

President's Awards Banquet



2025 ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop

October 25, 2025

Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, Lake Louise, Alberta



#ARPAConf2025

Land Acknowledgment

The Alberta Recreation & Parks Association (ARPA) would like to acknowledge the First Nations, the Métis, the Inuit, and all of the peoples across Alberta who share a history and a deep connection with this land. We dedicate ourselves to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.



Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, Communities ChooseWell and the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta would like to congratulate all the award winners tonight and thank them for their dedication to the recreation and parks sector of Alberta!

PROGRAM

Procession

Welcome

Blessings

Minister's Address

Alberta Recreation & Parks Association Scholarships

AABRD Undergraduate Scholarship

AABRD Graduate Scholarship

Halladay Memorial Scholarship

Dinner

Communities ChooseWell Healthy Community Inspiration Awards

ChooseWell Champion of the Year Award

Lieutenant Governor's Leadership for Active Communities Awards

Collaborative Impact in Community Leadership Award

Elected Community Official Award

Professional Leadership Award

Alberta Recreation & Parks Association Awards

Rick Curtis Children & Youth Award

Inclusion Award

AABRD Legacy Award

Parks Excellence Award

Closing Address & Honour Song by Spike Eagle Speaker Junior

Communities ChooseWell Healthy Community Inspiration Awards

The Communities ChooseWell Healthy Community Inspiration Awards recognize Alberta communities and individuals who are making the province a healthier place to live through active living, healthy eating and overall community wellness. Too often, the wellness champions in our province go unappreciated and their work goes unrecognized. Recognition is an important part of the ChooseWell program, and this year, six communities and one champion are being recognized. The award being presented this evening is the ChooseWell Champion Award, ChooseWell's most prestigious recognition.

ChooseWell Champion of the Year Award

Melissa Monzon

Born in Lima, Peru, Melissa is a Communication and Community Engagement Professional, with fifteen years of working experience in designing, implementing and evaluating social projects at local, national and international level. With a bachelor's degree in Communication for Development by Pontificia Universidad Catolica in Peru and a Master's degree in Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies by KU Leuven in Belgium, Melissa has worked in non-profits and international organizations like Care and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Melissa came to Canada at the end of 2022 and has worked at the Red Deer Native Friendship Society since July 2023 in the Four Directions department, where she organizes the Celebrating Families! program, an educational program for families who are having trouble because of substance use and who want to acquire healthy life skills and heal as a family.



Alberta Recreation & Parks Association Scholarships

AABRD Scholarships

The Alberta Advisory Board on Recreation for the Disabled (AABRD) Scholarships recognize academic achievements, contributions to, and endeavors in advancing the field of recreation for people with disabilities. The scholarships assist Albertans in advancing their education in the areas of recreation for people with disabilities (e.g., recreation administration, adapted physical education, rehabilitation medicine or other related programs).

AABRD Graduate Scholarship Recipient

Myra Emblau

Myra Emblau, a first-year Kinesiology student, is celebrated for her exceptional record balancing rigorous academics with high-level athletic achievement, including competitive gymnastics and elite basketball. Her career highlights include representing Fort McMurray at the Alberta Winter Games and the Artistic Gymnastics Provincial Championship. Myra demonstrates remarkable resilience, exemplary time management skills, and leadership qualities that inspire her peers, positioning her as a standout student poised to make significant contributions to the field of recreation.

AABRD Graduate Scholarship Recipient

Hannah Bayfield-Tarasco

Hannah Bayfield-Tarasco, a Master's student in Kinesiology, is recognized for her extensive work and advocacy in Adapted Physical Activity (APA). Driven by a deep commitment to inclusion, she co-developed Mount Royal University's first summer camp for children and youth with disabilities and has worked with the Calgary Adapted Hub. Her dedication goes beyond academics, as she consistently volunteers and actively seeks opportunities to advocate for accessible and inclusive spaces, embodying the values of leadership and community-building in the adapted recreation sector.

Halladay Memorial Scholarship

The Halladay Memorial Scholarship Award recognizes a student enrolled in any undergraduate program related to recreation and parks, who has contributed to recreation and/or parks services through volunteer activities, work experience, studies and involvement in ARPA. This award is given in memory of Jacqueline Diane Halladay (1959–1981), who served on ARPA's Board of Directors from 1979–1980 and was instrumental in initiating the Student Standing Committee.

Colton Meronyk

Colton Meronyk represents the outstanding future of the recreation and parks field, showcasing exceptional academic rigor and community commitment. As a student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Recreation, Sport & Tourism, he is an emerging leader who has served an impressive two terms as the Student Representative on the ARPA Board. Colton is also a founding member of the Sports Networking Association and has demonstrated his dedication to the sector's growth by working to build strong ties with other faculties, raising awareness of parks and recreation as a viable and rewarding career opportunity.



Lieutenant Governor's Leadership for Active Communities Awards

These awards honour the legacy of the Honourable Norman Kwong's honorary patronage of the Alberta Active Communities initiative.

This province-wide awards program recognizes the achievements of teams and individuals who:

- + Demonstrate the very best of active community leadership,
- + Engage citizens in planning,
- + Use leadership to get people more active more often,
- + Work to create places, spaces and opportunities for people to be active and engage in their communities, using recreation as a catalyst.

Collaborative Impact in Community Leadership Award Infinity Safety Awareness

Infinity Safety Awareness is recognized for its exceptional ability to forge collaborative partnerships that address critical community needs. Their impactful work includes organizing large-scale events, such as the Edmonton Cultural Festival, which serves as a successful platform for cross-cultural exchange. They also provide essential weekly support to the most vulnerable through crucial food hamper drives. Their proven dedication and successful collaboration with diverse organizations, including the Alberta RCMP, highlight a profound commitment to community safety, well-being, and building an inclusive, welcoming province.

Elected Community Official Award

Mayor Ken Johnston

Mayor Ken Johnston of the City of Red Deer is recognized for his principled and championing role as an elected official. Over his two terms, he consistently made active living and recreation key pillars of the city's strategic planning. His leadership has directly resulted in equity-focused initiatives that reduce participation barriers and ensure public investments reflect the community's deep-seated values of accessibility and sustainability. As he retires from public life, Mayor Johnston leaves a powerful legacy in sport, recreation, and community well-being that will benefit Red Deer for years to come.

Professional Leadership Award

Adrian Goulet

Adrian Goulet is known for applying traditional Cree knowledge to create unique and inclusive land-based recreational programs. As the Cultural Reconnection Coordinator at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary, and through his company Mahegun Tails Inc., he has driven strategic change by promoting cultural understanding and holistic well-being. Adrian is an innovator who builds strong, collaborative partnerships with municipalities and schools to ensure that programming is community-driven and accessible to all generations. Adrian has also been a key part of the ARPA team, working as the lead consultant with the Elders Knowledge Circle development project and a fundamental partner developing the Elder Capacity Building Culture Camp.

Tom Naested

Tom Naested is recognized for his enduring professional leadership at Vecova, and his involvement in the Calgary Adapted Hub. Throughout his career, he has made a lasting impact on the parks and recreation sector by championing inclusion and access for people with disabilities. His deep commitment to mentorship and his role in research and service delivery have left an indelible legacy of excellence and innovation, ensuring the sector grows stronger and more inclusive for future generations.

Alberta Recreation & Parks Association Awards

Rick Curtis Children & Youth Award

The Rick Curtis Children & Youth Award recognizes outstanding initiatives that empower and support children and/or youth in Alberta through recreation and sport. This award celebrates organizations and programs that prioritize the holistic development of children and/or youth.

Youth En Route

Youth En Route has made a significant positive impact on the health and resilience of young people. The initiative empowers youth by providing them with bicycles and cycling education, effectively breaking down transportation barriers and promoting active living. By repairing and repurposing discarded bikes, she not only helps the environment but also fosters independence, physical literacy, and a valuable connection to nature for young Calgarians, especially those from vulnerable communities.



Inclusion Award

The ARPA Inclusion Award recognises the forward thinking of a community, organization, school, or individual who has championed inclusion initiatives, change, or practices in the recreation and parks sector.

Nikâniw Indigenous Youth Leadership Program - City of Edmonton

The Nikâniw Indigenous Youth Leadership Program has demonstrated a profound commitment to inclusion by providing a vital, culturally grounded pathway for Indigenous youth to become certified leaders in aquatics and recreation. This successful program, which has been running for over 20 years, focuses on reducing barriers to employment and recreation. It provides hands-on learning that allows youth to achieve certifications as swim instructors and lifeguards, with many participants going on to careers in aquatics and becoming leaders within their community.

AABRD Legacy Award

The Alberta Advisory Board on Recreation for the Disabled (AABRD) Legacy Award recognizes achievements by individuals, communities, and organizations that strive to advance integrated recreation opportunities for people with disabilities.

Hoop Heroes Inclusive Basketball Program

Hoop Heroes Inclusive Basketball program has made a profound commitment to breaking down barriers by creating a unique, accessible, and all-abilities basketball league in Fort McMurray. This successful program fosters a strong sense of belonging for individuals with intellectual disabilities, including those with Down syndrome. By creating opportunities for community integration, such as their “Heroes Unite” game where participants play alongside local RCMP and Fire Departments, the organization ensures that everyone has the chance to participate, thrive, and feel a valued part of the wider community.

Parks Excellence Award

ARPA's Parks and Open Space Committee created the Parks Excellence Award to recognize achievements and innovative ideas in parks and open space operations. It serves to increase the profiles of parks and open space professionals in Alberta. Recreation and parks services in Alberta have helped create thriving communities and citizens adding greater value to the quality of life for all Albertans.

Hamlet of Marten Beach - Firesmart Program

Dan Tarney, of the MD of Lesser Slave River No. 124, has exhibited outstanding dedication through nearly two decades of service, specifically in the management and maintenance of Marten Beach. His extensive experience is matched by his unwavering commitment to public safety, which is best exemplified by his long-standing leadership in organizing the annual FireSmart Clean-Up event. Dan's proactive approach to fire mitigation and his consistent efforts to maintain the health and safety of the area showcase a gold standard of excellence in park management and community stewardship.

Parks Foundation Calgary

Parks Foundation Calgary has made a profound commitment to breaking down barriers by driving forward a vision for universal access in public spaces. The Foundation is specifically recognized for its development of a fully accessible dementia park, a unique initiative designed to provide a safe, therapeutic, and engaging outdoor environment for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. This effort embodies the spirit of inclusion by ensuring that public spaces are intentionally designed under the principles of universal design, guaranteeing that everyone has the opportunity to participate, play, and enjoy their community.





Congratulations to all the award recipients and thank
you for your commitment to recreation and parks
development in Alberta!



#ARPAConf2025