

This magazine is dedicated to showcasing the beauty of Kananaskis Country: the stunning landscapes, the awe-inspiring flora and fauna, and the extraordinary people that are both magnetically attracted to, and inspired by, the region's natural grandeur. Our publisher, Dwayne Zaba, recently had the honour of interviewing the man who, as Premier of Alberta, founded Kananaskis Country and became one of Canada's most prominent and popular political figures, the Honourable Peter Lougheed.

This page, the Honourable Peter Lougheed photograph by John Cornegge.

All other photography by Dr. Robert Berdan except where specified.

What moved you and your team to establish Kananaskis Country?

PL: I had a close friend, Bill Milne, who was a Calgary architect; in fact, he designed the Calgary Tower. Bill was an environmentalist too, and he spent a lot of time in the mountains. He came to me one day when I was Premier and said, "We've got to take a trip into the Kananaskis Country because it's a very special place. Not special just in terms of Canada but special worldwide."

And so, we got into a helicopter on a beautiful June day. I had driven through it, of course, and I'd skied in the area – I knew it from that perspective – but in the helicopter that day, I was just awed by the beauty of it. And out of that day came the idea that we should set aside Kananaskis Country. So I came back and told my cabinet colleagues about how excited I was. Clarence Copithorne, who was the Minister of Highways and lived near Kananaskis, was with me that day. He was pretty hard to get excited, but even Clarence got excited at the idea of what we would do. So, out of that came the birth of Kananaskis Country.

I gather you immensely enjoy the serenity of nature and one of your greatest pleasures is being in the mountains. Please relay what Kananaskis Country means to you personally.

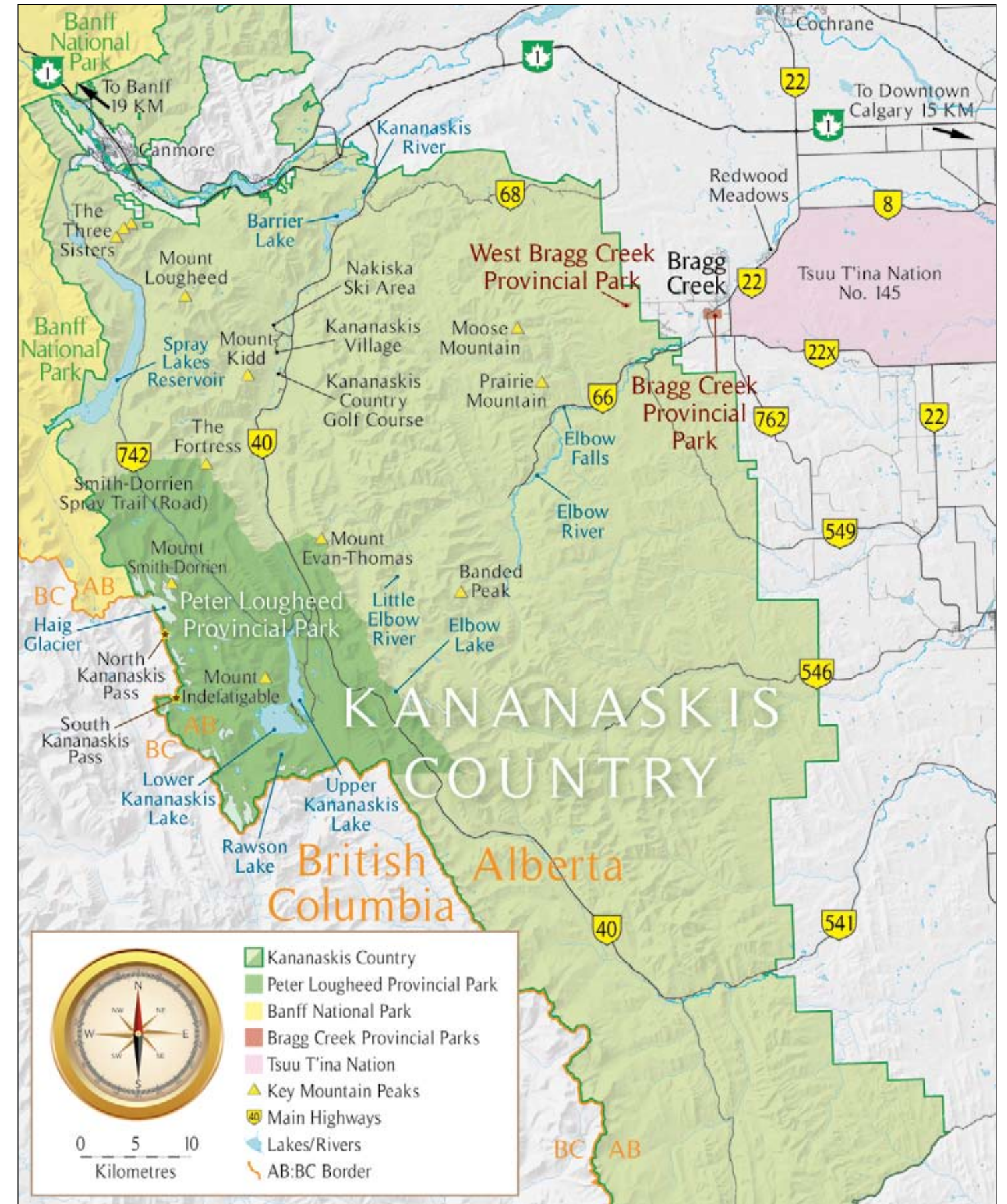
PL: Well, it goes back to my grandfather, who was one of the first citizens of Calgary. He actually came here in 1883 and was here before the railway. He was the first lawyer in the area and later became a senator. He was also the only



Photos courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta

This page from top: Peter with his wife Jeanne at the opening of the Kananaskis Country Golf Course; Peter at the World Scout Jamboree in Kananaskis in 1983 for the 75th anniversary of the Boy Scout movement; one of the signs that welcomes visitors to the Peter Lougheed Provincial Park.

Opposite page: Map of Kananaskis Country, highlighting Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, the home of such spectacular locations as Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes, and its close proximity to Bragg Creek.



Adaptation of a map produced by Kananaskis Region, Parks Division, Tourism, Parks and Recreation Ministry, Government of Alberta. The map outlines Kananaskis Country, including Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, which falls within the larger Kananaskis Region.





Albertan ever to be knighted – Sir James Lougheed. He and his wife Isabelle, who was a Métis from Fort Resolution, developed this cottage in Banff, by the Banff Springs Hotel. It was just a magnificent place! I grew up being aware of the cottage, but my grandfather died before I was born, and the cottage was turned into an estate.

Part of the estate was rented out, so we never had any use of it until later in life, but after my brother and I acquired it, it became a big part of our life. Our cottage in Banff got me very much attracted, of course, to the mountains and to Banff National Park. Out of that, we also saw some of the defects of Banff National Park, such as the overcrowding. So when I became Premier in 1971, I started looking for a change from the existing parks. There were excellent parks in the provincial park system, but there was no real mountain provincial park. There were the national parks of Jasper, Banff and Waterton, but no provincial mountain park.

So it was always at the back of my mind, thinking wouldn't it be wonderful if we could have a provincial mountain park? And then came the day when I went out there with Bill Milne and Clarence Copithorne and we were very excited.

Do you have a favourite spot within Kananaskis?

PL: I have a multitude of them. I don't have any one particular favourite spot. I like it down in the lake area, down at the bottom around the lakes, but I have a number of places I like. I play golf, so I like the Kananaskis Country Golf Course and I used to downhill ski, so I love the ski hills, but there are a multitude of places in Kananaskis that I love. It depends on the activity you're interested in: there really is something for everyone.



I gather that you protected Kananaskis Country in large part to ensure that future generations of Albertans would always have a place to recharge their batteries?

PL: That's right. Because of that, we came up with the concept of having different segments of Kananaskis Country set aside for different uses, so that it would appeal to all Albertans. We have the portion that is the provincial park, where you have the very significant restrictions of a provincial park.

