

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Society



Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

Support. Inclusion. Community.

2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT

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Land Acknowledgment

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities acknowledges the importance of the land that what we call Alberta, where we are on today, and which we call home. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to improving relationships between indigenous communities and their cultures.

We acknowledge the ancestral territories of all the Inuit, Metis, and First Nations that call this land home. We are called to reflect and acknowledge the effects of colonialism on indigenous families and communities. We consider how we are and can each, in our own way, move forward in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

Introduction

At Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD), our work is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: every person deserves to live with dignity, independence, and full inclusion in their community. Over the past year, we have continued to advocate, connect, and support individuals across Alberta by breaking down barriers and amplifying the voices of persons with disabilities.

This year has been one of growth, reflection, and renewed direction. With the introduction of our updated mission, vision, core values, and brand identity, VAD has strengthened its commitment to being a responsive, member-driven organization. We have worked to ensure that our services remain accessible, relevant, and impactful, especially for individuals and communities who face multiple and intersecting barriers.

Through our navigation services, outreach initiatives, partnerships, and community events, we have supported individuals, families, and organizations in accessing essential programs, building connections, and increasing awareness of disability-related issues. Our efforts have helped foster a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion, while also identifying gaps and opportunities for continued advocacy.

This annual report highlights the progress we have made, the challenges we have addressed, and the stories that remind us why our work matters. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers, members, partners, and funders who share our vision of a more inclusive Alberta.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to listening, learning, and leading with purpose—ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities continue to shape the future of our communities.

Mission, Vision and Values



Mission: Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) empowers individuals with disabilities across Alberta by providing practical support, education, and community connections, while amplifying their voices to drive meaningful inclusion and systemic change.



Vision: An Alberta where every person with a disability has equitable access, their experiences are valued, and their voices are heard, respected, and celebrated in every community.



VALUES

Inclusion: We create spaces, programs, and opportunities where all voices are welcomed, respected, and celebrated.

Advocacy: We champion the rights and needs of people with disabilities, amplifying their voices to drive systemic change.

Empowerment: We equip individuals with knowledge, tools, and support to navigate systems, access services, and share their stories.

Collaboration: We work hand-in-hand with communities, organizations, and stakeholders to build meaningful partnerships that strengthen impact.

Integrity: We act with transparency and accountability in everything we do, earning the trust of those we serve.

Diversity , Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace for all our employees, contractors, and business partners. We believe that a diverse and inclusive environment is critical to our success as a Society and is essential to creating a culture of full participation, accessibility and equity.

We are committed to fostering a culture that is inclusive of different backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and ideas, and that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bias. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law. We acknowledge our inherent distinctions as individuals and the realization that each person is unique. Skills, experience, thought, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, cultural or socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, political or ideological beliefs, as well as other aspects like lifestyle and family duties, can all be seen as sources of these inequalities.



Our Impact in the Past Year

- 7,892 phone calls answered—providing vital information and support.
- 1296 in-person appointments—assisting with applications for AISH, CPPD, Disability Tax Credit, Canadian Disability Benefit, OAS, GIS, Alberta Adult Health Benefit, and other essential supports.
- 2000+ referrals—connecting individuals with services such as AISH, Income Support, Boyle Street, Bissell Centre, and ECLC.
- 39 disability education and awareness presentations—reaching over 650 attendees.
- 140 tax returns completed—supporting low-income people with disabilities.
- Strategic partnerships—collaborating with Gateway, SCI Alberta, Catholic Social Services, law enforcement, municipal and provincial governments, and many more.

History of VAD

Founded in August of 1973, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities was formed to foster an attitude amongst people with disabilities that would encourage their personal involvement in overcoming social and physical barriers to their full participation in society. For 53 years, VAD has been a consumer-directed organization that speaks from the perspective of individuals with disabilities.

Guiding Principals

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) continues to be guided by a strong foundation of equity, accessibility, and full participation. These principles are more than values—they are commitments that shape how we advocate, support, and work alongside individuals with disabilities across Alberta. We remain vigilant in upholding rights and freedoms, while recognizing and respecting the individuality and lived experiences of every person we serve.

Accessibility remains central to our work. We believe that all people must have equal access to buildings, transportation, information, and communication services that meet diverse needs. At the same time, we are committed to advancing full participation by breaking down barriers—both visible and invisible—so that persons with disabilities are fully included in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. This includes promoting choice, accountability, and the dignity of risk, ensuring individuals have control over the decisions that affect their lives.

