

Illuminating Pathways

**Volunteer Alberta's
2024 Annual Report**





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Words of Welcome

As we reflect on 2024, we do so with gratitude and enthusiastic optimism. Guided by our Strategic Dreaming Compass, the Volunteer Alberta (VA) team spent the past year stepping boldly into the aspirations it sets forth—cultivating belonging, deepening civic engagement, and helping communities imagine and realize what’s possible.

Throughout the year, we spent meaningful time in communities—gathering with people, hearing their stories, and learning from the work already happening on the ground. Whether in formal gatherings or informal moments, we connected with people who work every day to build stronger, more caring places to live. These moments shaped our perspective—and we hope our presence helped support and strengthen the work unfolding in these communities.

These are uncertain times—for communities, for the sector, and for the people we serve. And yet, time and again, we’ve witnessed hope, creativity, and determination alive within communities. It’s this ongoing inspiration that drives us as we work alongside organizations to strengthen volunteer programs, conduct research that shapes thoughtful policy and programs, and nurture a culture where collaboration can flourish.

As we look ahead, we do so with a grounded and hopeful sense of possibility. Together with our members and partners, we’ll continue to bring our Compass to life—through shared action, bold dreaming, and deep care for one another and the communities we serve.

To VA’s members, volunteers, and supporters: thank you for your continued trust in us to serve and meet your needs. To VA’s board of directors: thank you for your ongoing guidance and leadership. And to our staff team: thank you for everything you do. Your dedication, insight, and leadership make everything we do possible.

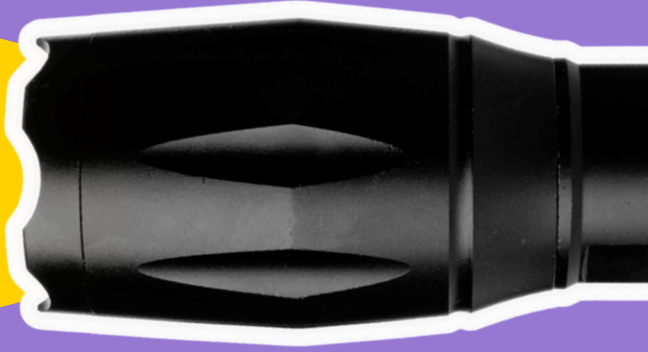
This organization exists because of all of you, and it thrives because of the values we share.

You are a vital part of our community, and we are so grateful.

Warmly,

Robyn Blackadar (she/her), President, Board of Directors
Miki Stricker-Talbot (she/her), Executive Director

VA in Numbers



19,822 Vulnerable Sector Check Fees waived, saving nearly **\$296,000** for Albertan Nonprofits and Volunteers

20 New organizations approved for a Volunteer Screening Program Number (VSPN) and **161** organizations renewed their VSPN

8000+ youth reached through the Alberta Civil Society Emerging Leaders Program (ACSEL)

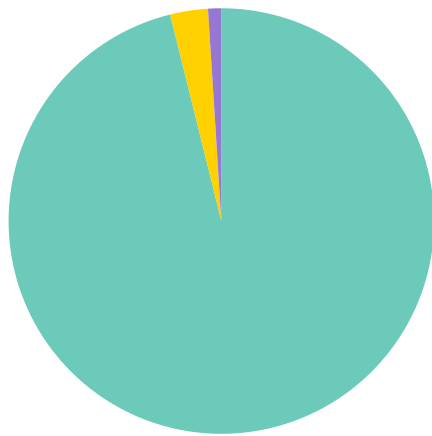
257 total members, including **51** who joined us this year

100 volunteer managers were officially recognized across the province for VA's International Volunteer Managers Day "Brewing Gratitude" initiative, in collaboration Alberta Blue Cross

91 internship placements through the Community Nonprofit Internship Program (CNiP)

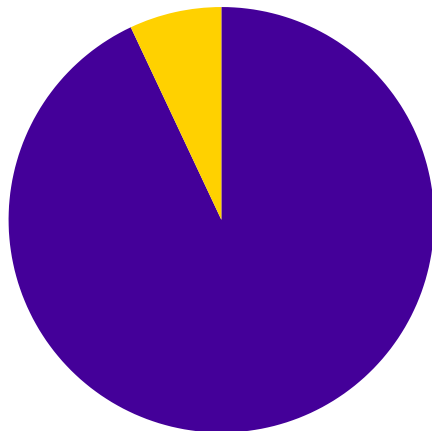
94 National Volunteer Week Celebrations supported

Finances



Revenue: \$1,803,431

\$1,742,366 Contracts/Grants/Contributions
\$51,649 Memberships/Workshops/Donations
\$9,416 Interest



Expenses - \$1,779,280

\$1,661,640 Charitable Activities
\$117,640 Management & Administration



Illuminating Impact Through Inquiry

Deepening our work to research, reflect, and (un)learn, and to understand the evolving dynamics of volunteerism in Alberta and factors affecting the nonprofit sector today.

VA's [Social Research & Design Portfolio](#) continued to grow in 2024 through four major initiatives: (Re)Engaged: Volunteerism from the Ground Up, the Volunteer Participation Research, the Dignified Retirement Options for Nonprofit Workers Research Project, and the Research & Knowledge Mobilization Community of Practice.

These initiatives set the foundation for VA's research capabilities and for a community-centred research approach that creates pathways for communities to share their knowledge and lived experiences in multifaceted ways. Using a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, we gathered insights from across Alberta to develop a more holistic understanding of the evolving dynamics of volunteerism and the matters that are important to the nonprofit sector today, in order to inform thoughtful action and change.

Volunteer Participation Research

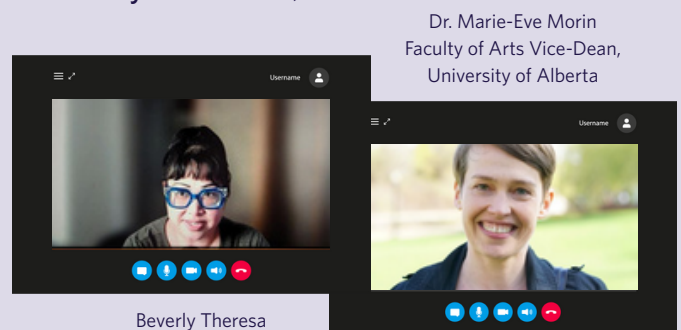
This study was the result of a collaboration between VA and Volunteer Canada. Initially emerging from curiosity around what motivates people to volunteer, this project expanded to more broadly explore how people perceive, define, and engage with different forms of volunteer activity. The survey received 839 responses, and a summary of findings will be released in 2025.

Dignified Retirement Options for Nonprofit Workers Research Project

In 2024, the Alberta Nonprofit Network hosted community conversations to understand the challenges and opportunities facing the nonprofit workforce. One idea that emerged was the interest in a pension plan for nonprofit sector employees. In late 2024, VA initiated a research project to explore the need for new pension options for nonprofit employees. The project will launch publicly in 2025.

Research & Knowledge Mobilization Community of Practice

This community of practice offered a space for Albertans interested in promising practices around research and knowledge mobilization to share challenges, learn from one another and create connections with like-minded individuals. The space also featured specialists who shared their insights on specific topics such as Marketing Research Results (with Social Media Strategist & Consultant Beverly Theresa) and Community-Based Research (with guest Dr. Marie-Eve Morin, Faculty of Arts Vice-Dean, University of Alberta).



Beverly Theresa
Social Media Strategist & Consultant

Dr. Marie-Eve Morin
Faculty of Arts Vice-Dean,
University of Alberta

Participant

"The group itself is great. I find the desire to connect and share is strong. The Gatherings are the lynchpin."

Participant

"I've found the presentations at gatherings super useful, hearing from people with specific expertise from VA and elsewhere!"



Over the past year, (Re)Engaged explored how everyday Albertans experience volunteering by using ethnographic and participatory action research methodologies in Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Fairview. We spoke with 17 individuals in depth and connected with hundreds more through community activation days. Working in partnership with InWithForward and BGCBigs of Edmonton and Area, we explored these individuals' views of volunteering, motivations for contributing, the barriers they face, and how volunteer roles and structures might be reimaged to better align with people's values.



When asked what matters most, participants ranked **relationships as their top value, followed closely by a sense of **community**.**

They resonated most with statements like:

"I want to leave something better for future generations."

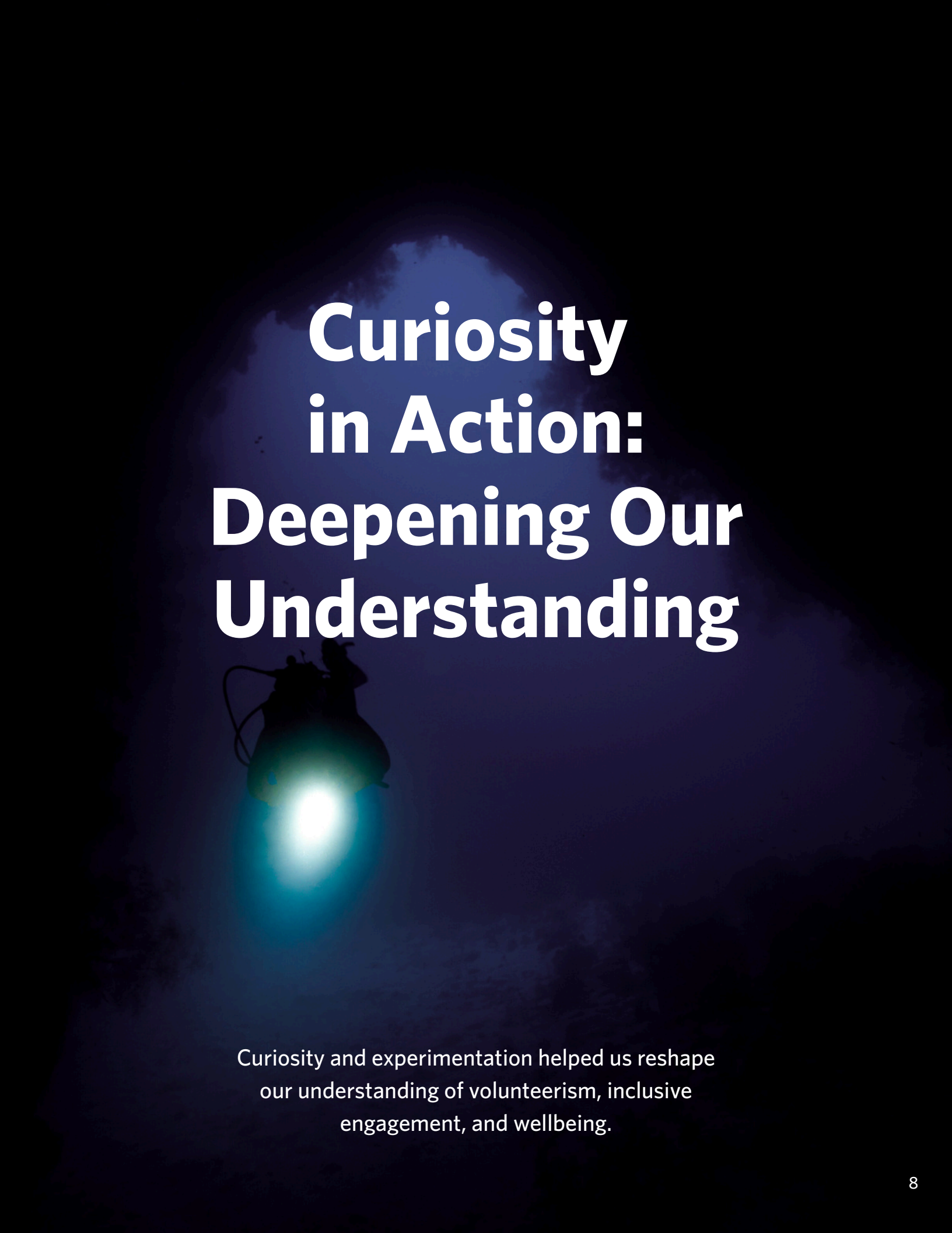
"Contributing makes me feel good."

"I've had tougher times, so I have empathy."

"It connects me to something bigger than myself."

These early findings reflect a simple truth: to (re)engage volunteers, we must prioritize connection, community, and purpose. (Re)Engaged has been a validating and reflective experience for many Albertans involved, which highlights the deep emotional and social motivations behind why people choose to contribute. The full report will be published in 2025.



A diver's silhouette is visible in the lower-left quadrant, holding a bright light that illuminates the surrounding dark, cloudy water. The light creates a strong glow and casts a beam upwards.

Curiosity in Action: Deepening Our Understanding

Curiosity and experimentation helped us reshape
our understanding of volunteerism, inclusive
engagement, and wellbeing.



Volunteer Screening Program (VSP)

The VSP plays an important role in providing Alberta's nonprofit sector with education, resources, and funding to enhance their volunteer screening and engagement practices, contributing to safer, connected communities.

In 2024, and in partnership with the Government of Alberta, the VSP provided:

- 19,822 Vulnerable Sector Checks (VSCs) waived through our VSC Fee Waiver Program, saving nonprofits and volunteers a total of \$295,787
- 20 new organizations approved for a Volunteer Screening Program Number (VSPN)
- 161 organizations renewed their VSPN
- 12 Screening Development Microgrants, totaling \$34,500 to improve risk management and screening capacity

What we heard from the VSP community

"Thank you for always working towards making volunteer engagement easier/smoothen for both organizations as this trickle down has an impact on volunteers."

"This a vital program necessary to encourage volunteer participation."

"Thank you for your support—especially the service we received while renewing our VSPN account!"

Equity and Inclusion in Volunteer Screening Webinar Series

VA's Equity and Inclusion in Volunteer Screening webinar series offered insights into how inclusive screening practices can enhance volunteer safety, well-being, and belonging. With 148 highly engaged participants across three sessions, this series provided practical takeaways to strengthen recruitment and retention efforts. Following the posting of the webinars on our website, these webinars accounted for 52% of total views in 2024, underscoring their relevance within the sector.



"Since being a part of this [series], we have recruited over 20 new volunteers. Thank you so much for the support with recruitment, and I feel that we will do a much better job with retention now as well."

"[The webinar] gave me more confidence that the practices I was using were correct, and direction on honing in and making our system even better."

"[The webinar] helped me realize that I need to focus more energy on setting up volunteer roles and expectations."

"One thing I did learn is that I'm going to work on improving communication with volunteers during each program's offseason."



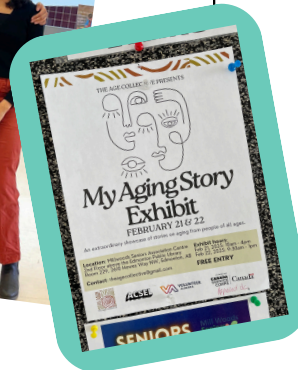


With the support of the Government of Canada Service Corps, this year's ACSEL program empowered 30 young people to lead and deliver community projects across the province. Building on the success of the 2023 pilot, this year's projects tackled social issues—ranging from ageism, social isolation, physical health and wellbeing, to race and racism. ACSEL participants led initiatives that served more than 8000 unique individuals, proving that youth can make meaningful and far-reaching impact.

Spotlight: The Age Collective (Shanuki G.)

Shanuki and her sister used the ACSEL grant to pilot "My Aging Story," an exhibit focused on showcasing stories from people of all ages and creating meaningful conversations about aging.

Shanuki



← Comments



wise.woman.aging Thank you, Shanuki for explaining so succinctly your mission and dedication to the issue of ageism. I was so touched as you presented your story of why you are involved. As a 79-year-old woman, I appreciate your efforts to raise awareness about the way we look at aging in our culture, as I believe much of this is ingrained and operates at somewhat of an unconscious level. Hence, bringing it to the surface and actually talking about this is so refreshing. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

2d 100 likes Reply

CONNECT Calls

VA hosted the second year of CONNECT, a virtual community of practice for Volunteer Specialists. The topics discussed in 2024 included: "Inclusive Language" with Steven Wright from GEDI Hub, "Effective Copywriting for Volunteer Recruitment" with Aleksandra Vasic from Volunteer Success, and "Engaging Youth Volunteers" with Rayyah Sempala from Action for Healthy Communities, joined by VA's Kyara Reynoso.

Continued on next page . . .




Our CONNECT calls addressed some of the most common questions we hear from volunteer specialists and provided a space for learning and connection, bringing together participants from across Alberta to meet and hear from each other. These recordings are now part of our growing member resource library.

Prioritizing Wellbeing through Policy Updates

VA continued to intentionally nurture a culture of care amongst our staff, board members, and volunteers. We also introduced new practices like “The Duck Up Awards”—a monthly opportunity for team members to share a story about a mistake they made and what they learned from it. In July, we tested our first “Focus Week” for (un)learning and discovery, and we will refine and revisit it in 2025. We also deepened our understanding of inclusivity with staff and board members participating in Deep Diversity Training with Anima Leadership and engaging in (un)learning sessions with Danielle Peers on gender identities, accessibility, and inclusion. Lastly, we updated our formal policies and procedures through a human-centred approach, working with deliberation to include notions of care and love within our documents. Our policy work was led by Micheal McOuat, earning him one of Future of Good’s 2024 Young Impact Leaders awards for weaving intersectionality, Reconciliation, and healing-informed care into our internal policies and documents.



The background of the entire page is a dark night sky filled with numerous small, glowing white dots, resembling stars or distant galaxies. Several large, glowing orange paper lanterns are floating in the sky. One is in the upper left, another in the upper right, and a third, smaller one is on the left side, partially behind the title text. The lanterns have a warm, orange glow from within.

Illuminating Connections: Partnerships and Collaborations

Throughout the year, we focused on nurturing relationships and shared purpose to support thriving communities across Alberta.

In 2024, ABNN Network Stewards—VA, Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, FuseSocial, Volunteer Lethbridge, and IntegralOrg—partnered with the Government of Alberta to host a series of community gatherings focused on the nonprofit workforce. In-person sessions in Lethbridge and Edmonton, along with two virtual sessions for rural communities, created space for sector leaders to come together, share their experiences, and discuss opportunities and challenges facing the sector. Attendees reported appreciation for the opportunity to gather and connect with peers.

Several insights emerged from these gatherings and are informing the work of ABNN, individual ABNN Network Steward Organizations, and the Government of Alberta. One key outcome was the creation of the Dignified Retirement Options for Nonprofit Workers project, developed in response to concerns about recruitment and retention in the nonprofit workforce.

National Volunteer Week 2024

VA celebrated a record-breaking year for National Volunteer Week (NVW) in 2024. With the highest number of applications in over a decade, 94 communities were approved for NVW enhancement grants. VA staff members were honoured to attend a significant number of these events in person, and we were excited that this year marked the highest social media engagement in the initiative's history, due to improvements like earlier promotion, increased outreach, and enhanced accessibility for application forms. These efforts led to greater community participation, increased recognition of volunteer contributions, and stronger awareness of the role of volunteerism across Alberta.

VA's collaboration with the Government of Alberta continues to assist in fostering a culture of civic engagement, recognition, and community connection in our province.



VA Staff at Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids

Collaborations with Sector Partners

VA enhanced its collaborative efforts with sector partners in 2024. These partnerships supported our ongoing learning in and commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Social Justice (IDEAS) and Reconciliation.

Here are some initiatives we contributed to:

- Monthly meetings of CDLI's Anti-Racism & Decolonization Learning Action Team
- Rupertsland Institute's inaugural Métis 2SLGBTQIA+ Gathering
- Imagine Canada's initiative on how nonprofits can take part in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action
- Volunteer Canada's Looking into the Future with Data webinar as a presenter, highlighting how data can drive meaningful change
- Volunteer Canada's AGM as a panelist for the National Action Strategy for Volunteerism
- Don't Just Survive—Thrive! conference led by Stony Plain and Tri-Region as session facilitators on creating meaningful volunteer roles and effective volunteer recruitment and retention
- League of Intrapreneurs Global Fellows Campfire Gathering as a facilitator

OASSIS

VA was pleased to announce the renewal of our valued partnership with OASSIS. This collaboration remains an important benefit to our network, with 36% of our members currently accessing OASSIS Health and Dental Benefits.

In 2024, OASSIS demonstrated continued commitment to our shared goals by sponsoring VA's Annual General Meeting and attending nonprofit sector conferences to maintain a strong presence within Alberta's nonprofit community.

We are grateful for OASSIS's ongoing support and look forward to building on this strong relationship in 2025.



Co-operators

VA and Co-operators renewed and expanded their partnership in 2024 to support Alberta's nonprofit sector with insurance and risk management resources. New this year were two co-learning sessions between VA and Co-operators, which nurtured mutual understanding and cross-sector collaboration to better support the communities we serve. VA exceeded deliverables by promoting Co-operators nonprofit-focused services and sharing two high-performing blog posts, one of which saw 10 times the usual social media engagement. This collaboration offered valuable insights that will continue to inform our work ahead.

Student Collaborations and Contributions to Sector Capacity Building

To support student learning, we partnered with many talented post-secondary students who brought fresh perspectives and strong research skills to support VA's knowledge sharing and capacity-building efforts to advance engagement and inclusion in the sector.

Student projects included:

- Designing marketing materials for the VSP webinar series on volunteer recruitment and retention
- Guest writing for the Around Alberta blog series and a new blog series focused on equity and inclusion in volunteer screening
- Inclusive engagement strategy assessment by the University of Alberta's (UofA) Community Service Learning students
- Updating the language in VA's member manual to reflect our 2024-2026 strategic priorities
- An evaluation framework template co-designed with Masters' students from UofA's School of Public Health



Darryl with the Master's students from the School of Public Health



Eunice with the PHIL 125 CSL students at the University of Alberta

Student Volunteers:

Calum Ward • Catherine Tran • Eddy Felix • Emma Monaghan • Emilie Tom-Parent • Faith Abimbola • Fall 2024 SAIT School of Business Practicum Students • Hannah Unsworth • Jay Batta • Oreoluwa Onabanjo • Rhiannon Leslie • Robertson Wickins • Simone Michalski • Vaani Yadav • Vania Russell • Zara Ahmed

A person is shown in profile, looking upwards at night. They are wearing a headlamp that is illuminated, casting a beam of light. The background is dark with several out-of-focus, warm-toned lights (bokeh) visible. The overall mood is contemplative and forward-looking.

Looking Forward: Insights, Reflections & Growth

Guided by our Strategic Compass,
we made meaningful steps on the path towards Reconciliation
and remained responsive to what is emerging and next
for volunteerism in Alberta.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Guided by our new Strategic Compass for 2024–2026, and recognizing a link between our recalibrated mission to nourish wellbeing and healthy communities of belonging through cultivating conditions for volunteerism and civic engagement and the work of Reconciliation, VA continued to deepen our work in this realm. To live into our role as “Change-Makers,” we must acknowledge how colonialism and its ongoing impacts affect both Indigenous communities and the systems of volunteerism and civic engagement, and we must seek ways to enact change within those systems.

To align our practices with our values, we revised our Land Affirmation to reflect our new Strategic Compass and to more accurately honour the Indigenous peoples that live within the land we now call Alberta and the areas we support. This process included extensive research into Indigenous histories and territories, which highlighted gaps in our knowledge and relationships. This work led to a more intentional and personalized Land Affirmation; one grounded in our values and the aspirations we hold for the future. Throughout 2024, we researched the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan to have a roadmap and framework to follow in 2025.

Volunteer Centre Research

In 2024, VA launched a province-wide research initiative to better understand the current and emerging roles of Volunteer Centres. This work, inspired by conversations within the Alberta Volunteer Centre Network (AVCN), reflects our commitment to sector (un)learning and collaboration. Guided by our Strategic Compass, we engaged in literature reviews and network consultations to explore how Volunteer Centres, and similar organizations, are adapting to shifting community needs and volunteer trends. This ongoing research will inform future support, advocacy, and partnership efforts to ensure Volunteer Centres remain vital infrastructure for civic engagement across Alberta.



Following the success of the 2023 pilot, made possible by the Government of Canada's Community Services Recovery Fund, VA relaunched the Community Nonprofit Internship Program (CNiP) in 2024 in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton (BGCBigS).

CNiP connects post-secondary students with meaningful, skill-based internship opportunities in Alberta's nonprofit sector, while supporting sector workforce challenges such as staff burnout and recruitment. Through a web platform, students can apply to internship opportunities with BGCBigS. CNiP also offers micro-credentials, certifying student skills and achievements to help with employability.

VA continues to collaborate with BGCBigS to place students as mentors in Edmonton schools, and there are ongoing efforts to grow this initiative.

A graphic of a black spotlight with a white ring at its base, casting a yellow beam of light across the page.

2023-2024

50 post secondary students completed their internship

2024-2025

91 students were matched and are expected to complete their internship in July 2025

**18 students
returned from
2023-2024 cohort**



"I honestly didn't have any expectations going into this program, as this is my first time volunteering and working with kids, so after this amazing volunteer experience, it definitely set some high expectations for any other volunteering I do in the future outside of BGCBigS."

"It was great to be able to help and connect with kids and just watch them be themselves, free from stress or anything going on in their life."

"Through this experience working with kids in schools, I gained a newfound respect for teachers and educational assistants and was able to learn and see all that they do on a daily basis."

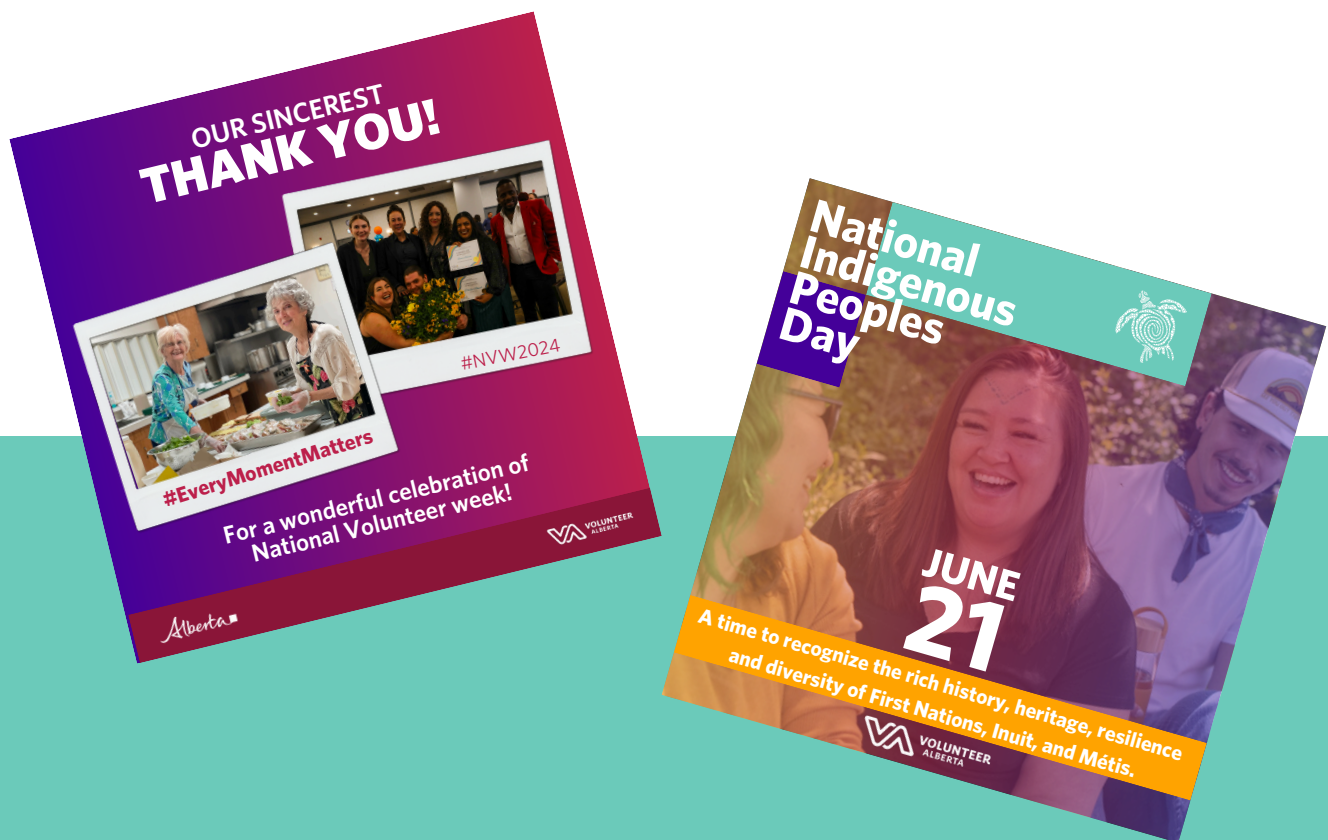


Strategic Communications for Engagement and Connection

In 2024, we revamped our communications strategy to align with our 2024-2026 Strategic Compass and member feedback. We prioritized VA-related content, created consistent visual branding, and continued to use key performance indicators to inform our approach.

A focused social media strategy and a near doubling of social media posts from 2023 led to a strong increase in engagement metrics. We tailored our content strategy to reflect member feedback, featuring key topics like VA updates, sector news, funding opportunities, and awareness days such as International Volunteer Day. To broaden our reach, we invested in online advertising, supporting the province-wide campaign for the National Volunteer Week Enhancement Funding initiative and a Canada-wide campaign for the National Volunteer Participation Survey with Volunteer Canada.

We also improved our email communication efforts, resulting in a notable increase in open rates and click rates from the previous year. Engaging subject lines, improved timing, and more targeted content helped us better connect with our audience. These results reflect growing engagement with our work and increased visibility across the sector. Looking ahead to 2025, we'll focus on turning that engagement into meaningful action.



Strategic Compass

(2024-2026)

In 2023, VA embarked on a Strategic Dreaming Journey, engaging in conversations with the people and communities we serve about the future of volunteerism and civic engagement in Alberta for generations to come. VA staff and board members convened in 2024 to reflect on the wisdom that surfaced from our community dialogues and to craft a strategic document that would turn the aspirations voiced in our community conversations into guiding principles for VA.

In 2024, we updated our Strategic Compass (2024-2026) as a north star document to navigate the future with intention and care. This compass will serve as a guide for VA, ensuring that our efforts are aligned with the engaged and caring communities in our province. It will help us clarify how we will continue supporting the good work of the sector and help us fulfill our vision of thriving communities nurtured by caring individuals across Alberta.



Our Circle of Support

We're deeply grateful to be surrounded by a strong circle of support. To our funders and collaborators—thank you for walking alongside us. Your continued partnership helps us nurture the conditions for engaged, connected, and empowered communities across Alberta. Thank you!



Funded by the Government of Canada under the Canada Service Corps program | Canada



Boys & Girls Clubs



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area (BGCBigS)

Funded by the Government of Canada's Community Services Recovery Fund | Canada



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The Association of Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Engaging Organizations of Alberta

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