But we also wanted a recreational area for both skiing and golfing as well. And then in addition to that, as you know, we also have the section set aside where the motorbikes can go. So from the start, we envisioned a Kananaskis Country that all Albertans could enjoy.

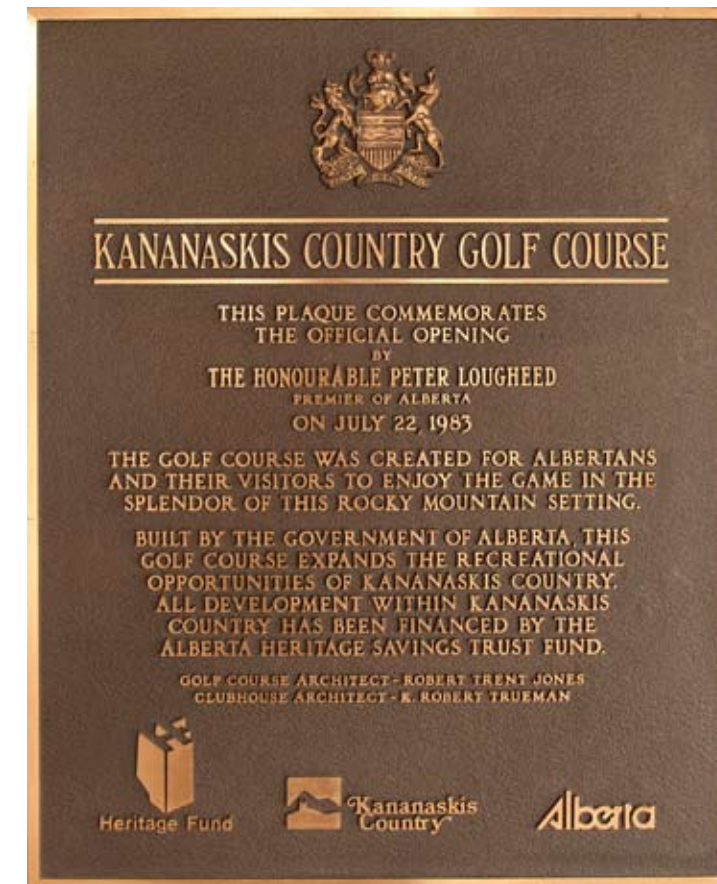
You've talked about the importance of Kananaskis to Albertans. Please speak about the magnetism that it has for the world. I mean, I really see Kananaskis as a world-class wilderness area. In my opinion it's the most beautiful place on earth.

PL: It is. In my extensive travels to various parts of the world, I have been fortunate to have visited many special places, but the most special place of all is Kananaskis Country.

This issue came up at the outset. What are we doing this for? Who are we doing this for? Remember, the money came through the government of Alberta, but it really came from the people of Alberta. So at the very outset, we had established the plan that it would be for Albertans first, because it was their money that was being invested to create Kananaskis. We had to set it up in a way that ensured Albertans were given priority. And one of the ways we did that, of course, was to give priority to Albertans in the usage of the different facilities.

So the priority for Albertans was an extremely important part of the evolution of the Kananaskis Country. We also recognized though, that if we were going to do this, we had to make the effort to make it attractive to other Canadians and communicate to other Canadians that it was there, and that obviously led us into making it attractive and generating awareness for people from all over the world.

And so there were these stages of development: Albertans first, other Canadians second and the rest of the world third, and it caught on with all the various groups.



Opposite page: The Kananaskis Country Golf Club is perfectly designed to integrate into the natural beauty and contours of K-Country.

This page, above: the plaque that sits outside the golf clubhouse.

Below: the official opening of the Kananaskis Country Golf Club by the Honourable Peter Lougheed in the summer of 1983.





Upper Kananaskis lakes yields picture-perfect moments in any season, and at any time of day.

Below: the landscapes across Peter Lougheed Provincial Park provide some of the most spectacular vistas in K-Country.



