



# The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

Fourth Quarter 2019



## Does your business achieves the barrier free code?

Book an accessibility assessment with VAD and identify opportunities to improve inclusion within your business. **Who should get an assessment:** Any business open to the

public. **What is an assessment:** An audit of your property that evaluates all areas of accessibility. **Why get an assessment done:** The assessment highlights areas that are currently accessible, outlines areas of opportunity and offers best practice recommendations. **How do I get an assessment:** Contact Sam, 780-488-9088 or e-mail [accessibility@vadsociety.ca](mailto:accessibility@vadsociety.ca).

## March Membership Drive

2020 is fast approaching. It is time to start thinking about next year's membership. Members bring awareness of existing barriers to inclusion and developing solutions to accessibility, accessible and affordable housing, employment, transportation and social isolation.



**ivAD-** This network is a pan-disability group of individuals with lived experiences. This membership is \$25 for the year, but individuals can request a benevolent membership if the fee causes financial hardship.

**VAD-**Organizational members offering services through non-profit and government agencies. Membership for organizations is \$150.

**Corporate-**Corporate membership is for the retail product and service providers selling wares to the general public. This membership fee is \$200 per business.

Benefits of membership in Voice of Albertans with Disabilities include:

- Free attendance at the spring and fall forum
- Invitation to educational events
- Distribution of organizational information through VAD social media
- Participation in research and projects
- Updates of current events and issues
- Quarterly newsletter: The Voice

- Weblink to organizational members
- Printed organizational members directory on request

## Coyote Lodge

VAD took a visit to Coyote Lake Lodge- A quaint rural retreat facility only about 90 minutes from both Edmonton (south west) and Red Deer (north west). Coyote Lake Lodges is a part of the Alberta Abilities Lodges Society (AALS) which supports disability friendly outdoor spaces. The Lodge has a barrier-free main recreation centre, complete with a library and commercial kitchen. It also has four cabins, half of which have been modified to be barrier-free, with the goal to make all four accessible in the future. The lodge has a total of 30 beds, an orchard, trails and access to the lake. The lodge has adapted equipment all available to those with mobility issues to make enjoying the outdoors easier and more accessible. Check out their photo album on Facebook: "Coyote Lake Lodge Alberta".



## What Barriers Did You Run Into Today?

VAD is looking for guest blog writers, persons with lived experience who would be willing to write a blog entry about the barriers that are in their lives on a daily basis. This blog is written to show awareness of what kind of barriers and issues people face going about their day. If you are interested in becoming a guest blogger for VAD, submit your contact information and your blog post via email to [vad@vadsociety.ca](mailto:vad@vadsociety.ca). VAD will contact those who show interest and work with them to create guest blog posts for our website.





[www.vadsociety.ca](http://www.vadsociety.ca); [vad@vadsociety.ca](mailto:vad@vadsociety.ca)  
 Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities

## 2019 Highlights

- Voice of Albertans with Disabilities hired a new Executive Director - Margot Brunner
- VAD moved office locations
- VAD held a Spring and Fall Forum. Both were well attended with attendees providing direction for VAD.
- We continue to expand our communication channels with social media using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Constant Contact and YouTube to reach members and raise awareness of issues.
- We proudly presented the third annual Accessible Driver Appreciation Week in November
- VAD participated in #GivingTuesdayCa as a fundraiser and awareness campaign
- We partnered with member organizations to raise awareness on disability issues relating to provincial and federal elections.
- VAD assisted over 85 individuals with personal income taxes during tax season
- VAD has assisted over 280 individuals with AISH & CPPD application forms this year, with over 600 phone calls about support and referral services
- VAD has presented to over 700 students and 200 business professionals about Disability Awareness
- VAD participated in National Accessibility Week by traveling across the province to present information to various municipalities
- VAD created a strong relationship with the Disability Advocate, Tony Flores

## EIA Updates

The Edmonton International Airport (EIA) has made some exciting changes, both in anticipation for the Accessible Canada Act, as well as continued projects that were started before the act was passed. The information booth on the arrivals level is now equipped with a hearing loop that can be accessed by hearing aid or with a headset, and the check-in terminals are being consistently replaced with barrier-free terminals. Across from Gate 54 an old barrier-free washroom was



converted to a relief area for service animals (pictured). Coming up, Bill C-81 has a mandate that airlines need to have support from curb to check-in, and security to gate by Summer 2020, the EIA is looking for the best ways to provide that service so if any of you have any suggestions email [accessibility@vadsociety.ca](mailto:accessibility@vadsociety.ca)



## VAD Support Services

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities offers many support services for individuals in need of assistance. We provide application assistance in the following areas:

- AISH - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- AISH Appeal Forms
- CPPD - Canada Pension Plan Disabilities
- CPPD Appeal Forms
- LAP - Leisure Access Pass
- Personal Income Tax (starting February 2020)
- Disability Tax Credit

## Bingo Volunteers Needed

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities is looking for additional bingo volunteers for the West End Bingo. Persons need to be able to work the bingo floor in a fast paced environment. If you are interested in more information, please contact our office 780-488-9088.



Looking to give back to your community? Support VAD and become a Bingo Volunteer.



*Together, We Hold the Power!*

**Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity**