second annual Ultra-Trail Stokely Creek race, which attracted 186 runners this year and saw some folks completing a grueling 170-km course.

The COVID-induced jump in Norm's cabin rentals as a hike-in and ski-in backcountry destination continued as well, with ~20 client nights during the winter and ~70 in summer and fall. Norm's cabin got a 10-year exterior-stain overhaul and saw many other improvements to enhance the visitor's experience.

2021 was also the first year of a multi-agency research collaboration on wildlife in southern Algoma with a particular focus on wolves and their prey.



The study was initiated by a few AHC volunteers with \$4000 of seed funding and quickly expanded into a \$100,000 research collaboration involving 8 agencies and two corporate funders, Hydro One and Evolugen. You can follow the progress of this project via the blog on our website.

I invite you to read more about these highlights in the following pages of our Annual Report. We will continue to do our best to keep you, our supporters, informed of our activities and new developments. Please check our Facebook page and Instagram for updates and visit our new website. We look forward to your continued support!

Happy trails!
Kees



CHANGE IN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We said good-bye to:

Sam Emerson

Sam Emerson joined the AHC as our treasurer late in the spring of 2020. Sam was working full time as a Chartered Professional Accountant student at OLG while studying for her accounting exams. As it was a challenge to meet her professional goals in addition to doing volunteer work for the AHC, Sam decided to withdraw from the Board earlier in the year. Sam has expressed an interest in outdoor activities, particularly biking.

Colin Wilson

Colin Wilson, is the Director of Strategic Advancement at Algoma University and was a former program manager at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Colin was on the AHC Board for approximately 2 years. Unfortunately, most of this time was during COVID 19 when the meetings were in a virtual format. Nevertheless, Colin was able to offer suggestions regarding fundraising including grants and how the AHC could develop partnerships in the community. As expected, Colin is passionate about being outdoors.



And welcomed:

Pam Jalak

Pam Jalak was welcomed to the Board of the AHC in November of 2021. Pam had a 20-year history of employment with Parks Canada in many capacities and had developed skills in leadership and operational management. Based on her

past experience it was determined that Pam could contribute ideas regarding the development of AHC policies and plans as well as helping the AHC enhance the relationships with other agencies and partners.



AHC Highlight NORM'S CABIN

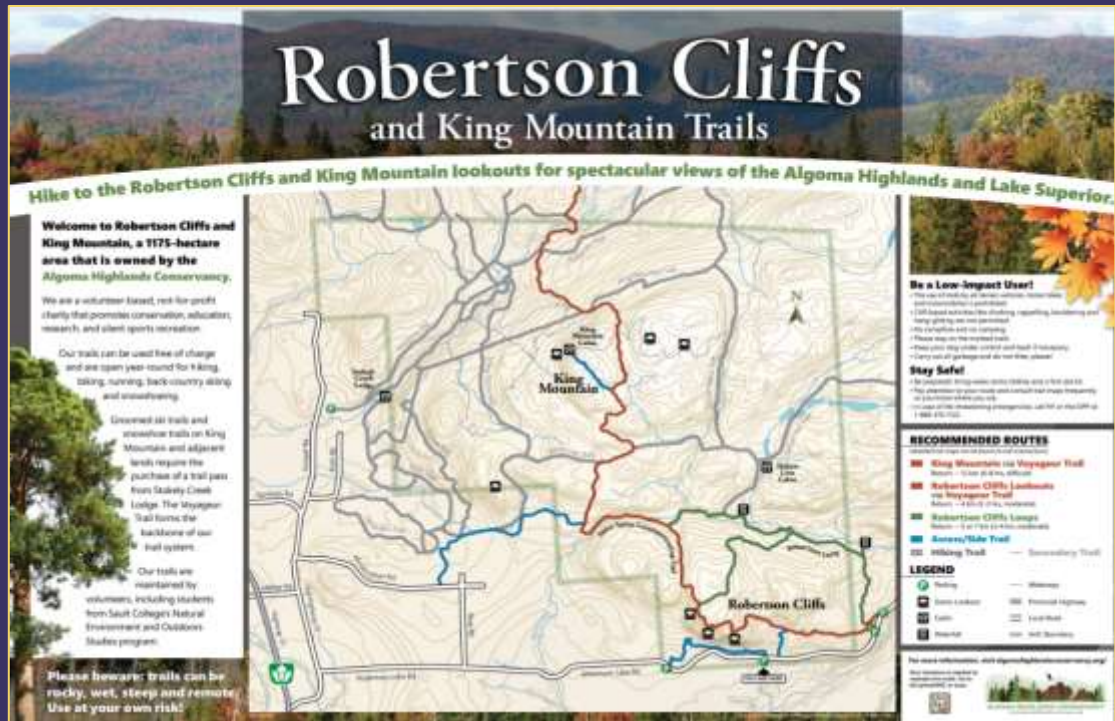
2021 was the second year that regulations due to COVID 19 restricted access to Norm's Cabin. Stokely Creek Lodge was not opened for the ski season and this meant that the ski trails were not groomed. It was determined that Norm's Cabin would be rented as a complete unit rather than on a per person or per room basis. Since the Lodge was closed, access for parking was arranged at a private site nearby. Individuals who had booked the cabin needed to make their own way in either on snowshoes or back country skis that winter. Unfortunately, Ontario went into lockdown in January for a few weeks so several of the bookings had to be cancelled.

