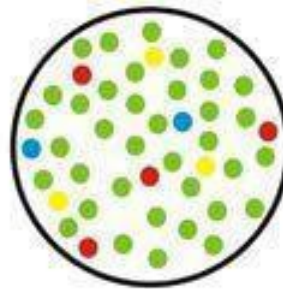


2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

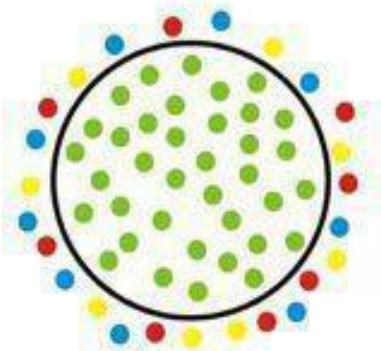
PREPARED BY
Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

VAD SOCIETY

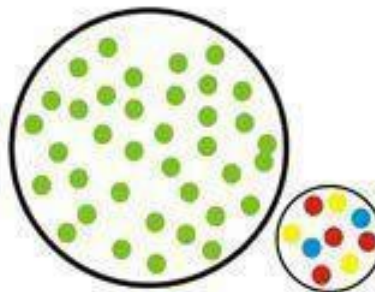




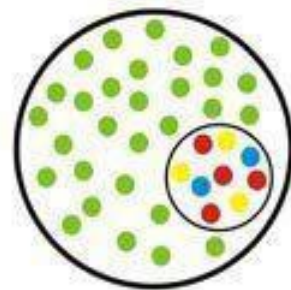
Inclusion



Exclusion



Segregation



Integration

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Mission and Guiding Principles


Mission Statement

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Society actively promotes full participation in society and provides a voice for Albertans with disabilities.

VAD's Guiding Principles

1.  **Equity**

- We will be vigilant to ensure that our rights and freedoms are upheld.
- We claim our right to be equal while maintaining our individuality.

2.  **Accessibility**

- All buildings and facilities must be accessible.
- Transportation, information and communication services must meet our diverse needs.

3.  **Full Participation**

- We are committed to breaking down barriers which prevent society from seeing beyond our disabilities so that we are included in all aspects of life.
- We will take charge of the social, political and economic decisions that affect our lives.
- We must be accountable for our actions.
- We must have choice in the services and support we require.
- We acknowledge and accept the dignity of risk

History



Founded in 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 over 49 years, VAD has been a consumer-directed organization that speaks from the perspective of individuals with disabilities.

Message from the Executive Director – Margot Brunner



As we look back at the extraordinary pivot that the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities office made this past year, we were busier than we have been for several years prior to the March 2020 event that could have been a disaster for our office – it was not. In our brief summary of highlights, there are some exceptional examples of how we organized and successfully executed our mission to actively promote full participation in society and provide a conduit with and for Albertans who have disabilities and their allies. One of our largest contracts through Community and Social Services mandates that we offer supports, referrals and presentations to organizations, businesses and Albertans with disabilities - we did just that. Also, we are tasked to contribute in collaborations throughout the province and we met that demand through virtual platforms that allowed us to be present at discussions that would otherwise have been impossible due to time, distance and cost limitations. We took advantage of this new way of doing business by attending over 400 gatherings with our consumers, our peers, our government leaders as well as many new potential partners who offered their areas of expertise via virtual platforms. During each of these meetings, our number one question is 'how does this fit the barrier free agenda and how does this affect people with disabilities in the province?'. VAD had over 826 individuals 'visit' for benefit form assistance and we received over 1200 phone calls and emails looking for direction, advocacy and basic support whether that be for financial supports, housing, food security, advice on where to access services with the majority of public offices closed to the public. Our presentation team offered 57 presentations to schools, businesses, member organizations and general lunch and learn seminars with close to 1300 people in attendance.

Your support of Voice of Albertans with disabilities has had a profound and lasting impact on the staff, clients and allies who come to us for assistance. For some, it is their darkest hour because they have found themselves in a place that they never could have imagined. This past year your willingness to provide support through monetary assistance, volunteer hours and paid employment has supported our mission statement to move closer to creating a barrier free existence for all citizens. I would like to thank our donors, our sponsors and those who have allowed us to be the stewards of their dollars to offer these necessary and empowering services to some of our most vulnerable populations. I believe that our ability to assist in navigating otherwise very difficult systems allows people to continue their own personal advocacy and the opportunity to teach others that they meet in their life journey.

