



"A community connected by a love of nature."

It's our motto. Our masthead. Our message. Nature Alberta exists to connect and give voice to those with a passion for our province's natural spaces and species, and to ensure that our natural environment is well-protected. This Annual Report, covering the year from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021, provides a picture of an organization celebrating its 50th anniversary. It was a time of revitalization in which we recruited an energetic team to focus on our solidified goals and strategies, and set out to make the best use of the resources we have to better serve our individual members and our network of member clubs. We enjoyed some genuine successes — and were met with more unprecedented challenges as the continued waves of COVID-19 impacted club and outreach activities. This time of separation has inspired us to become more creative in how we connect and communicate, and to redouble our efforts to be there for our community. We thank all of you for joining us in the celebration of our 50th year, and invite you to look ahead with us to the next 50.

Our Vision

Alberta's natural heritage is widely enjoyed, deeply appreciated, and thoroughly protected.

Our Mission

To be a strong voice and an active champion for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment.

Our Goals

- Goal 1. Build organizational capacity and sustainability
- Goal 2. Support Nature Alberta's member clubs
- Goal 3. Advance nature education and appreciation within Alberta
- Goal 4. Promote nature conservation in Alberta



Nature Alberta provides a unified voice for conservation education and advocacy in Alberta. That collective voice is made up of so many people who share a passion for nature. From our volunteer board, to our dedicated staff, to the membership of clubs who foster that love of nature, to the funders who make our work possible, we gratefully acknowledge the efforts of everyone who contributes to Nature Alberta's ongoing success.

2021 Board of Directors

President Liz Watts Vice President Lu Carbyn Amy Bergunde Secretary Gerben Deinum Treasurer Linda Howitt-Taylor Past President Kim MacKenzie Director Kaya Konopnicki Director Director Jennifer Okrainec Ted Nanninga Director Margot Hervieux Director Tony Blake Director Brian Joubert Director Claudia Lipski Director Brooke Kapeller Director Len Shrimpton Director

Staff

Richard Schneider, Executive Director
Stephanie Weizenbach, Nature Network
Coordinator
Abigail Stosky, Nature Network Assistant
Susan May, Communications Director
Jason Switner, Nature Alberta Magazine Editor
Renita Jackson, Bookkeeper

Member Clubs

Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

Alberta Lake Management Society

Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild

Alberta Mycological Society

Alberta Native Plant Council

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society

Big Lake Environment Support Society

Bighill Creek Preservation Society

Buffalo Lake Nature Club

Calgary Area Nestbox Monitoring Society

Calgary Bird Banding Society

Cochrane Environmental Action Committee

Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Athabasca

Crowsnest Conservation Society

Edmonton Native Plant Society

Edmonton Nature Club

Ellis Bird Farm

Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society

Friends of Blackfoot Society

Friends of Elk Island Society

Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre

Society

Grasslands Naturalists Society

JJ Collett Natural Area Foundation

Kimiwan Lake Naturalists

Lac La Biche Birding Society

Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory

Lethbridge Naturalists Society

Nature Calgary

Peace Parkland Naturalists

Purple Martin Conservancy

Red Deer River Naturalists

Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association

Vermilion River Naturalist Society

Wagner Natural Area Society

Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society

Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association

Funders

Alberta Conservation Association

Edmonton Community Foundation

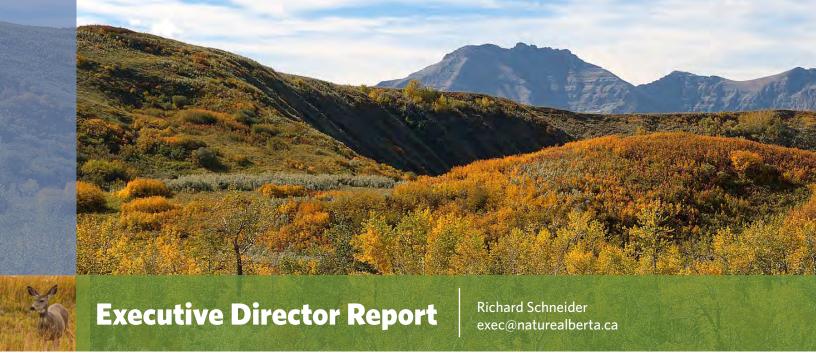
Environment and Climate Change Canada

Government of Alberta

Nature Canada

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation





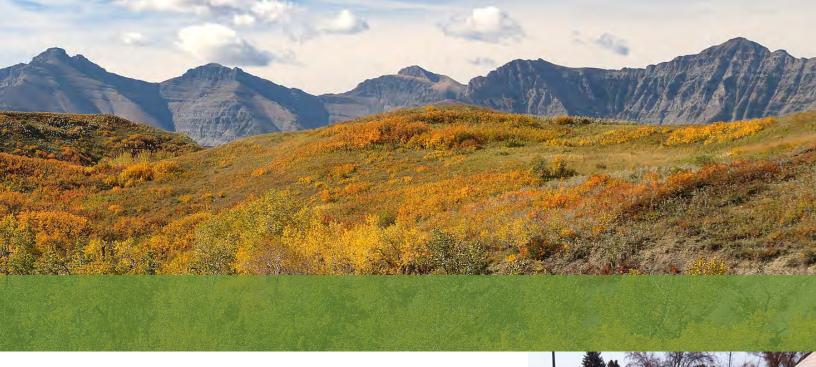
In 2019, Nature Alberta developed a new strategic plan centred on four main goals: (1) advance nature education and appreciation within Alberta, (2) promote nature conservation in Alberta, (3) support Nature Alberta's member clubs, and (4) build organizational capacity and sustainability. This led to operational changes over the past year and a half designed to better align our programs and activities with our strategic aims. Nature Alberta has emerged from this restructuring process as a more focused and significantly more effective organization with a higher profile among our member clubs and the general public.

The core of what we do as an organization centers on nature education and promoting nature conservation across the province (Goals 1 and 2). Over the past year we continued to pursue these goals through a variety of outreach efforts.

Our flagship outreach program is Nature Kids, which provides hands-on, nature-related experiences for families. Direct interaction with individuals — especially young people — is a powerful way of fostering an interest in nature and recruiting new members to the conservation community. The loosening of Covid restrictions this summer allowed us to again host in-person Nature Kids events, after a hiatus in 2020. These events were attended by 566 parents and kids. The silver lining of Covid is that it motivated us to also develop a suite of kid-friendly resources online. These are housed on our website and will serve as a lasting legacy for families to use in years to come. Additional details on the Nature Kids program are provided in the Nature Kids report.

Nature Alberta also delivers a nature outreach program aimed at the general public. Our efforts are organized around three core themes: "Learn About Nature," "Experience Nature," and "Protect Nature." We reach the public through our quarterly magazine, social media channels, electronic newsletter, and website. The magazine is a high-quality publication featuring natural history articles on Alberta's wildlife and in-depth analysis of conservation issues written by field biologists, university researchers, and other experts. Our website and social media posts deliver content from the magazine as well as information on nature-related events and guidance on engaging and protecting nature on a personal level. More information is provided in the Public Outreach report.

We also use our public outreach program to raise awareness of important conservation issues and deliver calls to action. This past year, our focus has been on raising awareness about the government's proposals to delist 164 parks from the provincial parks system, expand coal mining in previously-protected parts of the Eastern Slopes, and increase the rate of forest harvesting above sustainable



limits. Together with other conservation organizations, we have encouraged individuals from across the province to write to the government about their concerns with these proposals. The resulting groundswell of public pressure caused the government to rescind its proposal to delist parks and to pause further coal development pending public consultations. These are positive steps that demonstrate the power of public engagement, but we are not out of the woods. It will take ongoing effort to ensure that existing environmental protections remain in place. Therefore, Nature Alberta will remain engaged.

Nature Alberta's support of regional nature clubs (Goal 3) took a major step forward this year with the launch of the Nature Network. Each club now has a designated liaison who communicates directly with our Nature Network Coordinator, Steph Weizenbach, about club activities and concerns. There is also an online forum and resource library for clubs to use. The province-wide Nature Network speaker series, a collaboration between clubs and Nature Alberta, hosted on Zoom, is an early example of what can be achieved through the Network. Additional details are provided in the Nature Network report.