Throughout this past year, VAD has continued to advance its objectives through education, collaboration, and direct support. Through workshops, presentations, and accessibility assessments, we have increased awareness and understanding of the barriers faced by persons with disabilities. By building strong partnerships and working collaboratively with service providers, governments, and community organizations, we have contributed to the development of more inclusive programs and services.

Our work in providing support, referrals, and bursaries has helped foster self-reliance and empowered individuals to actively participate in addressing the barriers they encounter. We have also continued to engage with all levels of government—offering insight, education, and lived experience to inform policies, legislation, and initiatives that impact the disability community.

Through ongoing research and knowledge-sharing, we strive to drive meaningful, systemic change. At the heart of our work are our members. By listening to their experiences, gathering and analyzing data, and sharing information, we ensure that the consumer perspective remains central to everything we do. Through consultation, collaboration, and transparent communication, we work to amplify the voices of persons with disabilities and translate their insights into action.

This annual report reflects our continued commitment to these aims. It highlights the progress we have made, the challenges we continue to address, and the collective impact of our community. As we move forward, VAD remains dedicated to building a more inclusive Alberta—one where all individuals have the opportunity to participate fully and equally.

Board President's Message – Koryn Dyer



This past year has been one of reflection, rebuilding, and renewed direction for Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD).

As an organization, we have taken important steps to strengthen our foundation. We clarified our mission, vision, and core values to better reflect who we are and who we serve. We also began strengthening our governance structure by establishing board-level committees focused on accountability, compliance, and long-term sustainability.

At the same time, we have been focused on expanding our reach and relevance. VAD continues to grow beyond a single community, working toward a more connected, province-wide presence. Through outreach, partnerships, and increased visibility, we are laying the groundwork to ensure individuals with disabilities across Alberta can access meaningful support, resources, and a stronger collective voice. This year has also highlighted the importance of balance between governance and operations. As a board, our role is to provide strategic oversight while supporting our Executive Director and staff in delivering impactful programs. We remain committed to improving how we track progress, manage funding, and ensure transparency in everything we do.

Looking ahead, our focus is clear. We will continue building strong partnerships with businesses and community organizations, expanding sponsorship opportunities, and developing programs that directly respond to the needs of the disability community. We are also committed to improving communication, accessibility of information, and engagement with those we serve.

On a personal note, stepping into the role of President has been both an honour and a responsibility I take seriously. As someone with lived experience, I understand firsthand the barriers many individuals face. That perspective drives my commitment to ensuring VAD is not only a support system, but a catalyst for meaningful change.

I would also like to acknowledge the lasting impact of our former Executive Director, Margot Brunner. Her dedication to this organization and the community continues to guide and inspire the work we do today. It is an honour to carry that legacy forward.

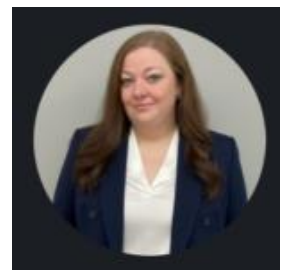
I want to thank our board members, staff, volunteers, and community partners for their dedication over the past year. Your work continues to move this organization forward.

Together, we are building something stronger, more accountable, and more impactful for the future.

Sincerely,
Koryn Dyer
President, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

Executive Director's Message – Tara Lyon

As we prepare for our 2026 Annual General Meeting, I find myself reflecting on how much Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) has grown, evolved, and strengthened over this past year. While there have certainly been challenges along the way, there has also been tremendous growth, collaboration, resilience, and momentum toward building a stronger and more connected future for Albertans with disabilities.



I am incredibly proud to be part of an organization made up of passionate individuals who genuinely care about giving back to our community. Every day, I have the privilege of working alongside Board members, staff, volunteers, community partners, and individuals with lived experience who continue to demonstrate the power of inclusion, connection, and collective impact.

As someone living with a disability myself, and as someone whose family has also been impacted by various forms of disabilities, I understand firsthand the frustration and stigma that can arise when individuals do not feel heard, recognized, understood, or valued because of perceived shortcomings or limitations. Too often, people with disabilities are defined by what others believe they cannot do, rather than empowered by what they are capable of contributing.

At VAD, we believe deeply in our mission, share the same vision, and believe in and live our values every single day without exception. These are not simply words written on paper — they are the foundation of the work we do, the relationships we build, and the future we are working toward together. We believe in supporting individuals in strengthening their voices, learning how to self-advocate, building meaningful connections, and creating opportunities where everyone can contribute and belong.

2026 marks an exciting chapter of growth and innovation for VAD. This year, we are proud to be expanding our impact through new and evolving initiatives including Voice Connect, Voices Heard, and Voices in Motion — a new speaker series being developed in collaboration with Cam Tait. We also launched our Community Outreach and Inclusion Program at the beginning of 2025, and since its inception, the program has continued to grow significantly, allowing us to travel to new communities throughout Alberta and strengthen our provincial reach and relationships.

In addition, we are preparing to launch Voices Without Barriers (September 26, 2026) — Alberta's first fully accessible music festival, and something Western Canada has never seen the likes of before. This groundbreaking event will bring artists, organizations, businesses, and community members together in Edmonton to celebrate accessibility, inclusion, talent, creativity, and connection in a truly barrier-free environment.

Our refreshed branding, expanding partnerships, and new programming initiatives all represent a shared belief that when voices come together with purpose, compassion, and understanding, meaningful change becomes possible. We are not simply building programs — we are building spaces where individuals feel heard, valued, empowered, and included.

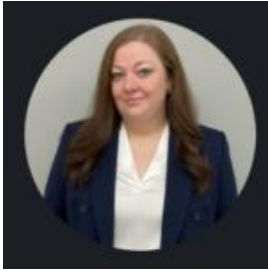
As we look back, we learn. As we move forward, we grow.

The future of VAD is filled with opportunity, and I truly believe the work we are building together today will create stronger communities for tomorrow. Thank you to our members, supporters, volunteers, staff, Board of Directors, and community partners for believing in this work and continuing to move forward with us.

I look forward to what comes next.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jana Lyons".

Staff



Executive Director
Tara Lyon



Program & Services Manager
Teresa Makarewich



Case Manager
Chantelle Samoridny



Education Coordinator
Michelle Bissell



Case Manager
Yusuf Ariyo



Admin & Finance Assistant
Corrine Bergen



Accounting & Finances
Tatiana

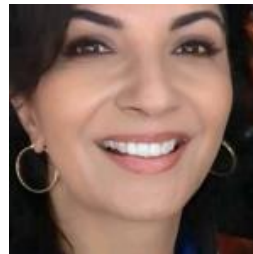
Board of Directors



President
Koryn Dyer



Vice President
Zachary Weeks



Secretary
Sunny Singh



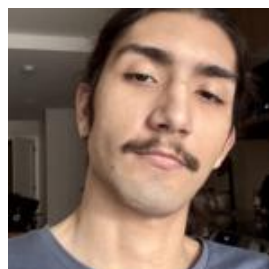
Treasurer
Vicky Augustin



Director
Don Slater



Director
Marilyn Erho



Director
Armany Amiri



Director
Mark Makarewich

Volunteers

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities would also like to thank the following volunteers for their countless time and energy spent supporting VAD in disability awareness presentations.

- Roxanne Ulanicki
- Michelle Exton

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities sends their thanks and appreciation to our volunteers for all the hard work these volunteers do to support VAD's fundraising through Bingos & Casinos.

- *Barb Koziak - Coordinator*
- Barb Anderson
- Crystal Komarnicki
- Harriet Komarnicki
- Patrick Komarnicki
- Thomas Tinworth
- Doris Astill
- Nancy Radomsky
- Ellen May Smith
- Nancy Doherty
- David Stang
- Helga Wheeler
- Rhona Ivan
- Neil Ivan
- Savanna Ivan
- Cory Gurnsey
- Rachel Wilson
- William Danyliuk
- Ruth Kozlowski
- Clinton Anderson
- David Miller
- Liz Opacinski



Support and Referral

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) serves its members and the broader disability community through core programs and services designed to reduce barriers and increase access to essential supports.

For the last 53 years VAD has provided support, referral, and advocacy services to individuals with disabilities and their families across Alberta. This long-standing commitment to navigation support reflects the ongoing challenges many people face when trying to access, understand, and complete applications for government programs and services.

Core Services and Access Points



Requests for support are received through telephone, email, and in-person visits. VAD's knowledgeable staff provide individualized, one-on-one assistance to help clients navigate complex systems, complete detailed forms, understand eligibility requirements, and connect with appropriate resources.

Most inquiries involve application support, program clarification, or referrals to trusted partner organizations. This hands-on, personalized approach ensures that individuals are not excluded from accessing supports due to confusing, inaccessible, or overwhelming processes.

Filling a Critical Gap in Services

VAD continues to be recognized as one of the few organizations in Alberta offering free, personalized assistance with disability-related applications and forms. For many individuals, this support provides a sense of relief and renewed opportunity, particularly for those who may have otherwise abandoned applications due to complexity or frustration.

By maintaining this high-demand program, VAD plays a vital role in addressing service gaps within the community. Our work ensures that individuals with disabilities are supported in accessing the programs and services they need, helping to reduce systemic barriers and promote greater inclusion across Alberta.

Areas of Support for individuals

One-on-One Consultations

VAD offers support in the following areas:

- *AISH Application forms*
- *CPPD forms*
- *Edmonton Leisure Access Pass forms*



- *Personal Taxes (Low Income Individuals)*
- *Disability Tax Credit (DTC) Application forms*
- *Canadian Disability Benefit (CDB) forms*
- *Old Age Security (OAS) forms*
- *Alberta Adult Health Benefit forms*
- *Referrals for RDSPs*
- *Support Service & Program Referrals*
- *Self Advocacy Supports*

Collaborations

Advocacy, Partnerships, and Systems Change

The Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) plays an active and influential role in advancing accessibility and inclusion across Alberta. Through strategic partnerships, board and committee participation, and collaborative projects, VAD ensures that the voices and lived experiences of persons with disabilities are represented in decision-making spaces that shape policy and practice.

Committee and Working Group Engagement

VAD staff and board members regularly participate in advisory committees, working groups, and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. These ongoing engagements—often occurring monthly—provide important opportunities to contribute insight, share expertise, and advocate for meaningful change. VAD brings a responsible, informed, and solutions-focused perspective to discussions related to accessibility, equity, and social inclusion.

Cross-Sector Collaboration and Information Sharing

Through strong and sustained partnerships, VAD shares knowledge, lived experience, and practical solutions with:

- Government departments at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels
- Public servants and policymakers
- Nonprofit organizations and service providers
- The broader community

In this role, VAD acts as a vital bridge between individuals with disabilities and the systems that impact their daily lives, translating real-world experiences into informed advocacy for systemic and structural improvements.

Government Relations and Policy Influence

VAD maintains ongoing collaboration with departments within the Government of Alberta to elevate disability-related priorities, identify gaps in services, and contribute to the development of more inclusive policies and programs. Through consistent engagement with elected officials and government representatives, VAD fosters relationships grounded in cooperation, respect, and shared purpose.

These efforts have supported constructive dialogue and forward momentum on key advocacy issues, reinforcing VAD's role as a trusted voice in advancing accessibility and inclusion across the province.

Guiding Philosophy

VAD's approach to collaboration is rooted in the slogan: "Nothing about us, without us!" This reflects a deep commitment to building effective, inclusive, and dynamic partnerships with individuals and organizations who share our vision of a more inclusive Alberta. Our mantra is *Support, Inclusion Community*.

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

Support. Inclusion. Community.

Membership

The Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) fosters a strong, province-wide membership network united by a shared commitment to accessibility, equity, and inclusion. Membership is open to individuals, organizations, and businesses who support VAD's mission and are dedicated to building a more inclusive Alberta.

Organizational Members

VAD brings together a collaborative network of Alberta-based nonprofit organizations that collectively advocate for inclusive policies, programs, and practices. By working together, these members strengthen their impact, influence systemic change, and ensure that the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are represented at all levels of decision-making.

Blue Heron Vocational Training Centre

Drumheller And Region Transition Society (DARTS)

Pros Providing Residential Options & Services

Canadian Mental Health Association, The (Ab East Central Region)

Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association (ACCPA)

Lakeland Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Society

Progressive Alternatives Society Of Calgary

Skills Society

Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre Of Calgary (DDRC)

Metis Child & Family Service Society

Foothills Advocacy In Motions Society

Spina Bifida And Hydrocephalus Association Of Northern Alberta (SBHANA)

Edmonton Epilepsy Association
Inclusion Alberta
Canadian Hard Of Hearing Association - Calgary Branch
Friends Of Medicare
AdaptAbilities
The Rehabilitation Society Of Calgary
Autism Independent Living Association – AiLA
Camp Health, Hope and Happiness - Camp HE HO HA

Corporate Members

VAD's corporate members include businesses and retailers that provide goods and services to the public, with a demonstrated commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion. These organizations align with VAD's values and contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable economy.