Many of the meetings that we attended would have attendees who are just being introduced to a concept of a barrier free Canada and or specifically a barrier free Alberta. In our attempts to move towards a Barrier Free Alberta legislation, we are advocating that a legislation be a platform for all political parties as we move into a provincial election cycle for 2023. We are looking forward to nurturing these new relationships that we have built over the past two years of meeting in a virtual space. Although the virtual is more convenient and cost effective, we look forward to traveling to our many constituencies for in person events where we will learn and grow to have a better understanding of the communities that are adopting and adapting to accessible environments and establishing the committees responsible for moving that full inclusion platform in towns and cities -big and small.



President's Message – Katrina Breau



I would like to start by thanking the following:

Donors

Members

Stakeholders

Board Members

Fundraisers

Volunteers

Working Groups

Committees

This year as President, I have loved to see the many ways we are able to lift each other's spirits reminding us all that we are not alone. This past year's journey through COVID times brought many revolving restrictions, rules and challenges that could easily pull us towards a swirling drain of depressed feelings as we felt stuck in isolation. When these thoughts came my way, I would choose to step back and see the experience from a different perspective. What if this time has been a gift to ourselves and others living with disabilities, a new light beginning to shine on the truth of the challenges we face daily? What if Covid has helped to shine a light on the reality of our everyday challenges, while providing everyone better clarity and understanding from a small piece of isolated lived experience? Ripples of changes are needed to aid and prevent many people falling through the cracks within our support systems today. Our collaborative voice may provide an important light on the true needs and impacts small positive pivots can make to our life journey's. We have the power through collaboration to create change throughout our society. Together we can bring forth a new path for beliefs to help realize the value, worth and importance of everyone within our communities. Whether we have visible or unseen challenges we all contribute to positive community growth. Let's share how accessibility, acceptance and appreciation may all lift our community spirit to new levels.

The priceless value of volunteers touches more than the immediate recipient as the gift positively molds the heart of our communities. Our Volunteers are the true backbone of our organization. We would not be able to rise to our true potential without the gifts of time so many of You have chosen to invest. Each hour you invest strengthens the force of our ripple of change. I love the way these powerful quotes remind of this daily:

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give"
- Winston Churchill.

"Helping others is the secret sauce to a happy life"
- Todd Stocker

"Volunteers wear working boots but leave a trail of angel footprints"
- Terri Guillemets

As the President of Voice of Albertans with Disabilities, I just wish to give a heartfelt Thank You to all our members as we all continue to lift each other's mental wellness in all we do. Also to remind you all, that throughout all our seen and unseen work we take on each day, remember to take a special moment for yourselves. Please reach out if you feel the need of a warm fuzzy mental lift, we are always here to walk alongside you offering tools to smoothen each step you take along your life journey. You are never alone!

Katrina



Board of Directors



PRESIDENT

Katrina Breau

Katrina has been a Director of Voice of Albertans with Disabilities since 2019.



Secretary

Valeria Palladino

Valeria became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2021.



DIRECTOR

Mehul Gupta

Mehul Gupta became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2020.



VICE PRESIDENT

Bernard Boulanger

Bernard became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2020.



DIRECTOR

Dominic Shaw

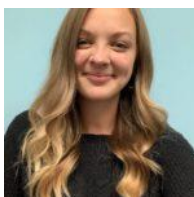
Dominic became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2020.



DIRECTOR

Koryn Krekoski

Koryn became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2021.



Treasurer

Brianne Staples

Brianne became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2020.



DIRECTOR

Sean Crump

Sean became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2020.



DIRECTOR

Zachary Weeks

Zachary became a member of the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Board in 2021.

VAD Staff



Accessibility Assessment
Coordinator
Sam Mason



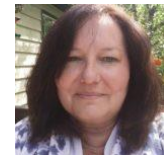
Education Coordinator
Michelle Bissell



Program & Services
Manager
Teresa Jackson



Executive Director
Margot Brunner



Financial Accountant
Ava Morasch

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities serves its members and the disability community through core programs and service areas.

