

National AccessAbility Week – Join Us!

As we move into May, we are excited to share updates, opportunities, and stories that reflect the strength and resilience of our community. This month is especially meaningful as we prepare to celebrate National AccessAbility Week and continue advancing inclusion, accessibility, and support for persons with disabilities across Alberta.

National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) is just around the corner, and VAD is proud to be part of this important celebration of inclusion and accessibility. We are excited to invite you to our:

NAAW BBQ & Silent Auction
June 6, 2026
12 pm - 3 pm
Borden Park – Site 6

This event brings together community members, partners, and supporters to celebrate achievements, raise awareness, and connect.

Get Involved:

- Donate items for the silent auction
- Attend and bring a friend

Your participation helps strengthen our community and supports VAD's ongoing work.

VAD is pleased to announce that we have 15+ silent auction items from:

City of Edmonton
Plaza Bowling Co
Fantasy Land Hotel
Monster Mini Golf
Alberta Art Gallery
MLA J Irwin
MLA C Gray
Rutherford Office
MLA L Sigurdson
Honourable A LaGrange
Heather Reid

facility admission passes
gift card
TGIF buffet for 2 gift card
5 passes
Duo Engage Membership
handmade ceramic mugs
silent auction item
silent auction item
silent auction item
hand blown glass heart
diamond dot package

Make sure to stop by the NAAW BBQ on June 6 and bid on these great items. Money raised goes to offset costs of the event and society operations. *VAD is providing free food and beverages thanks to **Preferred Client Services BBQ Champion Sponsor!***

NAAW is a national initiative dedicated to raising awareness about accessibility and disability inclusion, challenging stigma, and celebrating the contributions of Canadians with disabilities. Held annually during the last week of May, this year's NAAW runs from May 31 to June 6.

We welcome VAD members, volunteers, community members, and representatives from partnering organizations to join us in recognizing the progress made—and the work that remains—in making our communities more accessible and inclusive.

We are currently seeking event sponsors and supporters of the silent auction to help make this event a success.



If you're able to support this celebration or would like more information, please contact VAD at 780-488-9088 or vad@vadsociety.ca. Your partnership will help make this community event meaningful and memorable.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

Employment & Skills Development

Meaningful employment is an important part of independence and inclusion. VAD supports individuals in exploring opportunities, building skills, and connecting with inclusive employers.

Tips for Job Seekers:

- Highlight your strengths and transferable skills
- Seek out inclusive employers and workplaces
- Use available support services to navigate the job search

Across Alberta, more employers are recognizing that inclusive hiring isn't just the right thing to do—it strengthens workplaces, drives innovation, and builds resilient communities.

Leading by Example

Organizations like Alberta Blue Cross and Government of Alberta have taken meaningful steps toward inclusive employment by:

- Creating accessible recruitment processes
- Offering workplace accommodations and flexible work options
- Embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion into workplace culture
- Supporting employees with disabilities through internal networks and policies

Programs like EmployAbilities also work directly with employers to match qualified candidates with disabilities to meaningful job opportunities—helping businesses build inclusive teams with confidence.

What Inclusive Hiring Looks Like in Practice

Inclusive hiring goes beyond checking a box. Alberta employers making real impact are:

- Simplifying job postings with clear, accessible language
- offering alternative interview formats (virtual, skills-based, or supported interviews)
- Providing accommodations from day one, not just after hiring
- Focusing on skills and potential, rather than rigid job requirements
- Creating psychologically safe workplaces where employees feel valued and supported

These approaches don't just benefit employees with disabilities—they improve hiring and retention for everyone.



The Business Case

Employers across Canada are seeing the benefits:

- Higher employee retention and loyalty
- Increased workplace morale and collaboration
- Access to a broader, often under utilized talent pool
- Stronger reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible organization

VAD's Role in Advancing Inclusive Employment

The Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) supports inclusive hiring by:

- Educating employers on accessibility and accommodation
- Connecting individuals to employment supports and resources
- Advocating for equitable hiring practices and policy improvements



- Amplifying lived experiences to inform better workplace practices

Spotlight Opportunity

Know an employer making a difference? We want to hear from you. VAD is looking to feature organizations that

are:

- Championing inclusive hiring
- Creating accessible workplaces
- Leading with innovation and compassion

Let's celebrate the employers who are helping build a more inclusive Alberta—one job at a time.

VAD Annual General Meeting

Notice of Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD)

Date: June 12, 2026

Time: 1 pm to 3 pm

Location: Zoom by member registration only.