Canadian Accreditation Council
Redi Enterprises Society
Civida
Tina Coulombe Primerica
Ability Together Support Inc.
Adapt Mobility
Home Health Store
Fresh Focus Media

iVAD Members

The iVAD (Individual Voice of Albertans with Disabilities) network is a free pan-disability group of individuals with lived experience who play a vital role in shaping VAD's work. iVAD members are actively engaged in:

- Raising awareness of barriers to inclusion
- Identifying and addressing key issues such as:
 - Accessibility
 - Affordable housing
 - Employment
 - Transportation
 - Social isolation

Through their insight and lived expertise, iVAD members help ensure that VAD's advocacy and services remain grounded in real-world experiences and responsive to the diverse needs of the disability community.

Supporting One Another

A key strength of VAD's membership is the spirit of mutual support and collaboration. Members are encouraged to connect with and support one another by prioritizing fellow VAD members when seeking services or partnerships. This approach not only strengthens relationships within the network but also reinforces a shared commitment to advancing inclusion across Alberta.

Benefits of Membership

Membership with the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) offers individuals, organizations, and businesses a meaningful opportunity to connect, collaborate, and contribute to advancing accessibility across Alberta. Members gain increased visibility, access to a province-wide network, and opportunities to support and influence positive change within the disability community.

VAD Membership Include:

- Participation in VAD-hosted events, including the Annual General Meeting
- Opportunities to feature projects, research initiatives, and participate in committees
- Access to VAD's monthly newsletter, *The Voice* (available in digital and print formats)
- Promotion of member information through VAD's social media channels upon request
- Advertising opportunities in VAD's printed materials and publications

Website Visibility

- A direct link to member websites on the VAD website for the duration of the membership year
- Opportunities to be featured as a monthly spotlight sponsor on VAD's homepage

Directory Listings and Promotion

- Inclusion in VAD's printed organizational member directory
- Listing in VAD's online resource directory for corporate and organizational members
- Promotion of member services through a community-first approach, encouraging members to support one another when seeking products and services through a printed membership directory.

These benefits reflect VAD's commitment to fostering connection, strengthening collaboration, and building a supportive, inclusive community across Alberta.

Presentations and Consultations

The Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) continues to advance public awareness and understanding of disability through its Disability Awareness Presentation Program. This initiative reaches diverse audiences across Alberta, helping to build more inclusive schools, workplaces, and communities.

Over the past year, the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) has been actively advancing its Community Inclusion Outreach Project, focused on building meaningful connections with First Nations, Indigenous, and multicultural communities across Alberta. This initiative aims to increase awareness of VAD's free services while exploring opportunities to develop collaborative, community-driven partnerships.

Through this project, VAD is working to ensure that individuals who may face additional barriers to accessing supports are informed, included, and empowered. Our services are designed to provide

one-on-one assistance to individuals navigating complex disability-related government programs, helping to reduce barriers and improve access to essential supports.

In addition to direct support, VAD offers tailored awareness presentations on key programs, including Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) and the Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP), as well as broader education on available resources and supports. These presentations are adapted to reflect the unique needs, perspectives, and priorities of each community.

By prioritizing relationship-building, cultural awareness, and collaboration, this project represents an important step toward more inclusive service delivery and stronger connections with underserved communities throughout Alberta.

Presentation Content and Approach

Each presentation is tailored to meet the needs of its audience, including students, educators, professionals, and employers. Sessions typically range from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the audience and setting. Presentations are designed to be engaging, interactive, and informative, and include:

- Visual presentations supported by PowerPoint, props, and demonstrations
- Delivery by experienced facilitators with lived and/or professional expertise
- Opportunities for discussion and Q&A to encourage dialogue and deeper understanding

Program Reach and Delivery

During this reporting period, VAD delivered 39 Disability Awareness presentations to schools and businesses, engaging over 500 participants. Sessions were offered in a flexible, hybrid format—both in person and virtually through platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet—ensuring accessibility and broader reach.

Key Topics Covered

- Understanding disability and impairment
- Disability etiquette and respectful interactions
- The importance of inclusive language and communication
- Challenging common myths and misconceptions
- Exploring the barriers and attitudes experienced by persons with disabilities

Community Impact

Feedback from participating schools and businesses continues to be overwhelmingly positive. Participants report increased awareness, greater empathy, and a stronger commitment to implementing inclusive practices within their environments.