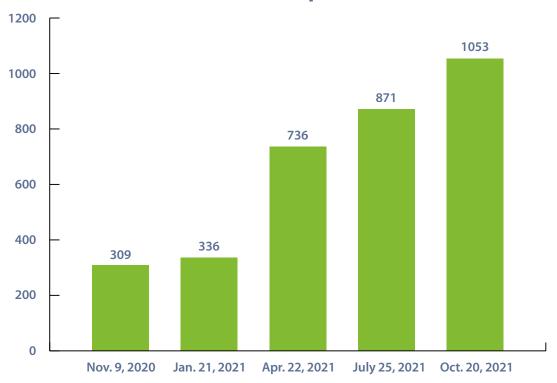
The Nature Network is also where our Important Bird Areas program and our Citizen Science initiatives are now housed. There is extensive overlap between these programs, the activities of nature clubs, and the interests of the broader naturalist community. We believe that coordination of these interrelated efforts through the Nature Network will result in important synergies and increased effectiveness. These integration efforts are currently a work in progress and will be fully implemented over the coming year.





Recent efforts to build organizational capacity and sustainability (Goal 4) have been focused on growing our membership and diversifying our funding base. A key step, taken in the spring of 2020, was to transition from an annual membership model to a lifetime membership model. By offering a relatively low-cost lifetime membership, we were able to rapidly expand our membership base this past year while avoiding annual churn (see chart). Our working assumption is that the loss of annual membership fees will be offset by donations coming from a larger member pool. We will see how this works in practice following this year's Christmas giving season (when most donations typically flow in). Because membership fees have only contributed a small proportion of our annual budget in the past (2-3%), the risk to the organization is small while the promise of increased donor-based funding over time is large.

Membership Growth





Another important motivator of the transition to a lifetime membership model was that it permitted us to make our magazine available to the public at large. Under the old model, only members received our magazine. But the magazine is a high-quality product that has far greater value as a public outreach and education tool than as a perk of membership.

Another step taken to advance organizational sustainability this past year has been the development of a formal fundraising program. The focus has been on building our endowment fund with the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF). The ECF currently offers 2:1 matching for any funds that



are deposited. To capitalize on this offer, the Nature Alberta board allocated \$25,000 from the reserve fund to be used as matching funds for any outside donations. As a result of these matching commitments, every dollar contributed by donors generates \$6 in the endowment fund (\$1 donation + \$1 Nature Alberta matching + \$4 ECF matching). Unfortunately, Covid limited our ability to host in-person fundraising events this year; therefore, our efforts have been focused on online appeals.

The great progress we have been able to achieve this past year is in large part due to our amazing volunteers and supporters. These individuals and organizations donate their time, expertise, and financial support, making our work possible. On behalf of Nature Alberta, I want to extend my thanks and appreciation for these important contributions.



In 2021, Nature Alberta launched the Nature Network to strategically focus support to our network of nature clubs across the province. Benefits of Nature Alberta club membership include:

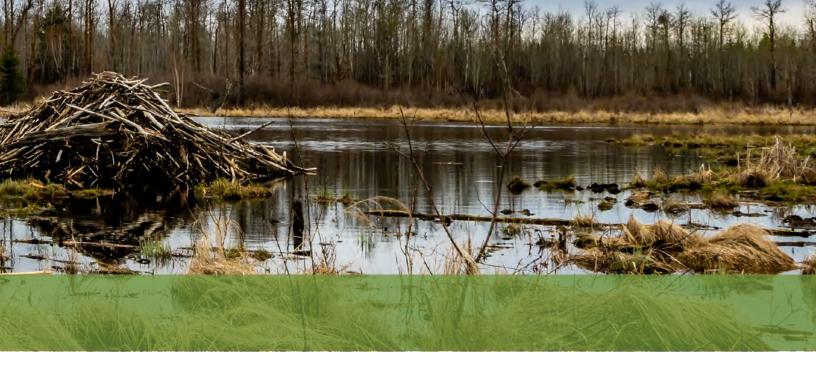
- 1. An online club forum and resource library
- 2. Promotion of clubs and club events to a wide audience
- 3. A shared Zoom account, with up to 500 audience, at no additional cost
- 4. An online photo library
- 5. A print copy of the Nature Alberta Magazine
- 6. The Nature Network Speaker Series
- 7. Support for citizen science programs
- 8. Support for stewardship and advocacy initiatives
- 9. The Nature Volunteer Network
- 10. An opportunity to participate in an affordable group insurance program