Support and Referral



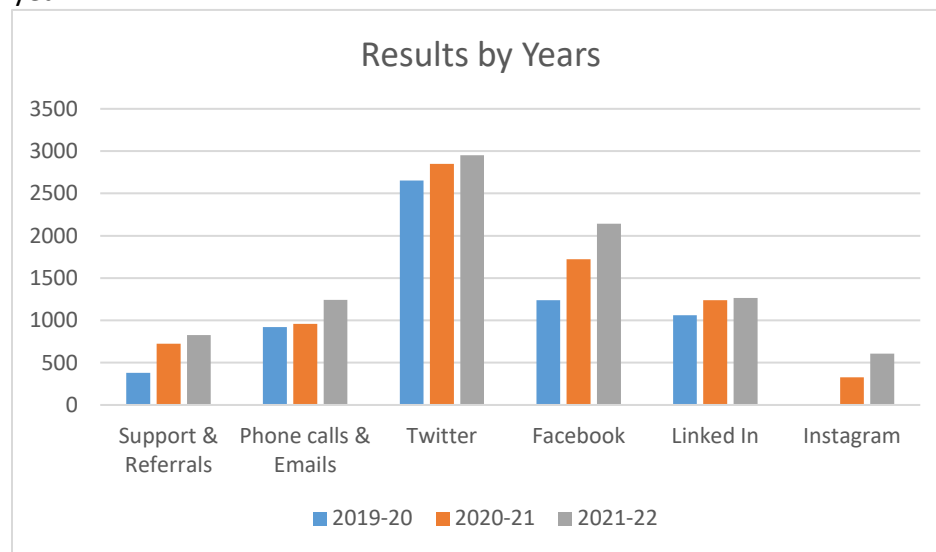
Voice of Albertans with Disabilities staff provide support and referral services to individuals with disabilities, their families and advocates. VAD provides assistance with AISH, CPPD, Leisure Access, appeal forms and other government forms for individuals that require assistance.

Request for information and support are received through telephone calls, letters, in person visits and emails.

VAD knows that government programs and services can be a challenge to access and/or understand. For this reason, VAD has maintained our support and referral program since 1973. The majority of the telephone calls we receive are from people inquiring about programs and services for individuals with disabilities, especially related to AISH forms, CPPD applications and personal income tax. We are able to either help these individuals directly, by completing forms and providing information, or we refer them to agencies and organizations whose work is relevant to the nature of the respective inquiry.

VAD had 826 office visits for forms assistance, and received 1243 phone calls and emails in the 2021-2022 year. This is an increase of 91% in our Support & Referral appointments from 2019-20 to 2020-21 and an additional increase of 14% for the 2021-22 fiscal year. Our phone calls

and emails have also increased by 30% since 2019-20 and additional 5% in the 2021-22 fiscal year.



Our social media has increased substantially in the last two years with a steady growth in the 2021-22 fiscal year. For the last year, our numbers have increased to the following: Twitter 2953 followers, Facebook 2141 followers, Linked In 1263 followers and

our newest social media platform, Instagram has 607 followers.

Areas of Support for individuals

One-on-One Consultations

- VAD offers support in the following areas:
 - *AISH Application forms and Appeal forms*
 - *CPPD forms*
 - *Leisure Access Pass forms*
 - *Personal Taxes (for Low Income Individuals during tax season)*
 - *Income Support Application forms and Appeals*
 - *Disability Tax Credit Application forms*
 - *Old Age Security forms*
 - *Alberta Adult Health Benefit forms*
 - *Referrals for RDSPs*
 - *Human Rights Concerns*
 - *Housing Support & Referral*
 - *Disability Discrimination Assistance*
 - *Accessibility Coordination (across the province)*
 - *Self-Advocacy*

Collaborations and Partnerships

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities plays an active role on numerous committees, offering an experienced, responsible and effective voice for the disability community. Collaborations and partnership activities occur through board and committee participation and project partnerships. On average, VAD staff participated in 16 working groups a month with ongoing meetings and events to attend.



Through our collaborations and partnerships, VAD shares information on accessibility issues and ideas with individuals with disabilities, other organizations, decision makers, public servants and the general public.

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities collaborate on an ongoing basis with different departments within the Government of Alberta to discuss important disability issues and to work towards common goals to address the need of individuals with disabilities in Alberta. We continue to meet with the elected officials and government employees to discuss issues brought forth by our membership. In the past these meetings were productive and cooperative.

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities' slogan, "Together, We Hold the Power!" reflects our commitment to developing effective dynamic partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals.

VAD Annual Membership

Organizational Members: Voice of Albertans with Disabilities is a collaboration of Alberta-based advocacy and supportive organizations. They use their collective voice to influence the creation of an inclusive and accessible Alberta. VAD has 41 organizational members in the 2021-22 year.

iVAD Members: This network is a pan-disability group of individuals with lived experiences who are interested in increasing awareness of existing barriers to inclusion and developing capacity around solutions to accessibility, accessible and affordable housing, employment, transportation and social isolation. VAD had 74 iVAD members in the 2021-22 year.

Corporate Members: This is a network of businesses and retailers providing products/services to the public. VAD started recruiting corporate members last year and is proud to say we grew to have 9 corporate members during the 2021-22 year.

Benefits of membership:

- Attendance at VAD events, and AGM
- Distribution of organizational member information through VAD social media platforms by request
- Participation in research and projects
- VAD newsletter: The Voice – email or printed copies
- Web link to your website for duration of membership year on VAD website
- A printed organizational member directory upon request



VAD Corporate Members

1. Calgary Progressive Lifestyles Foundation
2. Canadian Accreditation Council
Centre For Autism Services Alberta
3. City of Medicine Hat
4. Connect Society
5. Edmonton Residential Aide Placement Services
6. On Site Placement Services
7. Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society (SABIS)
8. REDI Enterprises Society
9. WJ Stelmaschuk and Associates Ltd.

VAD Organizational Members

1. Accredited Supports to the Community
2. Alberta AdaptAbilities Association
3. Alberta Network for Mental Health
4. Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association (ASCHA)
5. Aspire Special Needs Resource Centre
6. Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services
7. Autism Calgary Association
8. Blue Heron Vocational Training Centre
9. Brain Care Centre
10. Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - Edmonton Branch
11. CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION - CHHA CALGARY
12. CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, THE (AB EAST CENTRAL REGION)
13. Centra Cam Vocational Training Association
14. Cerebral Palsy Association In Alberta
15. CHINOOK HIGH SCHOOL
16. Crowsnest Community Support Society

17. Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary
18. Drumheller and Region Transition Society (DARTS)
19. Edmonton Epilepsy Association - EPA
20. EmployAbilities
21. Falher Friendship Corner Association
22. Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society
23. Goodwill Industries of Alberta
24. Inclusion Alberta
25. Inclusion Lethbridge Association
26. Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary
27. Learning Disabilities Association Of Alberta (LDAA)
28. March of Dimes Canada
29. Metis Child and Family Services Society
30. NorQuest College
31. Parkland Community Living and Supports Society
32. Parkland Head Injury Association
33. Plan Edmonton
34. Portage College - Cold Lake Campus
35. PROS Providing Residential Options & Services
36. Skills Society Supporting The Citizenship of People with Disabilities
37. Southern Alberta Individualized Planning Association (SAIPA)
38. Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Northern Alberta
39. Spinal Cord Injury Association Alberta
40. Spinal Cord Injury Treatment Centre Society
41. YWCA of Edmonton



Education and Awareness Presentations & Consultations

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities conducted 46 Disability Awareness Business presentations with 1001 participants, and 11 school presentations with 295 student participants. The feedback provided by businesses and educators is always positive, with attendees and students asking questions and learning about individuals with disabilities. VAD has adapted a virtual platform to present disability awareness to schools and businesses. These presentations and workshops focus on etiquette, mindfulness, language, rights and protocol for working or interacting with individuals who have a disability.

The presentation is a demonstration of the knowledge and skills offered by the presenters about individuals with disabilities. The 30-60 minute event is accomplished, depending on the age and organizational needs, using method demonstration

(props when necessary), speaking directly to the audience and using a power point presentation to relay:

- The meaning of disability and impairment
- How to treat and act around a person with a disability
- Appropriate use of language when talking to or about someone with a disability
- Understanding of people with disabilities rather than myths and misconceptions
- Attitudes and barriers faced by people with disabilities

Presentations are a free service provided to educate and generate awareness in the community.

Accessibility & Inclusion Coordination

VAD has taken a hands on approach to assisting businesses become more accessible and inclusive in their processes and policies. Working with accessibility committees, small to large businesses, and individuals, VAD is able to provide tips and easy to implement changes that give the opportunity for everyone to participate in office procedures, navigate built environments and attend inclusive events. We work with businesses to help them better be accommodating to staff and the public using their services.

This fiscal year, VAD has worked with the following organizations for their accessibility coordination:

- Citadel seating plan review
- St. Albert Place bathroom plan review.
- Healthy Family Healthy Futures student support
- Roxy Theatre
- St Lawrence Court
- CMHA
- Alberta NDP
- MillHurst Garden
- Mile Zero Dance
- Islamic Family and Social Services Association
- Alberta NDP – website & events
- NAIT campus buildings X, Y & L – CAPSTONE PROJECT
- U of A Social media consultation
- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Forest Terrace Community League
- IFSSA



Information Services

VAD's newsletter - The Voice, and our website provide ongoing updates on Voice of Albertans with Disabilities' activities, programs and services available to individuals with disabilities in Alberta. VAD has a digital distribution of over 600 contacts for our newsletter and distribution of 55 readers whom have requested a paper copy mailed to them.



Our website is being redeveloped to be fully accessible and inclusive in the creation of pages and content.

Projects

Disability related research is a key facet of 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:

- Nationals Accessibility Week project launch
- Revising VAD brochure and Infographic
- Annual Accessible Driver Appreciation Week
- Giving Tuesday
- IDPD Events – Edmonton & Alberta
- Transferring all working groups to Zoom format
- Provincial and Federal Election Readiness tool kits
- Covid-19 special newsletters and announcements
- Social Media & Videography Production
- Podcasts created and posted online
- VAD Videos posted on YouTube
- VAD Website redevelopment with inclusive accessible interactive pages
- Campus 2030 – NAIT Capstone
- VAD Podcasts
- Affordable Housing Solutions Lab
- Indigenous Canada, Collective Learning
- NAAW planning
- Volunteer Appreciation Event
- Taxes for low income individuals
- Membership drive

**It's Election
Time...
People With
Disabilities**

COUNT!

Bursaries

Education for Life Bursary

This program supports students with a disability to achieve their post-secondary goals. To be eligible for the Education for Life Bursary, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Have a disability
- Live in Alberta
- Registered for post-secondary program
- Use the bursary for tuition fees
- Submit a completed application form to VAD by the deadline of November 15
- Include one letter of reference from an adult other than a family member. (Only one letter of reference will be accepted.)
- Write and submit a short biography (maximum 250 words), which includes educational goals.

Applicants are selected based on completed requirements, economic need and character references.



\$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.



Videography

VAD has started our own videography for social media and in-house explainer videos. With this new service available to the office, VAD will benefit from an increase in social media interactions and engagements. We have a small library of videos available on our YouTube Channel.

Inspire Video

<https://youtu.be/jlxYVEoHXF0> (4:27)

Same as You Videos

<https://youtu.be/IQP-qFveABE> (0:58)

How to Apply for AISH (ASL included)

<https://youtu.be/0e38cPcKyLg> (6:28)

How to fill out CPPD forms with VAD

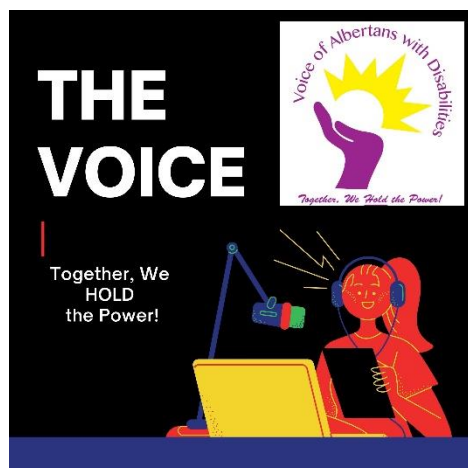
<https://youtu.be/tGIE1Gb1BcM> (7:22)

IDPD Video – Tony Flores

https://youtu.be/pPXPIOGy_6o (14:44)

Elder Blessing for VAD (8:46)

<https://youtu.be/61jPEEXhR6Y>



Podcasts

VAD has started our own Podcast! With the ability to create videos, VAD has expanded into audio files and is now able to edit and publish podcasts. We have started a small library of podcasts for informational purposes.