Through this program, VAD plays a vital role in promoting education, shifting attitudes, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion across Alberta.

Communications and Public Engagement

The Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) maintains active, transparent, and accessible communication with its members, stakeholders, and the broader community through its monthly newsletter and website. These platforms play a key role in sharing information, promoting engagement, and highlighting the organization's impact across Alberta.

Newsletter – *The Voice*

VAD's official newsletter, *The Voice*, is a central communication tool used to share:

- Program and service updates
- Upcoming events and initiatives
- Accessibility-related news and resources
- Advocacy efforts and community impact stories

Distributed monthly through both digital and print formats, *The Voice* continues to reach and engage a broad audience:

- Digital distribution to over 2,000 contacts monthly
- 78 subscribers receive printed copies by mail
- Average monthly readership: 568
- Highest monthly readership: 1179
- Lowest monthly readership: 112
- Total readership in 2025: 6810:

These metrics reflect a strong and consistent level of engagement, reinforcing VAD's role as a trusted and reliable source of information within the disability community.

Website and Blog

VAD's website and blog complement the newsletter by offering timely, accessible, and in-depth content. Regular blog updates provide:

- Expanded features on accessibility and inclusion topics
- Highlights of community partnerships and collaborations
- Information on grants, consultations, and available resources

Together, these platforms help inform, educate, and connect individuals and organizations across the province.

Accessible Website Enhancements

VAD's website is fully accessible and inclusive in both design and content. The website serves as a central hub for information on VAD's programs, services, and activities, as well as broader disability-related resources in Alberta.

VAD's interactive accessibility menu allows users to customize their browsing experience based on individual needs, including:

- Contrast adjustments

- Link highlighting
- Text size and spacing modifications
- Pause/stop animations
- Dyslexia-friendly formatting
- Cursor highlighting and tooltips
- Line height and text alignment options
- Graphic saturation controls

Website Impact

- Highest number of website sessions during the reporting period: 4982
- Increased overall website usage following accessibility enhancements
- Growth in direct engagement through the website, including:
 - Online appointment bookings
 - Presentation requests
 - Accessibility coordination inquiries

These improvements demonstrate VAD's ongoing commitment to accessibility, while also increasing opportunities for engagement and service delivery.

Projects

Disability-related research is a key factor in our organization. VAD staff write proposals to acquire project funding dollars, conduct research and produce informed literature on important topics regarding Alberta's disability community. VAD has worked on many projects this year including:

- VAD Website maintenance
- VAD Podcasts
- 2025 IDPD Provincial event
- 2025 Accessible Driver Appreciation Week
- 2025-26 Annual Membership Drive
- 2025 Volunteer appreciation event and planning
- Follow up and tracking of clients services
- Fiscal Year End Prep
- 2025 AGM
- 2025 National AccessAbility Week BBQ and Silent Auction
- Newsletters and Blogs
- Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reporting
- Community Inclusion Outreach Project
- BNI meetings
- Disability Awareness Prep and Presentations
- Bursaries marketing and approvals
- Networking at community events
- Free Tax Clinic

Bursaries

The Education for Life Bursary Program supports Alberta students with disabilities in pursuing their post-secondary education goals. This long-standing initiative reflects VAD's commitment to educational equity, financial accessibility, and empowerment through learning.

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for the Education for Life Bursary, applicants must:

- Be a resident of Alberta
- Identify as a person with a disability
- Be enrolled in a post-secondary program, with proof of registration for the academic year
- Submit a completed application form by the annual deadline of November 15
- Include one letter of reference from an adult who is not a family member
- Provide a short biography (max 250 words) outlining educational goals

Bursary recipients are selected based on application completeness, demonstrated financial need, and strength of references.

2025 Bursary Distribution

In 2025, VAD received 20 applications. A total of 12 bursaries were awarded, with individual amounts ranging from \$400 to \$1,000.

- Total awarded in 2024:
 - \$5,000 through the VAD Education for Life Bursaries
 - \$1,000 through the Elsa Lodewyk Memorial Bursary
 - \$1,000 through the Wesley United Church Bursary

Program Impact

Over the past 20 years, VAD has disbursed over \$100,000, directly supporting more than 200 Albertans with disabilities in their pursuit of higher education. This initiative continues to reduce financial barriers and promote lifelong learning and inclusion across the province.