The AHC was pleased that Norm's Cabin was featured in a television show called "Man, Woman, Dog". Half Yard Productions rented the cabin for a weekend in February to use as a remote location for an episode that featured Joe Robinet and his dog, Tripper. Joe is an Algoma District resident and outdoor enthusiast and the show is available on National Geographic Wild Channel and Disney Plus. After the filming which included use of a drone, the crew expressed an appreciation of the cabin and location.

There is always an ongoing need for maintenance of Norm's Cabin. Annual tasks include restocking the wood pile, resupplying the propane and putting the dock in for use in the summer and pulling it out in the fall. This year, the maintenance duties were more time consuming as this included staining of all the exterior wood surfaces and painting the trim. These tasks were accomplished by volunteers in particular Kees van Frankenhuyzen, Dean Thompson and Paul McBay.

Blaq Bear Eco Adventure Routes managed the bookings for Norm's Cabin again in 2021. Carole Blaquiere, the owner, also shuttled the gear into the cabin outside of the ski season. Carole was also responsible for cleaning the cabin between weekend bookings and this was made more arduous with the extra sanitation measures required due to COVID 19. There was definitely an increase in stays at Norm's Cabin as travel was restricted and people were looking for unique experiences closer to home. Carole reported that there were 27 separate rentals in the summer and fall and that all the clients were from Ontario.

OUR TRAILS



The AHC's property of Robertson Cliffs (RC) and King Mountain (KM) boasts about 40 km of trails which provide public access for the purposes of silent sports recreation, environmental education, and research. The trail system is depicted on the map below, which is the new trailhead sign that was installed in 2021.

The main trail on our lands is the Voyageur Trail, which was constructed in the mid-1990s when the property was owned by Chuck Peterson of Stokely Creek Lodge (SCL). The Robertson Cliffs property was bought from Chuck in 1999. The adjacent King Mountain property was purchased in 2009 from Astina, after the company acquired Chuck's estate in 2007. Astina sold the lower 1180 ha to the AHC and retained the upper 2200 ha. Stokely Creek Lodge owns a 20-ha sliver extending north of the lodge. Current landownership is depicted in the map.

Stokely Creek Lodge entered into trail use agreements with landowners to secure exclusive winter use of the trails for its XC-ski business.

Most of the trails on King Mountain are part of the ~100-km of XC ski trails that are operated by SCL on AHC-, crown- Astina-, and other privately-owned lands.



The King Mountain ski trails are maintained by SCL staff to ensure easy winter access for grooming and skiing. After the 2009 purchase, SCL developed several snowshoe trails on or near King Mountain. Winter access to snowshoe and XC ski trails requires a valid day pass from SCL.



