

2025



Alberta Recreation & Parks Association (ARPA)

ANNUAL REPORT



Photos 2025 YDRS Symposium

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ARPA would like to acknowledge the First Nations, the Métis, the Inuit and all of the people 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.



YEAR AT A GLANCE

September 2024 - September 2025

Our Reach



1750

Individual Members representing municipalities, businesses, non-profits, post secondary education institutions and students

Events



4

Events Hosted

- **2024 ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop** | Lake Louise, AB
- **2025 Alberta Healthy Communities Symposium** | Calgary, AB
- **2025 Leaders Summit** | Canmore, AB
- **2025 YDRS Symposium** | Water Valley, AB



595

Total Attendees

We recognized the hard work of individuals, communities, and organizations by...

Awarding

7

ARPA Awards

Awarding

3

Scholarships for a total of \$4000

Awarding

3

Lietenant Governors Awards

ARPA gratefully acknowledges our funding partner, the Government of Alberta.

Alberta



Photos: 2025 Alberta Healthy Communities Symposium (left), 2024 ARPA Conference (right)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I cannot believe it is already that time of year to reflect back on the past year of Association accomplishments and milestones. The Board completed and released our updated Strategic Directions for 2025–2027. While the outcomes and priorities were refreshed, we also reaffirmed the four pillars that continue to guide our work. **Here are some highlights from the past year, organized by these pillars:**

Leadership & Advocacy

As our Community Compass project entered its final year of funding, we were able to successfully reach more under-represented groups, individuals and youth to promote careers in recreation and parks. We also expanded resources for both job seekers and employers in the sector.

Our advocacy efforts were enhanced through Board development, securing meetings with provincial leaders, supporting CPRA nationally, and partnering with AARFP to define shared advocacy priorities.

We also worked closely with our post-secondary partners to ensure recreation and parks remain a vibrant part of the education opportunities for future leaders and relevant research for the sector.

Membership Excellence

Thank you to those who were able to complete our member survey, we gained valuable insights to strengthen our delivery and design of education and events. We continue to enhance our professional development offerings and recently launched our membership portal, which will grow into a hub for engagement and added value to our members.

Active & Engaged Communities

Our reconciliation journey continued through the Walking with Indigenous Communities Action Map. We supported the creation of the Elders Knowledge Circle Society and included Indigenous voices across our programs. The Indigenous Employer Toolkit, launched through Community Compass, was another key milestone.

Meanwhile, Communities ChooseWell marked 20 amazing years of inspiring healthier communities across Alberta, offering funding, resources, and opportunities to celebrate local champions across Alberta.

Operational Excellence

This past spring, the Board initiated a governance review to ensure ARPA is well-positioned for the future, with results and recommended updates to be shared in the year ahead.

We also navigated some important transitions: Communities in Bloom Alberta program has now moved to a new non-profit home; our role as a HIGH FIVE contracted provider concluded as a result of delivery-model changes by the program owner; and the Recreation for Life Foundation officially dissolved, however its legacy and endowment funds will continue as a part of the ARPA organization.

Looking ahead, 2026 marks ARPA's 75th Anniversary! We have an amazing volunteer team, led by Past-President Candy Lannan, and we've been gathering information and stories from our amazing history. We plan to celebrate this milestone throughout the year, honoring the incredible impact ARPA has had across Alberta and on the professionals who have been providing quality recreation and parks opportunities over this timeframe.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the strong relationship with several Ministries within the provincial government, including our work with Alberta Tourism and Sport on priorities related to municipal recreation and parks development, and Alberta Health with the Communities ChooseWell program.

As we celebrate 75 years together, I am excited about the future we're shaping. Looking forward we are positioned to ensure recreation and parks remain vital, relevant, and impactful for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Deb Comfort - ARPA President



BOARD MEMBERS

Deb Comfort

ARPA President

Heather Cowie

Past President

Kate Helset

Student Representative

Katie Biberdorf

VP External

Julie Dolmont

Region 1 Member (North)

Travis Kennedy

Nicole Fraser

Julia Soucie

Kyle McCallum

Ryan Poole

Directors at Large

Graham Jones

VP Internal

William Choy

Region 2 Member (Central)

Jarret Hoebbers

Treasurer

Scott Richter

Region 3 Member (South)

STAFF

Steve Allan

Executive Director

Janet Naclia

Director of People & Programs

Lori Simmonds

Finance & Operations Coordinator

Caleb Boorse

Communications & Member Services Manager

Callie Woodley

Communications & Marketing Specialist

Jessica Frechette

Member Services & Events Coordinator

Patrick MacQuarrie

Community Compass, Program Manager

Jagdeep Kundi

Community Compass, Industry Connections Coordinator

Simrat Bandesha

Community Compass, Program Coordinator

Julie Venner

Communities ChooseWell, Program Manager

Maddison Drader

Communities ChooseWell Program Officer, Education & Allyship

Emilia Grindlay

Communities ChooseWell Program Officer, Healthy Eating & Engagement

Kayla MacIntosh

Communities ChooseWell Program Officer, Storytelling & Communications

Alyssa Warwick

Communities ChooseWell Program Officer, Events & Partnerships



Photos: ARPA Board (left), ARPA Staff (right)

PARTNERS & COMMITTEES

We continue to build relationships with other associations and institutions with shared goals.

We have formal partnerships with the following organizations:

Associations:

- Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability (ALACD)
- Alberta Association of Agriculture Societies (AAAS)
- Alberta Association of Recreation Facilities Personnel (AARFP)
- Alberta Municipalities
- Alberta Sport Leadership Association
- Alberta TrailNet
- Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA)
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA)
- Ever Active Schools
- Recreation for Life Foundation (RFLF)
- Rural Municipalities of Alberta Association (RMA)
- Siksika Health Services
- Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories Branch
- InMotion Network

Post Secondary Institutions:

- Mount Royal University; Faculty of Health, Community & Education
- Olds College
- University of Alberta; Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport and Recreation (KSR)
- University of Alberta; Centre for Healthy Communities
- University of Calgary; School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape
- University of Calgary; Faculty of Kinesiology

Government:

- Government of Canada
- Province of Alberta; Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women
- Province of Alberta; Ministry of Forestry and Parks
- Province of Alberta; Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services
- Province of Alberta; Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration
- Province of Alberta; Ministry of Tourism and Sport

We also have additional working relationships with:

- Active Alberta Coalition
- Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention
- Calgary Foundation
- Indigenous Sport Council of Alberta
- Mahegun Tails Inc.
- Miskanawah
- Prescription to Get Active
- United Way Calgary
- YMCA of Northern Alberta
- Action for Healthy Communities

Committees, networks & task groups:

- ARPA Community of Practice
Chair: Jen Goeres
- Parks & Open Space Committee Network
Chair: Doug Evans & Erin Pickard
- Awards and Scholarships Committee
Chair: Glenn Jensen
- Advocacy Committee
Chair: Katie Biberdorf



RECONCILIATION

Indigenous Employment Toolkit

In 2024, ARPA introduced the [Indigenous Employment Toolkit](#) Developed by [Community Compass](#) in collaboration with Kacey Yellowbird, an experienced Health Specialist and long time partner of ARPA, the Indigenous Employment Toolkit aims to help organizations foster cultural sensitivity and inclusivity for Indigenous employees by addressing their unique practices, beliefs, and experiences. A Pipe Ceremony was held in March 2025 with Blackfoot Elder and Traditional Knowledge Keeper, Dr. Clarence Wolfleg Sr., to acknowledge the toolkit as an official document of ARPA.

Educational Round Dance at the ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop

2024 also saw the first-ever Educational Round Dance hosted by ARPA. Held at the 2024 ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop, this event also included an Indigenous Artisan Market that focused on Indigenous artists and businesses from Northern Alberta as part of ARPA's commitment to economic reconciliation. This event was hosted in collaboration with Adrian Goulet from Mahegun Tails Inc., a long-time partner of ARPA who specializes in Indigenous-led cultural opportunities.

A Commitment to Education

This past year also highlighted the creation of two key resources focused on reconciliation-based education for the recreation and parks sector. We were proud to launch the [Recreation, Parks, and Justice: Advocating for MMIWG2S+ in Alberta](#) toolkit designed to help our sector take meaningful action in response to the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S+) individuals. ARPA also introduced Communities ChooseWell's new [Indigenous Food Sovereignty](#) e-module which provides an introductory look into the role of Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Alberta.

Ongoing Activities

As with past years, we continue to honour Indigenous voices and practices by highlighting them in our activities, events, and programming. This included the continuation of the Elders' Capacity Building Culture Camp and our ongoing support of the Elders Knowledge Circle Society as a newly formed, independent non-profit organization.

Thank you to our funders for:

The Reconciliation Stream at the 2024 ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop:



The 2025 Elders' Capacity Building Culture Camp:



Photos: 2025 Elders Capacity Camp (left), Indigenous Employment Toolkit (middle), Round Dance at 2024 ARPA Annual Conference (right)

PROGRAMS

Communities ChooseWell

Communities ChooseWell is a program that inspires healthy living champions across Alberta to transform their communities into places where eating well and being active are easy choices for everyone. The partnership between ARPA and our funder, the Ministry of Alberta Health, demonstrates the joint commitment by the recreation and health sectors to improving the health and wellbeing of Albertans and their communities.



Who We Reached



1574
Unique
Champions



353
Unique
Communities



493
Champions Working with
Indigenous Communities



128
Indigenous
Communities



70
Alberta Healthy Communities
Symposium Delegates

Key Successes



The Healthy Communities Framework released in two NEW formats: interactive video & workbooks



We celebrated our 20th anniversary this year with weekly trivia, a community story, and a reception at the Symposium.



We launched our NEW Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion in Recreation Settings Peer Learning Network in partnership with Community Compass.

We Celebrated the Hard Work of Communities by...



Recognizing
7
Champions with
ChooseWell Awards

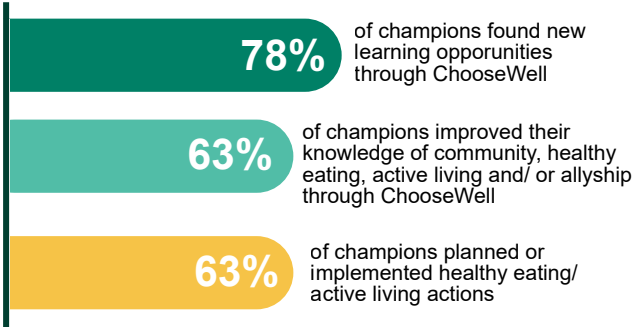


Distributing
\$30,885
through 7 Healthy
Community Grants



Featuring
19
Community partners at the
Community Stories Market

According to our 2024 Annual Champion Survey...



Photos: 2025 Alberta Healthy Communities Symposium

Community Compass

Community Compass is the Alberta Recreation & Parks Association's workforce initiative, funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Economy, & Trade.

Community Compass raises awareness about career opportunities in the recreation and parks sector, and supports job seekers by showing pathways to employment. We're also helping employers create more equitable, diverse and inclusive hiring practices and workplaces in the recreation and parks sector.



Events Held

Inclusive Webinar Series: Provides the opportunity to hear from experts and individuals with lived experience related to creating safe workplaces for individuals from various equity deserving groups.



5
Webinars
Held



90
Individual
Attendees

We are grateful to the [Steadward Centre](#), [Selections Career Support Services](#), and Kacey Yellowbird for partnering with us on these webinars

Key Resources Developed



**The Recreation & Parks
Essentials eCourse**



**Writing Accessible Job
Postings Guide**



**Facilitating Accessible
Job Interviews Guide**



**A Student's Guide to Working
in Recreation & Parks**

Key Successes

- **Hosted our first Job Shadow Event:** In collaboration with Action For Healthy Communities and the Jamie Platz Family YMCA we were able to provide job seekers with the opportunity to shadow recreation roles at the YMCA, and learn about programs, certifications, and employment opportunities in recreation & parks.
- **Engaged in Community Outreach:** Our team attended **46** career events, engaging with **3197** attendees.



June is Recreation & Parks Month (JRPM)

ARPA celebrated June is Recreation & Parks Month (JRPM), emphasizing the vital role recreation and parks play in fostering healthy, active, and connected communities across Alberta. The month-long celebration featured weekly themes, an engaging activity guide, and a dynamic social media contest, encouraging participation and awareness among individuals and organizations.



This year's JRPM activities were designed to highlight the many benefits of recreation and parks, including improved physical and mental health, enhanced community engagement, and environmental stewardship. By promoting these values, JRPM aimed to inspire Albertans to actively engage with their local parks and recreation services, reinforcing the importance of these spaces in daily life.

June is also recognized as National Indigenous History Month (NIHM) and Pride Month. In our efforts to tie together JRPM, NIHM, and Pride month we featured local events on our website. We also hosted a webinar in collaboration with the Calgary Adapted Hub on "Celebrating Inclusive Recreation in Alberta".

ARPA extends its gratitude to all municipalities, organizations, and individuals who participated in and supported JRPM 2025. Your involvement underscores the collective commitment to building vibrant communities through recreation and parks.



19.4K
Impressions on
social media



\$500
Worth of prizes
given away



Photos: ARPA Team Celebrating JRPM

EVOLVING PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

High Five®

Since 2006, ARPA has been honoured to serve as the authorized provider of the HIGH FIVE® program in Alberta. At the end of the 2024 fiscal year, Parks and Recreation Ontario, the national owner and operator of HIGH FIVE made the decision to bring program management and administration fully in-house across Canada.

We are proud of the role ARPA has played in expanding HIGH FIVE in Alberta and are glad to share that the program continues to be available to organizations in our province to support training and quality standards in children's recreation. Looking ahead, ARPA is exploring new opportunities to support children and youth professional development, and we look forward to updating our members as these plans take shape.



Communities in Bloom Alberta

Since 2006, ARPA has also served as the provincial administrator for Communities in Bloom Alberta. Recognizing the program's potential to flourish under more dedicated leadership, our Board of Directors worked over the past few years to identify a path forward. In 2024, ARPA supported the establishment of a new non-profit organization, the Communities in Bloom Alberta Society, dedicated solely to stewarding, sustaining, and growing the program across the province.

We are thrilled that the program has successfully transitioned and will continue to champion Communities in Bloom by promoting the program and sharing resources with our networks.



Recreation For Life Foundation

This past year brought another important transition with the Recreation for Life Foundation (RFLF). Next year would have marked its 25th anniversary, and together with RFLF leadership we made the thoughtful decision to officially dissolve the Foundation in 2024.

Since its creation, the RFLF has raised and secured more than \$1 million in support of ARPA and the recreation and parks sector. Its efforts, through golf tournaments, auctions, giving campaigns, legacy donations, and raffles have left an enduring legacy, including more than \$140,000 in endowments with the Edmonton Community Foundation. These endowments will continue to support professional development in our field for years to come.

We extend heartfelt thanks to the many leaders, volunteers, and supporters who made the RFLF's achievements possible over the past 25 years. ARPA's Board of Directors is committed to carrying forward this spirit of generosity through our own fundraising initiatives and continued stewardship of the current legacies, with exciting opportunities on the horizon including our 75th Anniversary celebrations in 2026.



Photos: ARPA Team at a team social event

EVENTS

2024 ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop

This year’s ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop, held **October 24–26, 2024** at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, centered on the theme **“Community Connections.”** Despite challenges posed by the wildfire in Jasper, ARPA collaborated closely with the Fairmont Hotels & Resorts team to ensure a seamless and memorable experience for delegates.



The conference celebrated the power of fostering strong connections within communities, highlighting innovative strategies, best practices, and success stories in parks and recreation planning and operations. This year’s event reinforced ARPA’s commitment to creating vibrant, inclusive spaces and supporting the professional growth of Alberta’s recreation and parks community.



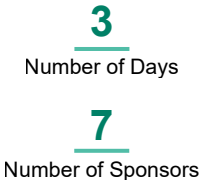
Photos: 2025 ARPA Conference & Energize Workshop

2025 Leaders Summit

ARPA hosted the 8th Annual Leaders Summit at the Coast Canmore Hotel and Conference Centre, bringing together senior leaders who advise councils and boards on recreation, parks, arts and culture, FCSS, community development, and urban planning. The Summit featured dynamic presentations, interactive discussions, and opportunities for debate, networking, and peer learning.

Highlights included insights on Alberta’s evolving political landscape from Duane Bratt (Mount Royal University), a Global Trends Panel with leaders from IAKS, NRPA, and major U.S. cities, and engaging sessions on research, student engagement, and the evolving role of recreation and parks in communities. Participants also explored national strategies through the Framework for Recreation in Canada Renewal and participated in world café-style discussions on current sector trends and data.

With over 50 leaders in attendance, the Summit reinforced ARPA’s commitment to building connections, supporting succession planning, and equipping Alberta’s recreation and parks leaders to make informed, strategic decisions for their communities.

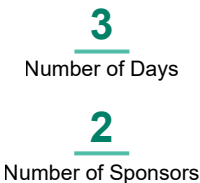


2025 Youth Development Through Recreation Services (YDRS)

The YDRS Symposium is a premier professional development event dedicated to empowering youth through recreation. This year’s theme, “Pathways Through Leadership,” focused on fostering confident, capable, and compassionate young leaders.

Delegates explored innovative strategies in child and youth development, participated in themed presentations, and engaged in meaningful networking opportunities. Attendees left equipped with practical resources and new insights to create positive, lasting impacts in their communities.

The Symposium welcomed a diverse audience, including recreation leaders, youth program coordinators, educators, policymakers, and emerging professionals, reinforcing ARPA’s commitment to supporting leadership and growth across Alberta’s recreation and parks sector.



Photos: 2025 YDRS Symposium

FINANCIALS & AUDIT

Treasurer's Report (2024 Fiscal)

The 2024 fiscal year brought a mix of stability and challenge. We were grateful to continue our partnership with the Government of Alberta through multi-year funding for the Communities ChooseWell and Community Compass programs. At the same time, rising costs from inflation and the impacts of the province's wildfires created financial pressures.

ARPA closed the year with revenues of more than \$2.9 million and a loss of \$32,245. Much of this was tied to the complexities of relocating our Annual Conference and Energize Workshop to Lake Louise after the devastating Jasper fire.

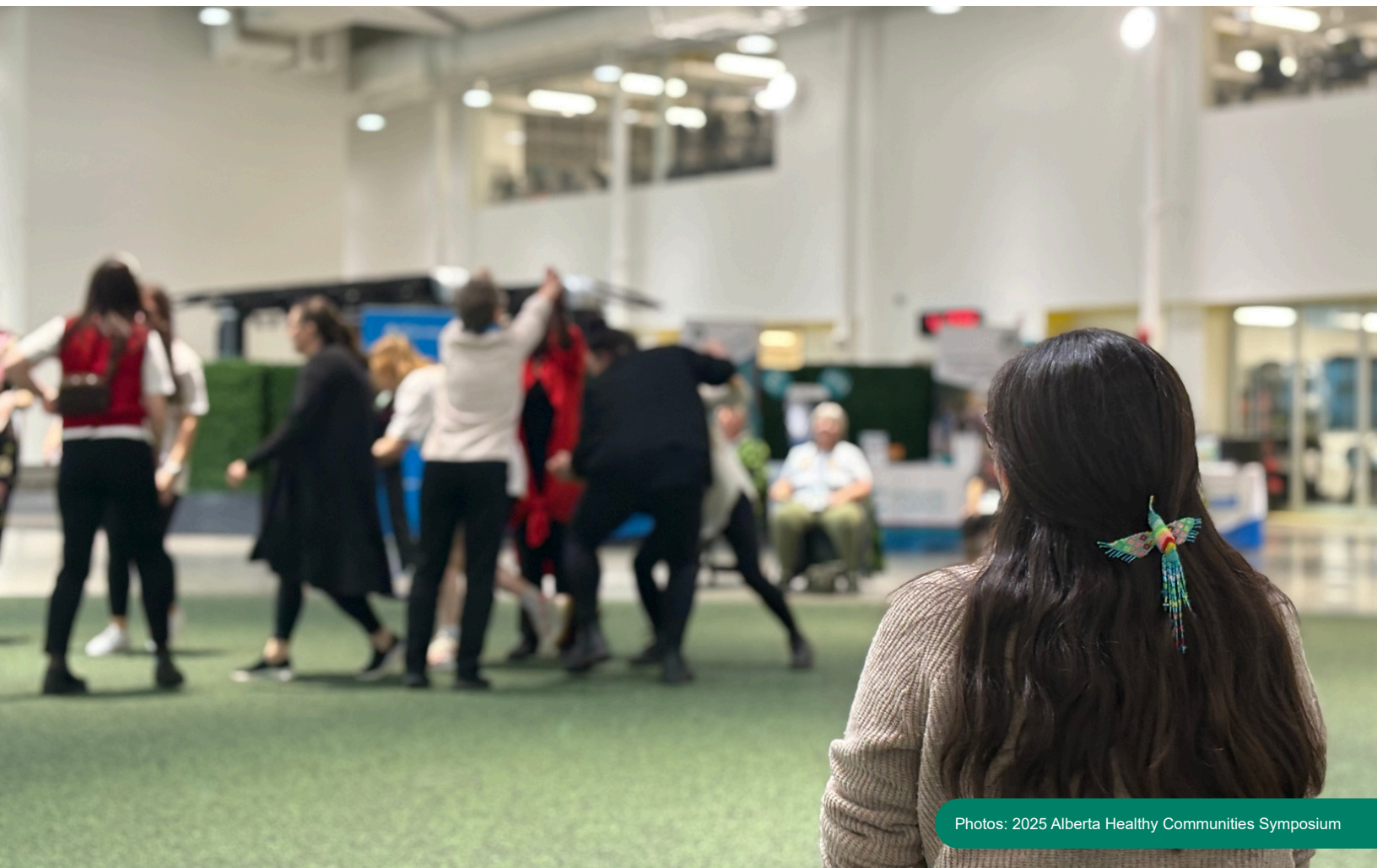
Despite these hurdles, there were many highlights to celebrate:

- Ongoing multi-year grants for Communities ChooseWell and Community Compass
- Strong collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, including our organizational grant and the Energize program
- Hosting four successful multi-day educational events
- Continued progress on reconciliation through Walking with Indigenous Communities, including another Elders Camp and support for the Elders Knowledge Circle Society

Looking ahead, 2025 will remain financially challenging as costs rise while many funding agreements stay static. As we move toward 2026, further uncertainty awaits with several major multi-year grants coming up for renewal.

Even with these pressures, ARPA's Board of Directors and staff remain committed to careful stewardship of resources and to seeking new funding opportunities. With our strong partnerships and shared commitment, we are confident in our ability to navigate these times and continue delivering meaningful impact for recreation and parks across Alberta.

Jarret Hoebbers, ARPA Treasurer



Summarized Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS	2024	2023
Current Assets		
Cash	236,548	445,119
Short-term investments	1,137,719	775,000
Accounts receivable	111,165	90,300
Prepaid expenses	27,390	62,467
GST receivable	848	1,126
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,513,670	1,374,012
Equipment		
Computer	63,140	63,140
Office	32,607	32,608
Subtotal	95,747	95,748
Less accumulated amortization	94,119	93,044
TOTAL EQUIPMENT	1,629	2,705
TOTAL ASSETS	1,515,299	1,508,191
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	16,416	36,372
Deferred Contributions	972,106	912,796
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	988,522	949,168
NET ASSETS		
Internally Restricted Funds	192,325	186,324
Unrestricted Fund	332,824	369,994
Equipment Fund	1,629	2,705
TOTAL NET ASSETS	526,777	559,023
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	1,515,299	1,508,191

Summarized Statement of Financial Operations

REVENUE	2024	2023
Grants & Contracts	1,689,218	1,583,800
Memberships	104,852	106,090
Education Services	627,009	620,728
Projects	180,794	271,709
Casino	30,590	49,965
Administration	265,332	235,979
Donations	-	48
Interest Income	6,000	1,216
TOTAL REVENUES	2,903,795	2,869,535
EXPENSES		
Administration - General	62,942	68,926
GST Expenses	20,369	27,764
Salaries & Benefits	480,631	460,547
Board & Executives	23,914	28,699
Liasons	2,099	1,932
CPRA/Memberships	35,589	31,125
Education Services	570,512	562,193
Casino	5,567	2,486
Committee & Network Activity	16,207	19,496
Projects	1,718,210	1,597,076
TOTAL EXPENSES	2,936,040	2,800,244
NET GAIN (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR	(32,245)	69,291
NET ASSESTS, BEGINNING OF THE YEAR	559,023	489,732
NET ASSETS, END OF THE YEAR	526,778	559,023