Dear Members,

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) will be held on the date and time indicated above.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Present and approve the 2025 – 26 Annual Report
- Review financial statements
- Elect members to the Board of Directors
- Appoint the auditor
- Provide updates on programs, services, and strategic priorities
- Address any other business as may properly come before the meeting

Who Can Attend:

All VAD members are encouraged to attend. Only members in good standing will be eligible to vote. iVAD, Organizational and Corporate Membership entitles each membership to one vote. To join as a VAD Member, please contact the office: 780-488-9088

Accessibility:

VAD is committed to ensuring this meeting is accessible to all participants. Please advise us of any accommodation or accessibility needs in advance. The meeting will be held on Zoom and will have closed captioning and ASL interpretation.

RSVP:

Please confirm your attendance by June 10, 2026, by contacting: vad@vadsociety.ca or phoning 780-488-9088.

We encourage all members to participate in this important opportunity to stay informed, share feedback, and help shape the future of VAD.

Sincerely,

Tara Lyon

Executive Director

Accessibility in Action

Creating accessible communities is a shared responsibility. Across Edmonton, we are seeing encouraging steps toward more inclusive spaces, services, and programs.

At VAD, we continue to advocate for meaningful accessibility—ensuring that individuals not only have



www.vadsociety.ca; vad@vadsociety.ca
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities



**Voice of Albertans
with Disabilities**
Support. Inclusion. Community.

#105, 10106 111 Ave NW
Edmonton, AB
T5G 0B4
780-488-9088
vad@vadsociety.ca

PROXY VOTE FORM

I, _____, being a member in good standing of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD), hereby appoint:

(Name of Proxy Holder)

as my proxy to attend, act, and vote on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities to be held on June 12, 2026, and at any adjournment thereof.

My proxy holder is authorized to vote on my behalf on all matters that may properly come before the meeting, including the election of directors and any resolutions presented.

☐ **Optional Direction to Proxy (if desired):**

(Provide specific voting instructions below, if applicable)

Signed this _____ day of _____, 2026.

Member Name (Print)

Member Signature

Date

Notes:

- This proxy must be submitted prior to the start of the AGM.
- Only members in good standing are eligible to vote.
- A proxy holder must also be a member in good standing of VAD.

Send your proxy form by email to vad@vadsociety.ca or mail to:

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities
105 Royal Alex Place
10106 111 Ave NW
Edmonton, Alberta, T5G 0B4

access, but feel welcomed and valued. If you know of a business or organization making a difference, we would love to hear from you.

Real Change in Edmonton

Across Edmonton, accessibility is not just a concept—it's showing up in tangible, everyday improvements that are making the city more inclusive for people of all abilities.

Reimagining Streets for Everyone

A major example is the Imagine Jasper Avenue initiative. This downtown transformation includes:

- Wider sidewalks for mobility devices
- Shorter pedestrian crossings for safer navigation
- Improved lighting and visibility
- Enhanced transit accessibility

These upgrades are designed to make one of Edmonton's busiest corridors safer and more usable for pedestrians, including those with disabilities.

This reflects what advocacy has long pushed for—universal design in public infrastructure, not retrofits after the fact.

Inclusive Recreation Spaces

City recreation facilities are increasingly being built or upgraded with accessibility at the core. For example, centres like Clareview Community Recreation Centre and The

Meadows Community Recreation Centre offer:

- Barrier-free entrances and automatic doors
- Accessible change rooms and washrooms
- Pool lifts, ramps, and zero-depth entries
- Inclusive viewing areas and adaptive equipment

Some facilities even include features like hearing loops and universal change rooms, going beyond minimum standards.

This aligns with VAD's work promoting equitable access to community life—ensuring recreation, wellness, and social spaces are truly inclusive.

Policy Driving Progress

The City's updated Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy C602 (2025) commits to embedding accessibility across all services, programs, and spaces—not as an add-on, but as a standard.

Programs like *Measuring Up Edmonton* also encourage businesses and organizations to assess and improve their accessibility practices.

Advocacy plays a key role in shaping and holding systems accountable to these policies—ensuring they translate into real-world impact.

Accessible Transit & Daily Life Supports

Edmonton continues to expand accessible transportation and supports, including:

- Specialized transit services for those unable to use regular transit
- Accessible LRT features
- Subsidized transit and recreation access programs

These services help reduce barriers to employment, healthcare, and community participation.

This reflects the broader goal of independence and inclusion—core to VAD's advocacy and support services.

Why This Matters

Accessibility improvements are not just about compliance—they are about dignity, independence, and belonging.



While progress is visible, gaps still exist. That's where organizations like VAD continue to lead:

- Amplifying lived experiences
- Identifying barriers
- Advocating for systemic change

Accessibility in action means turning voices into visible change—and ensuring no one is left out of community life.

Support Services in Action: Connecting People to What Matters

Every day, individuals and families are reaching out to the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) for help navigating systems that can often feel overwhelming. Through personalized support, advocacy, and outreach, we are helping people access the programs, services, and benefits they need to live more independently.

How People Are Accessing Support

VAD continues to meet people where they are—both in person and online. Individuals are connecting with us through:

- One-on-one support (phone, email, and in-office)
- Community outreach sessions and pop-up events
- Referrals from partner organizations and service providers
- Workshops and presentations on benefits, accessibility, and self-advocacy

From assistance with programs like AISH, DTC, and the Canada Disability Benefit, to help navigating housing, healthcare, and community services, our team works alongside individuals to break down bar-

riers and build confidence.

A Story of Reconnection and Hope

One recent story highlights just how powerful connection can be. A client came to VAD feeling isolated and unsure where to turn. Through conversation and support, our team helped them navigate available services—but something more meaningful happened along the way.

During the process, we were able to help reconnect this individual with a family member they had been separated from for years. What started as a search for support became a moment of reconnection, healing, and renewed belonging.

This is what accessibility truly looks like—not just accessing programs, but rebuilding connections and strengthening community.

Get Connected with VAD

If you or someone you know could benefit from support, we encourage you to connect with us or attend an upcoming outreach session.

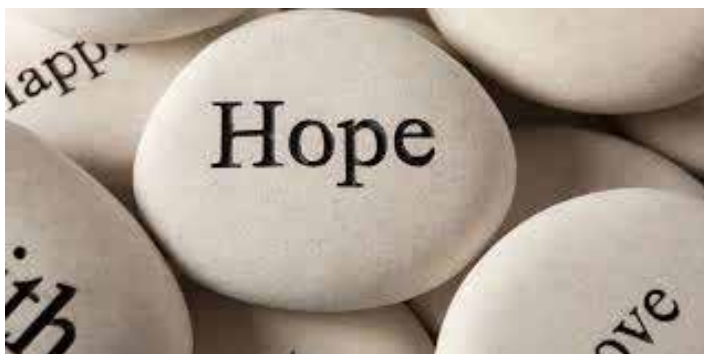
Together, we are making accessibility real—one connection, one conversation, and one success story at a time.

Reaching Communities Through Outreach

VAD is expanding its outreach efforts to ensure that support reaches communities that have historically faced additional barriers. Our Indigenous and multi-cultural outreach sessions are designed to:

- Provide culturally respectful, accessible information
- Break down language and systemic barriers
- Build trust through community presence and partnerships
- Connect individuals directly to supports in a welcoming environment

These sessions are already helping new individuals and families learn about benefits and services they didn't know were available.





Save this date

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MAY 2026

ReYu's Annual
Walk, Run, and Roll

Walk, Run & Roll with ReYu – 2026

Join us for our 10th Annual 5K Walk, Run & Roll in support of ReYu. Funds raised help us continue providing vital programs and services to our community.

Participants are encouraged to collect pledges from family and friends.

Pledge forms are available on our website.

Location: Site #7, Sir Wilfred Laurier Park (marked start/finish line)

Check-in: 10:00 AM

Registration deadline: 11:00 AM

Start time: 11:15 AM

Route: Two closed loops of the park (outdoor event)

Refreshments provided after the event

Registration fee: \$34.29





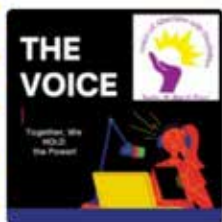
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and Guests



www.vadsociety.ca



A New Chapter for VAD Rebrand

The Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) is entering an exciting new chapter. With a refreshed mission, vision, and visual identity, our rebrand reflects not only who we are—but where we're going. This isn't just a new logo. It's a renewed commitment to the disability community across Alberta.



What's Changing

Our updated mission and vision sharpen our focus on:

- Empowering individuals through accessible information, support, and advocacy
- Breaking down systemic barriers that limit inclusion and independence
- Amplifying lived experience to influence meaningful change
- Building stronger, more inclusive communities across Alberta

Our new look and messaging better represent the diversity, strength, and resilience of the people we serve.

What This Means for Members

For VAD members, this rebrand brings:

- Stronger advocacy on the issues that matter most
- Improved access to information and supports
- More opportunities to engage, share your voice, and shape our work
- A clearer, more connected community identity

At its core, VAD remains your organization—member-driven, responsive, and grounded in real experiences.

What This Means for the Community

For partners, stakeholders, and the broader community, our rebrand signals:

- A more visible and unified voice for disability advocacy in Alberta
- increased collaboration and outreach, including Indigenous and multicultural communities
- A continued commitment to education, awareness, and accessibility in action
- A stronger presence in shaping policies, programs, and inclusive practices
- Moving Forward Together

This rebrand is about growth, impact, and connection. As we move forward, VAD will continue to:

- Advocate for equitable access and inclusion
- Support individuals in navigating systems and services
- Create spaces where all voices are heard and valued
- Together, we are building a future where accessi-

bility is not an afterthought—but a standard.

Self-Advocacy Corner

Accessing disability benefits and services can feel complicated—but you don't have to navigate it alone. Here are some practical tips to help you access key supports and advocate for your needs with confidence.

Understanding Key Programs

AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped)



- Apply as early as possible—processing can take time
- Ensure medical forms are detailed and completed by the right professionals
- Keep copies of everything you submit
- If denied, you have the right to appeal—don't stop at the first “no”

DTC (Disability Tax Credit)

- Eligibility is based on how your condition affects daily functioning—not just diagnosis
- work closely with your medical practitioner to clearly describe impacts
- If approved, you may be eligible for retroactive credits
- A denial can be appealed or resubmitted with stronger documentation

CDB (Canada Disability Benefit)

- Make sure your DTC status is up to date, as it may impact eligibility
- Watch for application updates and time lines

Practical Tips for Success

- Document everything: Keep records of applications, letters, and conversations

- Ask questions: If something isn't clear, follow up—systems can be complex
- Bring support: A friend, advocate, or support worker can help during appointments
- Don't accept barriers as final: Many decisions can be reviewed or appealed
- Connect with VAD: We can help guide you through the process step by step
- Speaking Up for Your Needs

Self-advocacy is a powerful tool. It means knowing your rights, expressing your needs, and asking for what will help you succeed.

You can advocate for yourself by:

- Clearly stating what you need (e.g., accommodations, time lines, communication formats)
- Using written communication when possible—it creates a record
- Referring to your rights under accessibility and human rights frameworks
- Practicing your message ahead of time—especially for appointments or meetings

Example:

“I would benefit from receiving this information in writing to review at my own pace.”

“I need additional time to complete this process due to my disability.”

You're Not Alone

Advocating for yourself can feel challenging—but your voice matters.

At VAD, we believe in empowering individuals to:

- Understand their options
- Build confidence in navigating systems
- Turn barriers into opportunities for change

When members speak up, systems improve—not just for one person, but for the entire community.

Member Story: The Power of Speaking Up Before Advocacy

When Maria (name changed for privacy) first con-

nected with VAD, she was feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. She had applied for supports but was denied, with little explanation she could understand.

She wasn't sure how to respond, who to contact, or what her rights were. The process felt intimidating, and like many others, she began to wonder if it was even worth trying again. As a result, she went without supports she was eligible for—impacting her financial stability and overall well-being.

After Advocacy

With support from VAD, Maria began to take the next steps with confidence. Together, we:

- Reviewed her application and identified gaps in documentation
- Helped her gather stronger medical information
- Supported her in submitting an appeal
- Guided her on how to clearly communicate her needs

Maria also practiced self-advocacy—asking questions, requesting clarification, and following up consistently. A few months later, her application was approved.

The Impact

Access to supports meant more than financial relief. It meant:

- Reduced stress and greater stability
- The ability to focus on her health and daily life
- A renewed sense of confidence in navigating systems
- Most importantly, Maria realized her voice mattered.

What This Means for Others

Many people face similar barriers—but outcomes can change with the right support and information. Advocacy can turn a “no” into a “not yet.” If you’ve been denied or feel stuck, don’t give up. VAD is here to help you understand your options and take the next step forward. Call us at 780-488-9088.



Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

Sign Up Today
Membership



VAD Membership

Join VAD to add your voice, access support, and help build a more inclusive and accessible Alberta for everyone.

SIGN UP

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