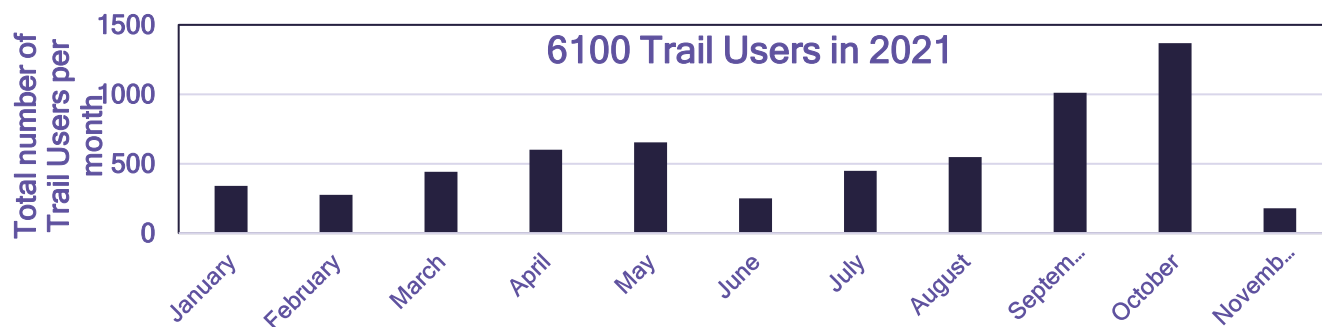
Trails on the Robertson Cliffs property are designed as general-use trails, are not groomed by SCL, do not require a day pass from SCL, and are maintained by the VTA and AHC with assistance from volunteers and students in Sault College's Outdoor Studies Program.

The RC trail system is shown in more detail on the map below.

For the first decade of our ownership, the Robertson Cliffs trails were used sparingly and intermittently. With the advance of social media, trail use increased dramatically during the next 10 years. A trail camera was installed in 2017 before multiple access points were created as part of our trail-improvement plan. Trail cam images revealed that ~3700 hikers used the RC trail between early September and late November. Peak use was during the month of October, with more than 400 hikers using the trails on a peak day in late October.

Increased user intensity forced necessary improvements to the trails, including the construction of new sections to bypass wet or eroding trail sections, the establishment of a new short and family-friendly trail along the base of the cliffs, and the creation of additional parking space. Trail maps were installed at each trail intersection in 2019, and an updated trailhead map was erected near the new central parking location in 2021 as the final step of the trails-improvement plan.

Electronic trail counters were installed at each of the three trail access points at the end of 2019. We recorded about 4000 trail users in 2020 and more than 6100 in the first 10 months of 2021, as shown in the graph below. Trail use continues to be monitored.



AHC SCHOLARSHIP

The Algoma Highlands Conservancy proudly supports Post-Secondary Education in our community. One of the Conservancy's core values is Education, and what better way to support students than with scholarship money? The AHC has 2 annual awards, one within the School of Natural Environment at Sault College and the second through the School of Life Sciences and the Environment at Algoma University. The winners are selected based on the following criteria:

The student who best combines academic achievement with a commitment to one or more of the four core values of the AHC:

1. Conservation,
2. Silent sport recreation,
3. Ecological Research and
4. Environmental Education.

This year's award winners are celebrated by the Conservancy as students who have demonstrated great resilience in studying through the pandemic, in addition to their commitment to the Natural Environment. Join us in congratulating Raquel Gonzalez (Sault College) and Avery Marsh (Algoma University).



EVENTS



After the 2020 Ultra Trail Stokely Creek was cancelled due to Covid, it re-emerged for its second race in 2021 on the September 17-18th weekend. 182 participants laced up to participate in race distances that ranged from 5 km to a punishing 170 km that criss-crossed through the Highlands with some courses climbing over Robertson Cliffs and King Mountain. AHC Board and Administrator Derissa Vincentini worked with UTSC organizer Nick Brash, ensuring there was opportunity for education and promotion of AHC pillars of conservation and silent sport recreation. Ten percent of race fees collected by UTSC were paid to AHC.



OUR WILDLIFE RESEARCH PROJECT

2021 saw the launch of our Wildlife Research project. A plan to study how human presence affects wolves and their primary prey species in the Stokely creek area morphed into a multi-agency project spanning four study areas from Lake Superior to Iron Bridge.

