

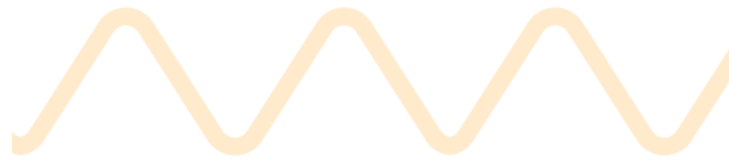
Cultivating optimism, connection, and capability

*An Illustration of VA's impact
in Alberta's voluntary sector*

Volunteer Alberta
2022 Annual Report



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**Planting seeds
of optimism,
hope, and positive
change to nourish
imaginations for
civic engagement
and volunteerism
in Alberta**

We Are

Connectors

that convene and collaborate across networks to advance collective work and nourish relationships.

Champions

that amplify diverse voices to elevate the power of volunteerism and civic engagement.

Catalysts

that strengthen nonprofits and community capacity to engage Albertans.

Our Vision

Engaged, connected, and empowered communities building a flourishing Alberta.

Our Mission

To strengthen and create pathways for volunteerism and civic engagement in Alberta.

Words of Welcome

Hello!

2022 has been a full year, overflowing with moments of reflection, growth, and (un)learning. An annual report is a way to send off the past year in a meaningful way, and as Volunteer Alberta's Board Chair and Executive Director, we're so glad you're taking the time to read ours. Volunteer Alberta was able to thrive in 2022 because of community members like you who dedicate their time and attention to others, whether through a formal volunteer opportunity or an informal act of civic engagement. Thank you so much for being here.

As a provincial organization, we strive to create impact at different scales. Through our work and the relationships we create, we try to cultivate the conditions for volunteerism and civic engagement at the systems level (by supporting the capabilities of rural and urban communities), at the organizational level (by supporting the capabilities of organizations), and at the individual level (by supporting the capabilities of individuals within organizations).

This work - of course - would be impossible without you. It is only through the work you do within your communities that our vision of engaged, connected, and empowered communities building a flourishing Alberta can come to be.

We started some deep work in 2022 - starting with a good look at some of our organizational practices, policies, and underlying mental models - and began to interrogate which ways of knowing, doing, and being we wanted to embrace more intentionally, and which we wanted to compost. We believe that by doing this, we will be better able to attune to and meet the ever-evolving aspirations and hopes that you - the people and organizations we serve - hold.

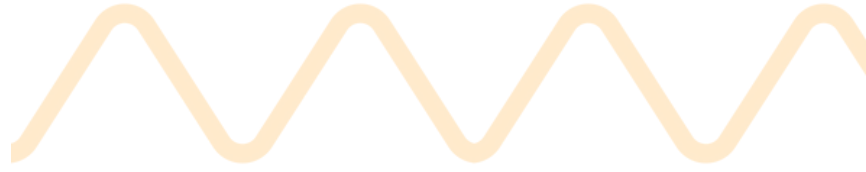
We share some of our (un)learnings so far within this annual report, with the understanding that this work is continuous. All across the province - from the Milk River basin, to the Peace River basin, whether you are a part of Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 or 10 - we look forward to continuing this journey with you.

Warmly,

Hero Laird (any pronouns), President, Board of Directors
Miki Stricker-Talbot (she/her), Executive Director

Re-imagining norms and examining curiosities

We aim to foster a culture of curiosity and experimentation to support volunteerism and civic engagement in the province. We do this by translating our experiences into tangible practices for ourselves and for community organizations.



Cultivating new practices for “the way we do things around here”

In order for Volunteer Alberta (VA) to nourish the conditions for volunteerism and civic engagement in the province, we must first nurture those conditions within ourselves. Just as airplane travelers are instructed in the case of a change in air pressure to attend to their own oxygen mask before assisting others, VA understands that we will be much better able to assist organizations in their capability growth if we have done the work ourselves first.

We know that by nurturing staff and board belonging, participation, and wellbeing, our team will be better equipped to assist the people and communities we serve to do so as well.

Approaching with curiosity

It is important to us to create a team environment where we can ask “why?” and “how come?” We want to foster an environment where we can run safe-to-fail experiments and examine assumptions we may hold. In 2022, we introduced practices such as Flowing Fridays and Blue Sky Meetings to test our ability to make room for new ideas. We believe that providing space for curiosity allows us to nurture the strengths and imaginations of our team.

Our curiosity paves the way for us to be brave experimenting with new practices, ways of being, and ways of doing within VA. We aspired to start these experiments from a place of inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and social justice (IDEAS). We want to make intangible curiosities tangible - so that we are better equipped to help other groups and organizations do the same.

What does a culture of caring look like?

We prioritize curiosity and compassion and recognize that our call to serve demands a holistic approach, with the practical needs and well-being of communities and people at the forefront.

Creating a culture of caring

At the root of our work, we want to understand how prioritizing curiosity, compassion, and understanding might relate to building long-lasting relationships in our work. Thanks to funding from the Government of Alberta through the Enhanced Capacity Advancement Program (ECAP), we were granted a unique opportunity to delve even deeper into the crucial work of understanding the perspectives of the people and organizations we serve.

Through various experiments, conversations with members and other interested parties, and deep internal reflections, we recognize the way we were being called to serve requires a holistic approach, where we consider our community members' emotional and psychological wellbeing as much as their practical needs.



Partnerships

VA embraces the spirit of caring by building and strengthening new and existing partnerships. We cherish the connections we make and carefully nurture relationships with partners who share our passion for compassion. Some of our partnership work in 2022 included working with Drive Happiness in the Driving Rural Access to Vaccines Project, collaborating with GEDI Hub to support our IDEAS work, sharing promising practices with volunteer centres across Canada, and continuing our ongoing partnerships with OASSIS, Grant Connect, and Volunteer Connector to provide our members with exceptional benefits.



Flowing Fridays

In 2022 we began to intentionally question unhealthy conditions that exist in our working world (e.g. workaholism, perfectionism, and exclusion). We initiated an experiment in July 2022 to create time and space for wellbeing and connections. Every other Friday was a designated day off, and the remaining Fridays were reserved for independent work. Team members reported improved wellbeing through increased community engagement, volunteering, and prioritizing rest. We suspect these self-reported strategies for wellbeing may help to retain staff and mitigate long-term burnout.



Relationshiping

As connectors, we prioritize developing relationships with careful intention and attention. In 2022, we carved out time to nurture connections both internally and externally. Virtual and in-person coffees, walks in nature, and co-creating communities of practice were ways relationshiping manifested for VA. This generated renewed inspiration, a deeper understanding of folks' experiences and perspectives, and opportunities to incorporate the wisdom of those we serve to our programs and services.



COVID-19 Health Policy

In response to the ongoing pandemic, we updated our wellbeing policies, introducing a designated COVID leave category. Recognizing the possibility of multiple COVID infections and the potential impact on sick leave, we prioritized wellbeing by encouraging team members to take time off for recovery without exhausting their regular sick leave.



Grounding our gatherings

We make a deliberate effort to begin internal and external meetings with check-ins. This practice, including questions about attendees' wellbeing and what they bring to the meeting, grounds participants and fosters a caring culture. Where appropriate, playful and lighthearted questions are also used to create a comfortable atmosphere. Check-ins allow us to learn more about each other and encourage us to establish relationships based on trust and empathy.

Is it possible to (un)learn what we have learned?

“Unlearning is about moving away from something — letting go — rather than acquiring. It’s like stripping old paint. It lays the foundation for the new layer of fresh learning to be acquired and to stick. But like the painter who needs to prepare a surface, stripping the paint is 70 per cent of the work while repainting is only 30 per cent.”

- Margie Warrell,
Forbes Columnist & Advisory
Board Forbes School of
Business & Technology

(Un)Learning

Learning has long been a core value of VA. However, in 2022, we began to deeply consider the notion of unlearning.

Guided by this concept, we opened ourselves to new ways of thinking, in the hopes of igniting a vibrant culture of experimentation, creativity, and growth. Through insightful conversations and more experiments along the way, we created the grounds for elevating our collective wisdom.

To date, we have come to understand unlearning is a vital component of our work and continue to embrace it. Welcoming diverse perspectives is a transformative journey that breathes fresh life into nonprofit organizations.



Seniors' Digital Literacy

The Seniors Digital Literacy Toolkit Project aims to meet the needs of seniors in Alberta's voluntary sector. VA explored how digital literacy impacts seniors' engagement in volunteering. Phase 1, funded by the New Horizons Program, allowed Volunteer Alberta to research and prototype resources for future use. We actively engaged with communities and seniors to understand their experiences and needs, ensuring the project addressed key requirements for seniors in volunteerism.



Regional Engagement

During the summer, we interviewed five volunteer centres in Alberta. We explored how centres celebrated volunteers during National Volunteer Week and assessed the impact of COVID-19 on communities. Since we were unable to attend any events due to the pandemic, these interviews offered valuable insights directly from communities. These and future interviews serve as the basis for the "Around Alberta" blog series.



