

Delivering Compelling Stories

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'We tell stories to entertain and to teach.'

Pascal

Cows and Fish works with people to build the knowledge and skills necessary to 'take the next step', which is the application of improved and beneficial management practices. This step is about building ecological literacy and it goes along with the practical 'farmer know how' and local knowledge. The combination of these elements has produced many success stories on Alberta farms and in local watersheds.

Sharing stories and key messages allows us to get the **good news stories** out, deliver effective riparian management tools, and create healthier landscapes.

What are Digital Stories?

Digital stories are short videos consisting of still images, music, voice-over and video (sometimes); the stories are told by real people about real experiences. We use a combination of the age-old art of storytelling brought together with a contemporary technology to build these new effective extension tools. Cows and Fish has been reviewing this new tool for over a year and has done a pilot, collaborating with the Center for Digital Storytelling based out of Berkley, California. Stories are designed using powerful audio and visual elements making the most of modern software technology. **Digital stories are a *distillation* - they move us from the narrative to the *essential story*.**

Cows and Fish is working with producers to increase understanding of riparian areas and grazing management to enhance landscape health and productivity. We have a long and trustworthy track record of working with communities to build more sustainable operations throughout the province. Our success is based on a proven process and emphasis on high quality image-based presentations and tools. Over the past decade, Cows and Fish have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with individual producers and stewardship groups to increase adoption of improved management practices in riparian areas and rangelands. These tools include *Caring For the Green Zone* and our trademark visual presentations delivered to local community venues throughout the province.

Producers value their interactions with Cows and Fish and our interactions with producers lead to practice change. We like to think of ourselves as somewhat knowledgeable and able to understand the practicalities of living in and making a living

from riparian areas—the two most highly valued characteristics identified by producers. Cows and Fish messages resonate with producer audiences because we understand the practicalities they face, and are committed to providing them with real life examples of how other producers have succeeded in dealing with managing riparian and grazing areas. Our success and theirs lies in learning from their peers to be stewards of their operations.

It is important part of our process to let producers tell their own stories – who better to get these messages out to producers than other producers? Applying improved management practices requires not only the knowledge, but the confidence and motivation to make a change — real-life producer profiles will help more producers take those next steps, when one producer hears from another what works and what doesn't, what motivated them to make a change, and the value they have seen from making a change.

***So it helps if you listen in circles,
there are stories inside stories
and stories between stories...'***
Centre for Digital Storytelling