In each of the ~400 km² study areas we are deploying an array of 16 trail cameras on powerline right-of-way's, recreational trails, and forest sites without trails, for a period of 3 years. The cameras will allow us to monitor the occurrence and distribution of many wildlife species. We hope the data will shed some light on how powerlines and trails and associated human activity influence the occurrence and distribution of wildlife.

We are paying particular attention to wolves and coyotes, being the top predators in our forest ecosystems. We hope to outfit a few wolves in each study area with a GPS transmitter so we can follow their movements in real time and identify their winter and summer ranges. In addition, we are collecting wolf scat in the winter months for genetic analyses.

The study was started with \$4000 of seed funding from the AHC, which leveraged an

additional \$100,000 from participating agencies and corporations. Participating agencies include researchers from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (Wildlife Section, Biodiversity Section, and District Office), Natural Resources Canada (Great Lakes Forestry Centre), University of Guelph, and Trent University; and two corporate sponsors, Hydro One and Evolgen. The table below lists the project participants, their roles and financial contributions in 2021.

A highlight of the 2021 season was when Andrew Silver from the OMNR wolf research team in Peterborough came up for 2 weeks in late August to teach us how to live-trap wolves. We deployed 20 leghold traps along a 30 km route in the Stokely Creek area for 10 days. Our traps caught 8 bears (which released themselves unharmed) and were visited by wolves but did not catch any....

We hope to have better success in 2022!



Agency	Participant	Role	Funding
Algoma Highlands Conservancy	Dean Thompson	Project coordination, experimental design, reporting	\$4,000
	Kees van Franhuizen	Stokely Creek lead	
	Paul McBay /Joe Meating	Sylvan Valley lead	
Prentiss & Carlisle	Mark Balogh	Prince Township lead	\$25,000
NRCAN GLFC	Phil Wiebe	Project and GL lead; GPS collaring; certified chem <u>immob</u> , data analysis	
	Tom Swystun	GIS applications	
OMNRF Wildlife Section	Brent Patterson	<i>Canis</i> science advisor	
	Andrew Silver	Live trapping lead; certified chemical immobilization	
OMNRF District Office	Derek Goertz	<u>Liasion</u> , live trapping support; certified chemical immobilization	
OMNRF Biodiversity Section	Phil DeWitt	Collaborator, funding support to AI Autorecognition model development	\$40,000
University of Guelph	Stefan Schneider	Collaborator AI Autorecognition model development	
Trent University	Linda Rutledge	DNA Analysis & <i>Canis</i> genomic assignment	
Hydro One	Michael Farrell	Corporate Liaison, Funding	\$25,000
<u>Evolugen</u>	Kelly Withers	Corporate Liaison, Funding	\$10,000



1. Andrew showing us how to set a trap
2. Morning briefing of field crew
3. This male wolf sniffed the trap
4. Scent-marked the site than wandered off

2021 FINANCIALS CANADA

NOTICE TO READER

	2021	2020
Assets		
Current Assets	\$225,061 ¹	\$211,616
Property	1,823,326	\$1,823,326
Due from AHC (USA)	2922	\$1572
TOTAL Assets	\$2,052,309	\$2,036,514
Liabilities and Fund Balances		
Current	\$576	\$361
General Funds	228,407	\$212,827
Invested in Capital Assets	1,823,326	\$1,823,326
TOTAL Liabilities and Fund Balances	\$2,052,309	\$2,036,154
Revenues	\$73,677 ²	\$11,412
Expenses	58,097	\$28,535
TOTAL Revenue over Expenses	\$15,580³	(\$17,123)

Notations:

1. Assets; Term deposit of \$129,130 is reserved and dedicated to future land acquisition
2. \$39,000 in revenue is a research grant
3. Deferred revenue of \$15,580 to be expensed in 2022.



2021 FINANCIALS USA

NOTICE TO READER

	2021	2020
Current Assets	\$3914	\$3934
Liabilities and Fund Balances		
Current	\$1200	\$1200
Due to AHC Canada	2305	\$1235
TOTAL		
Liabilities and Fund Balances	3505	\$2435
 Revenues	 \$0	 \$0
Expenses	(1090)	\$1132
TOTAL Revenue over Expenses	(\$1090)	(\$1132)



Photo Credit; Derissa Vicentini