Not sure anyone has acknowledged the value of this insurance but we thank you for the opportunity to participate in the program — very valuable for our organization.

— Blake Bartlett, Liaison for Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association

To allow easy manoeuverability through all of these great resources, Nature Alberta published the *Nature Alberta Member Club Manual*, and launched the monthly Nature Network News to keep clubs informed and engaged. In March 2021, Nature Alberta exclusively offered all Member Club Members free lifetime membership, adding 165 individuals to Nature Alberta's membership.

The piloted Nature Network Speaker Series, launched in spring of 2021, was a wild success. Clubs shared their virtual presenters with our entire Nature Network, allowing all of our Member Clubs to benefit by inviting their members to attend. Edmonton Nature Club, Red Deer River Naturalists, Nature Calgary, and Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society all supported this initiative with presenters to provide a series of five speakers with an average of 100 attendees at each presentation. This proved to be a great resource to our network, as well as great exposure to each presenting club. This initiative truly connected our community through a love of nature. Our 2021-22 Nature Speaker Series is already well underway and will include the first ever Nature Alberta Chit Chat; presenters will tell their story in a Pecha Kucha style, with John Acorn, Nature Alberta's Patron, as the keynote storyteller.



Nature Alberta supported member clubs and the public with various events and projects including the May Species Count, City Nature Challenge, BiodiverCity Challenge, Cowley Pollinator Garden, Alberta Saskatoon Watch, and much more. Nature Alberta continues to act as the regional coordinator for the Important Bird Area Caretakers, actively recruiting and supporting volunteers and Member Club representatives to complete bird surveys and contribute to federal assessments of these areas for consideration for Key Biodiversity Area criteria.

Due to challenges posed by the pandemic, some member clubs are currently on pause but we are happy to report that many clubs are actually seeing a rise in participation. There is demand for connecting our community through a love of nature and our clubs are leading the way with innovative projects like the Grasslands Naturalists Society's Adopt a Pond program which was featured in the Meet a Member Club article in the Fall 2021 Issue of *Nature Alberta Magazine*.

I am so impressed by the changes Nature Alberta has made to help connect our groups together and build a stronger nature network — thank you for your efforts!!!

— Curtis Goodman, Liaison for Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre Society







Public Outreach Report

communications@naturealberta.ca

Nature Alberta's mission is to be "a strong voice and an active champion for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment." We advance this mission through a public outreach program that celebrates our natural heritage, educates Albertans about native species and ecosystems, and raises awareness of conservation issues. These are the building blocks of public caring and engagement, which ultimately drive environmental policy. We saw this clearly demonstrated earlier in the year when Albertans engaged en masse to push back on proposals to delist provincial parks and expand coal mining in sensitive parts of the Eastern Slopes, forcing the government to rescind its plans.

The flagship of our outreach program is *Nature Alberta Magazine*, now available for free on our website or by subscription for the print copy. The magazine is a high-quality publication providing informative and engaging articles on all aspects of nature. Over the past year we have published natural history articles on a wide variety of species (from bugs to bears), provided in-depth analysis of important conservation issues, taken readers into the field with research scientists, shared images and stories from leading wildlife photographers, and much more. There is also a Nature Kids section in every issue. The feature articles are written by field biologists, university researchers, and expert naturalists keen to share their knowledge and their passion for nature. Growth in readership has been steady over the past year, and is now over 1,400 readers per issue. We have also begun selling the magazine, on a cost-recovery basis, at two wild-bird supply stores in Edmonton. If this works well we will expand to other cities in Alberta.