Policies review from an IDEAS perspective

To prioritize IDEAS, VA embarked on an internal policy audit. Collaborating with our HR consultant and GEDI Hub, we began examining our policies through an IDEAS lens. By focusing on internal processes first, we aim to share promising practices with our members and network with authenticity and assurance that it is possible to do so.



(Un)learning as a team

Our staff retreat is a time when we come together as a team and (un)learn together. In the fall, we were delighted to have GEDI Hub present at our retreat, and we delved into the important topic of decolonizing organizations. Our collaboration with GEDI Hub has been ongoing as we work on updating policies with an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens.



Magic Time

VA staff are encouraged to carve out time in their schedules to unlearn during "Magic Time." Activities such as practicing a skill as highlighted in staff enhancement plans, reading an article from a to-read list, spending time reflecting, or whatever else is helpful for staff in their journeys, are some ways our team intentionally engages with unlearning.

Engaging with complexities

Adapting to our complex and changing realities started with reflection with internal and external partners and stakeholders.

We found our strength in numbers.

Engaging with complexities

The nonprofit sector is complex and multifaceted. Our approach to navigating this space is guided by curiosity, community care, and (un)learning. These principles help us navigate the intricacies of nonprofit and voluntary work. Our curiosity-driven, community-centric perspective fortifies relationships with members, partners, and funders, and invites opportunities to better serve the sector.



Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medals

VA was invited to confer five Platinum Jubilee Medals in 2022. Though the medals evoked complex emotions for our team and likely for communities that faced oppression from British colonization, we were intentional with highlighting and encouraging nominations from individuals of historically marginalized communities and our selection committee created their short list with that in mind. We were thrilled by enthusiastic community response and were inspired by all the stories of Alberta's dedicated volunteers. We joyfully celebrated Arlene Bain, Nicole Chappell, Wanda Whitford, Dr. Thomas Cheuk, and Nicolas Brown.



Volunteer Screening Program

In 2022, the Volunteer Screening Program (VSP) turned its attention to evaluating and gathering feedback from the community through focus groups and surveys. This research informed the program's benchmarks and paved the way for new educational content in 2023/2024. Additionally, the VSP team provided fee waivers to 500+ VSPN holders and distributed \$30,000 in micro-grant funding to support screening development in organizations, complementing the program's goal of kickstarting a provincial conversation on screening.



Unpacking Civic Engagement

Alongside a diverse working group, our aim in 2022 was to unearth a more inclusive understanding of civic engagement as a place for intersectional healing, reconciliation, and relationships. We recognize that civic engagement has different forms and are committed to honouring that. We are excited to see what conversations sprout in 2023.



Blue Sky Meetings

We embraced Blue Sky Meetings in 2022 to support our (un)learning and invite curiosity. These meetings are staff-led conversations that provide a space to openly discuss complex subjects in a secure environment, allow brainstorming without barriers, and make room to explore possibilities.



Intersectionality

VA continued its Intersectionality Project with support from the Suncor Energy Foundation. To align intersectional approaches with "the way we do things at VA," we collaborated with GEDI Hub to evaluate our organization's policies and practices. To supplement our internal audit, we enlisted student volunteers and summer employees to explore real-life examples of intersectionality in volunteerism.

**How might we
begin to
untangle and
interrogate the
complexities
within
which we
operate ?**

Adapting quickly in a constantly changing sector can be challenging, but here are some ways we did that in 2022.

Untangling, understanding, and adapting

To help us adapt and thrive as an organization within Alberta's nonprofit sector, we intentionally worked to be responsive to the emergent needs of and opportunities for the people and communities we serve. By gaining a deep understanding of the unique and shared challenges of our communities, we arrived at solutions that better met the evolving needs of VA's staff, board, and the communities we serve.



National Volunteer Week (NVW)

Celebrating volunteers has always been crucial for Albertan communities, fostering a sense of gratitude and camaraderie. However, the pandemic and socio-economic changes hampered the capacity of host communities to celebrate in ways they used to. To ensure more communities were able to partake and commemorate their volunteers, VA and the Government of Alberta offered two opportunities for communities to apply and receive Enhancement Funding for their celebrations. This adaptation in the delivery of NVW Enhancement Funding helped 71 communities celebrate their volunteers.