Accessibility with Sam Mason:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/9091992>

Housing with Michelle Bissell & Roxanne Ulanicki:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/9155294>

Community with Ian Young:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/episodes/9336341>

Epilepsy with Katrina Breau:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/9617908>

Rural Mental Health Project with Katrina Breau:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/episodes/10138417>

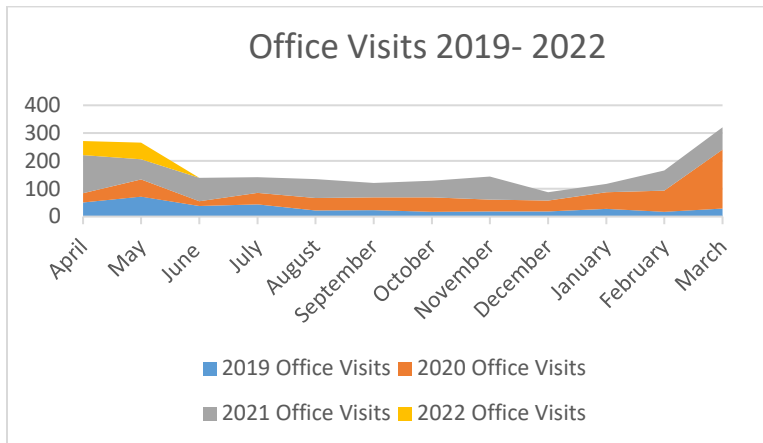
The Voice - PLAN Edmonton (VAD Member Series)

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/episodes/10559587>

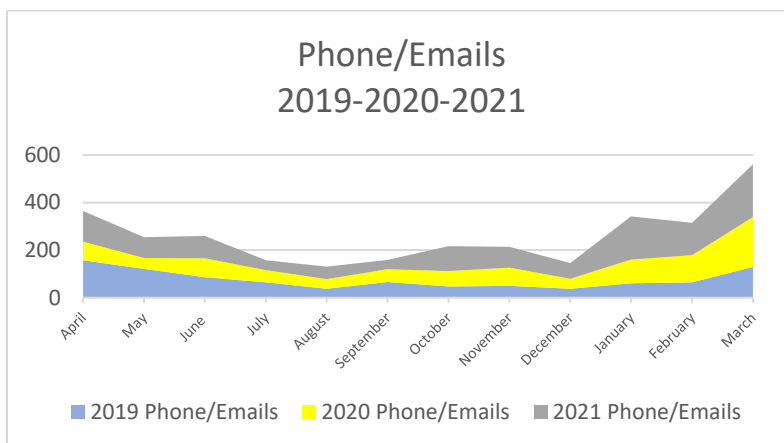
The Voice - Spinal Cord Injury Alberta (SCI) (VAD Members Series)

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1678687/episodes/10642806>

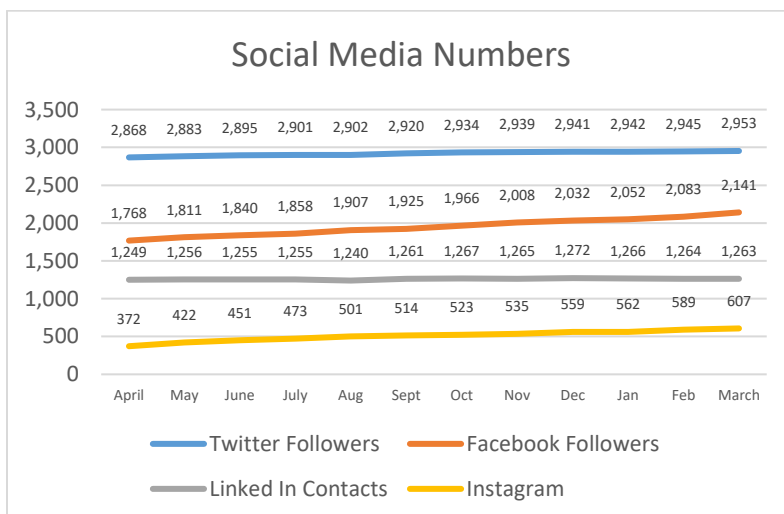
Charts



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Twitter 2953 followers, Facebook 2141 followers, Linked In 1263 followers, and Instagram 607 followers.

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 2021-2022. 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.

Province of Alberta
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Multiculturalism, Indigenous and Inclusion Grant Program



Robertson-Wesley United Church: E.I Clark Fund

Donald Gordon McArthur Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation

Tom Ciezki Agencies



Co-operators



Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component



Individual and Organization Donations and Memberships

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities thanks everyone who contributed to our organization in 2019-2020. Every donation, large or small, helps us towards achieving our goal of full participation in society by people with disabilities. Thank You!