Nature Alberta Magazine online

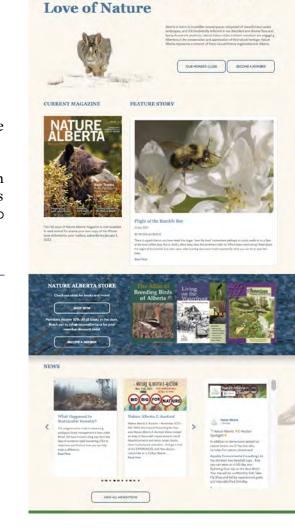


We also reach the public through several social media platforms and an electronic newsletter. We use these platforms for shorter, more frequent posts on nature-related events and presentations hosted by Nature Alberta, our member clubs, and other nature organizations. This is also where we post news about pressing conservation issues, including calls for public action. Over the past year, our followers on Facebook have increased from 8,072 to 9,095. In the same period, our E-news subscriptions have increased by over 50%, from 1,565 to 2,385.

The final pillar of our outreach program is our website, which was completely rebuilt in the fall of 2020. The new website is organized around three main themes: Learn About Nature, Experience Nature, and Protect Nature. Much of the content is derived from the magazine and our social media posts, so repeat visitors will always find something new. The site also provides useful guidance on kid-friendly nature activities, experiencing nature, protecting urban nature, citizen science, local nature clubs, and much more. Since the new website was launched last fall, monthly visits have more than doubled to over 7,300 per month.

Magazine content contributors in 2021

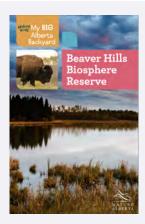
Arya Horon Karen Fahrlander Matt Wallace **Bradley Peter** Kate Corrigan Myrna Pearman Cheryl Tebby Kristin Bianchini Nicholas Boyce Colleen St. Clair Linda Kershaw Richard Hedley Erica To Liz Watts Ryan Wilkes Lorna Allen Glynnis Hood Sarah Hatt **Guy Swinnerton** Lorne Fitch Sarah Milligan Jocelyn Hudon Timothy Shapka Lu Carbyn John Acorn Margot Hervieux Tony Leprieur



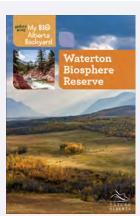
A Community Connected by a



Winter 2020 through spring 2021, Nature Alberta's Nature Kids program adapted to pandemic conditions by updating and producing engaging virtual program materials. Many of these digital publications are available for young families to discover on our website including Nature Kids Do-It-Yourself Activities, Nature Kids Fun Facts, and three downloadable publications:



Beaver Hills
Biosphere Reserve
Guidebook



Waterton
Biosphere Reserve
Guidebook

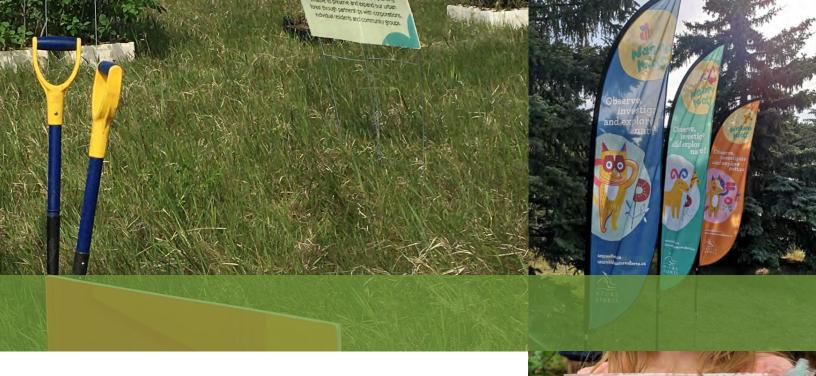


Nature Heroes
with tracking sheet and
completion certificate



This event was a wonderful way for my family to celebrate World Environment Day, since the trees we planted will improve wildlife habitat and capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It was lovely to spend the afternoon learning a new skill and enjoying the natural environment with kindred spirits. One highlight was spotting a pair of threatened bobolinks as we walked through the fields at the end of the day. We'll certainly be back to this spot to watch "our" saplings grow and look for more birds!