That really rings true with everything you've done from my perspective. What makes you, in my opinion, the greatest premier Alberta's ever had, is the fact that you have always put Albertans first. Most people that are in public office say that they put the people first, but you actually have a legacy of doing exactly that.

PL: Well, thank you. That was the reason I got into public life in the first place. I was initially encouraged to go into federal politics – my grandfather was involved in federal politics and I was encouraged by quite a number of people to seek a seat in the federal parliament.

But as I got into it and started to think about it, my real attraction was to my home province of Alberta, and so I made the decision to become the premier of this province. So I set out to become the leader of the Conservative party. We had no seats and had never formed a government, but from that I became leader of the opposition in 1967 and formed a government in 1971.

So it was an evolution, but the evolution was part of my commitment and my feelings about Alberta as a province. So those particular feelings, my feelings about Alberta, are what in due course got me so focused on Kananaskis Country.

How does it feel to have one of the most beautiful places in the world named in your honour?

PL: Well, I find it very hard. It was done by my successor, Don Getty, and for the park to be named that way, I feel very humbled by it. It's not something in the world you ever think about. You never would ever have contemplated that would have happened, but obviously I was deeply honoured by it and I remain humbled by it.

Do you have any further vision for Kananaskis Country?

PL: My major thing is preservation. I think it's extremely important as things move ahead in Kananaskis, and as the province gets bigger and the demands get greater, that we don't lose sight of the original nature of Kananaskis Country. There is some scope for development, perhaps in the second village, which has been discussed, but it has to be done with great care. The one thing that would bother me the most, perhaps, is if we over-did it and started to develop some of the negatives that we see in Banff National Park. We've got to be very, very careful with the degree to which we develop the various segments of Kananaskis Country. They can be developed but they should be developed very carefully, and within the same strict limits that have always been part of the Kananaskis Country development.

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What's your idea of perfect happiness?

PL: (Laughing) I suppose to me at the moment, the joy of being together with my four children and my seven grandchildren and with my wife, Jeanne, at some family event that permits us all to be part of it.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?

PL: Oh, Winston Churchill, because he was a parliamentarian. I think many Canadians think about some American statesman, but their system is so different from ours. I'm a parliamentarian, and to me our success is rooted in the parliamentary way.

We were only able to accomplish that because we were able to make the parliamentary system, including the caucus, work for us. The man that I always had the highest esteem for was Sir Winston Churchill.

Do you have any regrets?

PL: Yeah, I wish that we'd been able to do better with the native people in our province. We made some progress, but not nearly as much as I wanted and, of course, I have native background myself through my grandmother. I was asked that exact question when I left government, and my answer

was that my only significant regret was that we didn't get enough done for the native people of our province.

Do you see any opportunities there moving forward?

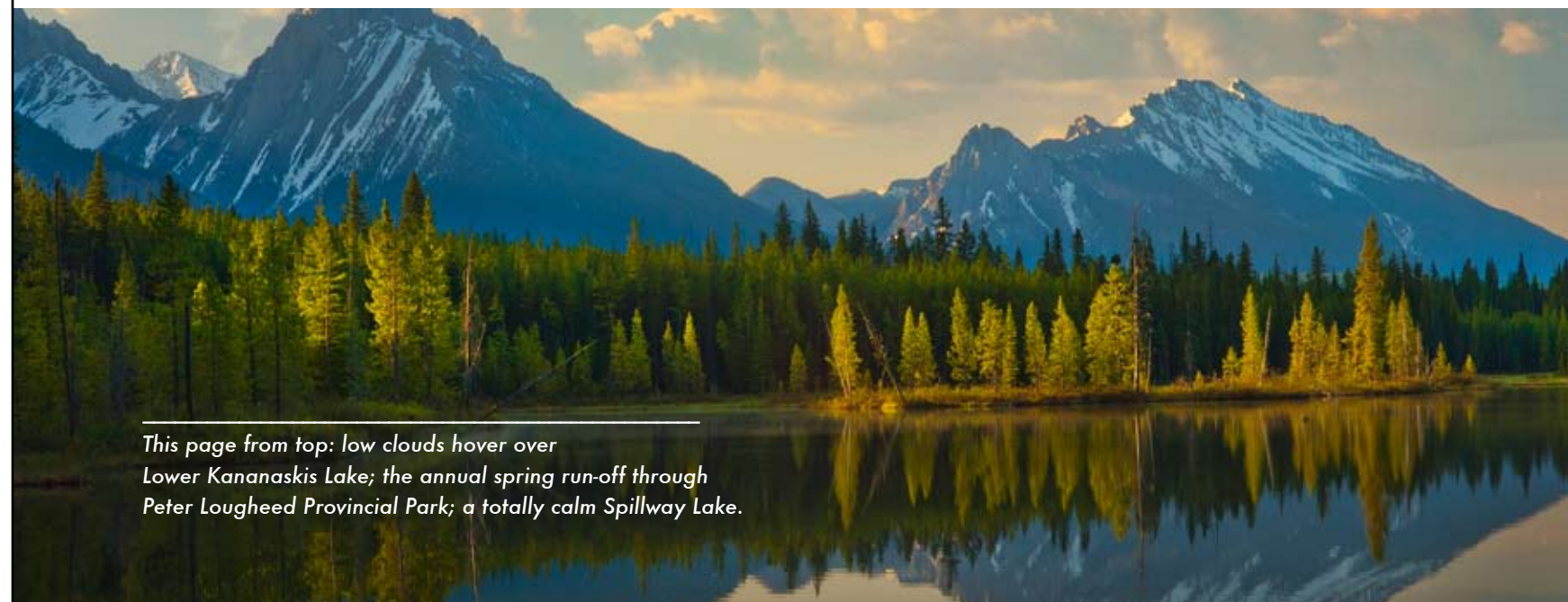
PL: I'm optimistic about it. I know it will take time, but I hope that there will be greater and greater recognition with regard to the role the native people, including the Métis people, have played and continue to play in our province.

What would you say your most marked characteristic is?

PL: It's the ability to look ahead. I try to focus on the future and what's ahead, what can be done with the challenges that are ahead, and try to avoid getting caught up too much in peering behind and saying, "Well, I could have done that differently." I try to look ahead, plan ahead, and see what we could do better.

What's your greatest concern for the future of Alberta and Canada as a whole?

PL: You just have to go in as a Canadian in respect to national unity, and with the position that Quebec will be part of Canada. I mean, anyone that doesn't have that as their priority should have that as their priority, in my judgment.



This page from top: low clouds hover over Lower Kananaskis Lake; the annual spring run-off through Peter Lougheed Provincial Park; a totally calm Spillway Lake.

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You built the Conservative Party from the grass-roots up; the party was really nothing when you stepped into the game and started recruiting small-town mayors and newspaper editors as representatives. What characteristics do you think people should look for in a leader?

PL: It's not an easy question, but I think there are two elements involved. One is determination. I respect and admire people who have determination, but I also respect people who have vision. So it seems to me that if you get a person that has the combination of both determination and vision, male or female, I think that's what you should be looking for.

What do you most value about Alberta and Canada as a whole?

PL: Well, I think I value the fact that we have respect for the law. Look at some other parts of the world, and it becomes clear we have just an inherent respect for the law here, and that shows with our people. There are other things, the way we contribute as volunteers, but overall the number one thing is respect for the law.

You've received numerous tributes, awards and degrees. Which is the most significant for you?

PL: Well, Kananaskis Country rates very high in my judgment. I'm very proud of the decision to put it together. All those other things are very esteemed and I'm honoured by them, but I rate Kananaskis Country very high on my list of accomplishments. ■

View a video of the Honourable Peter Lougheed at the opening ceremonies of the Kananaskis Country Golf Course at www.braggcreek.tv/video15

Dr. Robert Berdan

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Dr. Robert Berdan is a multimedia web developer, an award-winning nature photographer, and a Photoshop/Photography teacher in Calgary, AB.

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A White-tailed doe sprints through a shallow creek in Kananaskis