Allied Community and Co-operative Shared Services (ACCESS)

In 2022, ACCESS, a nonprofit co-op, was formed by Alberta Community and Co-operative Association, Volunteer Alberta, and Econocoop. ACCESS provides specialized services in bookkeeping, IT, as well as web services and HR. To address the needs of co-ops and nonprofits, with limited resources in mind, ACCESS fills the gap by creating shared backend services to nonprofits, co-ops, and social enterprises.



Alberta Volunteer Centres Network (AVCN)

AVCN shifted meeting frequency this past year to better meet the needs of the network. We had guest presentations from organizations like Drive Happiness, Volunteer Connector, Rural Roots, and ACCESS. These interactions celebrated volunteer centers and fostered learning about community activities and achievements.



Evaluation & Impact

Over three years, VA's Evaluation and Impact Initiative empowered a number of Alberta's volunteer centers and nonprofit organizations to enhance their program evaluation and impact assessment capabilities. The lessons learned were put into an online course that increased the reach of the initiative beyond the participating volunteer centres and organizations.



Youth Engagement

As we sunset the Youth @ the Table program, we reflect on the valuable lessons learned in the past four years. With pride in the 100 alumni, we look forward to the launch of the Alberta Civil Society Emerging Leaders (ACSEL) program, empowering youth province-wide to lead community projects. Our commitment to youth engagement remains unwavering as we continue to deliver impactful programming.

Emerging and Next

In 2023, VA is engaging in a Strategic Dreaming session to help guide the next three years of our work. Through all that we've discovered in 2022, we are thrilled to take the lessons learned and adapt how we're called to serve.

Emerging and next

Since its establishment in 1990, Volunteer Alberta (VA) has provided capacity-building services to support the nonprofit sector. However, as VA enters a new strategic phase in 2023, as a staff and board we are re-evaluating our work. As we do, we want to interrogate some of the underlying mindsets associated with notions of "capacity building," to understand how we can do our work in a good way. We are curious what might happen if we shift away from notions of "capacity building," and instead, move towards the concept of "capability nourishing." As we do, we aim to honour the gifts and strengths of communities by engaging in deep listening, co-discovery, and co-creation.

We believe that through intentional conversations, community-based research, and experimentation alongside the communities we serve, we can cultivate practices and programs that enhance the conditions for volunteerism and civic engagement in Alberta. Traditionally, our focus has been on nonprofit capacity building, but recent (un)learnings have prompted us to reassess our approach to providing support to community-based organizations and how we can better address systemic challenges.

To facilitate this shift, in 2023 and guided by insights from the people and communities VA serves, we will embark on "strategic dreaming," to help set our "compass" for the next three years. We will also introduce a Social Research and Design (Social R&D) portfolio, aligning our work with collaborative and participatory action research approaches. By engaging in community-based research, VA aims to better understand the needs of the communities we serve and test new ideas. Our organization seeks to move away from extractive research methods rooted in colonialism, and instead incorporate meaningful and reciprocal community engagement. Through this approach, we believe we can adapt existing programs and services or develop new ones that address the evolving needs and aspirations of communities.

The goal of VA's transformation is to foster a more inclusive and equitable social impact ecosystem by engaging diverse groups, exploring root causes of issues, and developing shared solutions. As we do, we will expand our work beyond focusing exclusively on formal nonprofit organizations and engage with and amplify the voices of equity-seeking individuals and groups engaging in their communities through volunteerism and civic engagement.

We know that this work will take time. And by the time we write our 2023 Annual Report we will have barely scratched the surface. However, we also know that by embracing capability nourishing, engaging in community-based research, and cultivating collaboration, Volunteer Alberta is actively working towards creating a more responsive and empowering environment for civic engagement and volunteerism in Alberta. This transformation reflects the organization's commitment to adapt, evolve, and contribute positively to the wellbeing of communities across the province.

VA IN 2022 BY THE NUMBERS

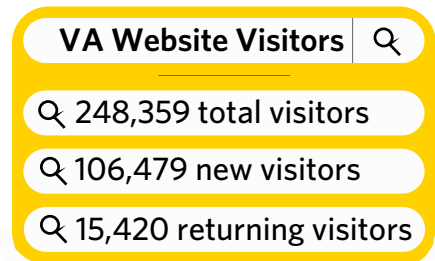
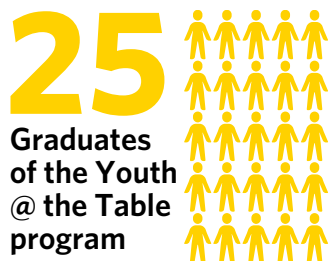


AVCN

15 meetings
4 partner presentations
2 new organizations



\$30,000
 Microgrant funding distributed to organizations through the Screening Development Grant



16 Newsletters Delivered



2 New Virtual resources developed

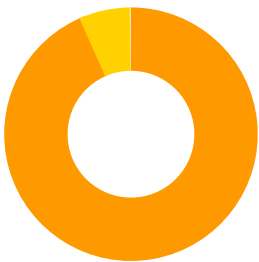
What We Heard

[Being a VA member] is an excellent opportunity to belong to a benefit plan that would not be affordable otherwise. Great connection to resources and ability to apply for enhancement funding.

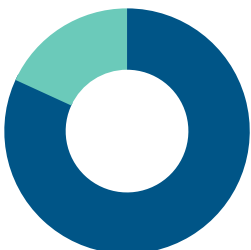
The membership to Volunteer Alberta has educated me on screening practices and bias in the volunteer sphere.

We see so many volunteers that require police checks and [the Volunteer Screening] program allows us to enroll more volunteers. This results in us being able to support more young people who are facing adversities through the power of 1:1 mentoring.

Financials



\$1,541,708	REVENUE
\$1,438,875	Contracts/Grants/Contributions
\$100,162	Memberships/Workshops/Donations
\$2,671	Interest



\$1,625,863	EXPENSES
\$1,330,665	Programs/Services/Resources
\$295,198	Management/Admin

We extend our deepest gratitude to Volunteer Alberta staff, board members, volunteers, and working group members for your invaluable support. Your dedication and efforts have been instrumental in helping us achieve our strategic goals of connecting, catalyzing, and championing volunteerism and civic engagement in Alberta. Thank you!

Board of Directors

Bonnie Chiu

Corinne Ethier

Dave Maffitt

Hero Laird
Board President

Ken Kirk
Treasurer

Lisa Gilchrist
Vice President

Naomi Mahaffy
Secretary

Rhea Kachroo

Safiyah Oni

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Networks & Engagement*

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Micheal McOuat
Coordinator, Operations

Miki Stricker-Talbot
Executive Director

Working Groups

IDEAS

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Naomi Mahaffy**
Working Group Co-Chairs

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**Alison Besecker
Eunice Droni
Graeme Dearden
Micheal McOuat
Miki Stricker-Talbot**

VA Board

**Bonnie Chiu
Ken Kirk**

External Members

**Rhianna Chiarchuk, ECVO
Roya Damabi, ECVO
Sensetsa Pilane, BGCBigs
Sheena Swierenga, Propellus**

Civic Engagement

**Melody Santiago &
Micheal McOuat**
Working Group Co-Chairs

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Micheal McOuat
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**Dina Jubrek, Brooks & County
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Revenue Diversification

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VA Board

Dave Maffitt

Canada Summer Jobs Staff

**Aretha St. Hilaire
Celeste Kwok
Kyara Reynoso
Victor Adeoye**

Volunteers

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Emilie Green
Eulainne Droni
Hyejun Kim
Jasmine Zhao
Jessica Revington
Jonathan Diaz
Joy Droni
Julianna Holt
Meena Ramanathan
Siyao Li
Sherrill Johnson**

**Staff List reflects the VA team as of June 1, 2023*

Our Funders

We would like to extend a special thank you to our funders for their support. We are grateful for the continued partnerships in creating positive change.



And our Members and an Anonymous Donor

Our Partners and Collaborators



The Alberta Nonprofit Network (ABNN) unites organizations to tackle provincial issues. Supported by Volunteer Alberta, ABNN collaborates with FuseSocial, IntegralOrg, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, and Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations. Funded by Suncor Energy Foundation, ABNN hosted online events and discussions, while Volunteer Alberta facilitated Monthly Gatherings and engaged with government officials.

Suggested Reading & Helpful Links

We encourage you to engage with the following list of resources to enhance your reading of our annual review.

Should We Cancel Capacity Building?

by Marcus Littles

Transformational Capacity Building

by April Nishimura, Roshni Sampath, Vu Le, Anbar Mahar Sheikh & Ananda Valenzuela

Protopia Futures Framework

by Monika Bielskyte

Flowing Fridays (Un)Learning Brief

prepared by Kendra Fincaryk for Volunteer Alberta

Intersectional Healing: Findings from Community-based research with Chinese & Indigenous Communities in Alberta

prepared by Celeste Kwok for Volunteer Alberta

Virtual Volunteering Screening Guidebook

prepared by Volunteer Alberta



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