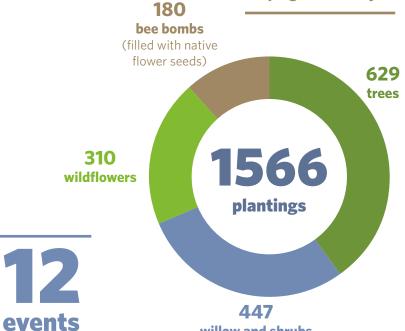
— Jennifer Froese, Nature Alberta Volunteer at Golden Ranches in the Beaver Hills Biosphere Reserve



Despite evolving health restrictions, Nature Alberta led a variety of successful in-person programs in the spring and summer of 2021. Events included three guided nature walks, two tree planting events, five Family Nature Nights, and two days of migratory bird celebrations.

859 adults, children, and volunteers engaged in nature exploration and conservation activities

community organizations involved to support program delivery



willow and shrubs



ABIGAIL STOSKY



When asked what their absolute favourite part of the Family Nature Night event, anonymous participants responded:

- My favourite bit was how the kids engaged, they just loved it! They loved the lepidopterist display, the nature walk finding cool bugs, and finding and catching their own bugs. They went from being scared of spiders and wasps to being really interested in them. Thank you to all of the volunteers who took part!
- Seeing two polyphemus caterpillars on our nautre walk and then having the lep society having one in a living coccon (as well as a sample of eggs and the adult moth) was amazingly cool! All of the station and nature walk leads were so enthusiastic and engaged with the youth it was wonderful! Best night yet!

Nature Kids empowered schools, clubs, and camps to connect with nature through a variety of initiatives.

- Project FeederWatch engaged four schools to mentor students to observe and record birds, weekly.
- Two nature themed day camps in the Town of Barrhead received Junior Birding Journals and child binoculars to inspire their 40 young birders.
- Nature Alberta engaged 68 at-risk youth at 5 Edmonton-based Boys' and Girls' Clubs through
 the Celebrating Nature Initiative. Celebrating Nature Kits were provided to each participating
 club with a pair of unlimited warranty binoculars, bee house, native flower seeds, bird feeders,
 nature themed-games, books, and identification guides. Club participants adopted songbird
 nests at the Ellis Bird Farm Ltd. and had a virtual meet and greet with WILDNorth's albino
 squirrel named Yarrow.

What a wonderful program it was and so easy to incorporate into our already planned summer activities, but it gave us more direction. For example, we already have a nature week so we were able to use a lot of the materials provided through the Nature Kits to make the week more engaging. Especially on our Nature Walks we were able to use the notebooks for the kids to jot down what they saw and what interested them so that they can do further research. Absolutely love it, the families loved the updates on the bird nest we adopted, and I hope we can do this again in the future.

Boys' & Girls' Club program coordinator



We would like to thank all the organizations who collaborated with us to deliver our Nature Kids programming:

Alberta Amphibians and Reptile Conservancy

Alberta Biodiversity **Monitoring Institute**

Alberta Environment and Parks - Water Projects Management

Alberta Lake Management Society

Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild

Alberta Science Network

Backyard Birds Nature Shop

Big Lake Environment **Support Society**

Boys' & Girls' Clubs of Edmonton

Cold Lake Fish Hatchery

Edmonton and Area Land

Trust

Edmonton Native Plant

Society

Edmonton Nature Club

Ellis Bird Farm Ltd.

Junior Forest Wardens

Kerry Wood Nature Centre

Nature Canada

Nature Central

Nature Conservancy of

Canada

North Saskatchewan

Watershed Alliance

Park Plaza Daycare Center

Red Deer River Naturalists

Root for Trees

Strathcona Wilderness

Centre

Town of Barrhead

Tree Time

University of Alberta Experts

Waterton Biosphere Reserve

Association

Wildbird General Store

WildNorth





Statement of financial position As at March 31, 2021

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| ASSETS | | |
| CURRENT | | |
| Cash and short-term investments | \$238,191 | \$290,107 |
| