

## **BIOGEOSCIENCE INSTITUTE, BARRIER LAKE FIELD STATION**

### **SAFETY IN THE ALPINE ENVIRONMENT**

**Special conditions exist when working and studying in an alpine environment and certain precautions must be taken to ensure your safety. You are responsible for your own safety and for the safety of those around you. You may be working in a remote area where emergency services are not readily available so it is important that everyone acts in a safe and responsible manner.**

- Sturdy footwear (e.g. hiking boots) should be worn when traveling in mountainous terrain.
- Stay on the maintained trails as much as possible. Avoid taking short cuts on switchback trails as this contributes to the erosion of the area. Be aware of where you are and how you got there by making mental notes of landmarks. If you get separated from your group, you may have to find your own way out. If you are working on your own, make sure someone in the group knows where you are and how long you will be there.
- It is always easier to scramble up rocks than down, so be aware of your own limitations. Don't choose a study site that puts you in unsafe conditions. Shortcuts generally take twice as long as staying on the trail, as you usually end up bushwacking.
- Weather conditions are very unpredictable in the mountains. Each time you travel in the mountains, you should take rain/wind gear, hat/toque, extra sweater/fleece, mitts/gloves. Snow can occur any time during the year and sudden afternoon thunderstorms are very common during hot, sunny days. If you are above tree line and a thunderstorm is approaching, immediately head for lower ground and protection.
- Sunlight can be very intense at the higher elevations. Take a hat, sunglasses and sun block.
- It is very easy to become dehydrated while working in the alpine environment. Drink fluids often and take at least 1 litre of fluids with you.
- Pack a good lunch in the morning and snack frequently during the day. It is important to keep your energy levels high to prevent twisted ankles or falls on the hike out at the end of the day.
- Kananaskis Country is the home for black and grizzly bears, cougars, wolves, moose, elk and other large mammals. It is important to respect them and not attract them by leaving garbage, foodstuff outside. If you see evidence that bears are in the area that you want to work in, leave the area and choose another site. If you are working in an area, make "human noise" like singing, talking etc. to let any wildlife know that you are there and they will generally avoid you. More information on "wildlife encounters" will be presented to you on your arrival at the Field Station.

**Inform your instructor prior to your field trip of any condition which may require emergency medical attention such as diabetes, asthma, insect sting allergies. You are responsible for determining whether you should participate in any activity.**