VAD extends its congratulations to the 2025 recipients and heartfelt thanks to all applicants for their dedication and ambition. The programs that the post-secondary students who received bursaries are listed below:

Bachelor of Kinesiology
Bachelor of Business Administration - Human Resource
Practical Nurse
BA in Gender and Sexuality Studies
Biology
Child and Youth Care Diploma
MACP MA Counselling Psychology

Bachelor of Science
BFA in Music Theatre Performance
Inter disciplinary Therapy Assistant Diploma

\$1000 Robertson-Westley United Church Bursary

Trusting in the promise of Jesus that “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them,” we come together at Robertson-Wesley United Church to worship God, to share each other’s joys and sorrows, to learn and grow in faith, to use God’s gifts wisely, and to lead active Christian lives of service among our neighbours here and in the global community.

\$1000 Elsa Marie Lodewyk Memorial Bursary

Elsa Marie Lodewyk was born on April 18, 1992, with severe Cerebral Palsy and was not expected to live for even a few days. She had a strong will to live, though, and lived a full life for almost 19 years. Elsa’s disabilities meant that she needed help from many people – her parents, siblings, teachers, schoolmates, caregivers, doctors and nurses. She touched the lives of many people with her gentle spirit and had many friends. Elsa showed that life is not what we accomplish but more about our relationships, listening and being a friend. Even though Elsa could not speak, she was able to contribute to the lives of many people and her life had a positive impact on many.

The Elsa Marie Lodewyk Memorial Bursary was established by her family to reflect Elsa’s generosity, kindness, and gentleness. She would have been thrilled to know that she was helping another person with a disability. To the Bursary Recipient: *Just like Elsa, your life, too, will have more of an impact on others than you could ever imagine. We hope that this bursary will encourage you to live your life to the fullest and to be all that you can be.*



Podcasts



To expand outreach and promote accessibility education in new and engaging ways, the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) has launched its own podcast series. With in-house video and audio production capabilities, VAD is now able to create, edit, and publish content tailored to the disability community in Alberta.

Purpose and Focus

The VAD Podcast serves as an informational platform to:

- Highlight member stories and lived experiences
- Share resources and supports available to Albertans with disabilities
- Feature community partners and advocates
- Provide accessible education around issues of inclusion, equity, and support

These podcasts are designed to educate and inform a broad audience while amplifying voices from within the disability community.

Reach and Engagement

Since its launch, the podcast has gained momentum, with over 500 downloads to date. The growing library of episodes is available to the public and easily accessible online.

Listen to the VAD Podcast: <https://vadsociety.ca/vad-podcasts/> VAD is excited to continue building this audio archive, offering diverse perspectives and creating space for dialogue around accessibility in Alberta.

Cumulative Tracking Report

		Non-Indigenous	Indigenous On Reserve/ Settlement	Indigenous Off Reserve/ Settlement	Total
Total # of received referrals	Accepted	8031	24	84	8139
	Not accepted	0	0	0	0
	Total # of received referrals:				8139
	Number of referred clients with a developmental condition/impairment:				29
	Number of referred clients with a mental condition/impairment:				253
	Number of referred clients with a neurological condition/impairment:				157
	Number of referred clients with a physical condition/impairment:				430
	Number of referred clients with a sensory condition/impairment:				3
Total # of unique clients served	Male	3436	4	48	3488
	Female	4229	20	35	4284
	Other	366	0	1	367
	Total # of clients served:				8139
Total # of new files opened for this reporting period:		8031	24	84	8139
Total # of closed files for this reporting period:		7275	780	84	8139
Waitlist # of clients waiting to receive service after meeting the eligibility requirements	Less than one month	8031	24	84	8139
	1 - 3 months	0	0	0	0
	4 - 6 months	0	0	0	0
	7 - 12 months	0	0	0	0
	12+ months	0	0	0	0
	Total # of clients on waitlist:				8139

Thank You

On behalf of the membership, Board of Directors, and staff, we thank all the funders, volunteers, government departments, organizations, corporations, and individuals who provided VAD with support in 2024-2025. Your contributions are helping make Alberta a more accessible and equitable province for individuals with disabilities. The generous support of our donors is key to the success of Voice of Albertans with Disabilities.

Every donation, large or small, helps us towards achieving our goal of full participation in society by people with disabilities. Thank You



Province of Alberta - Ministry of
Community and Social Services



ALBERTA NORTH

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Council of Canadians with Disabilities



Social Development Partnerships Program
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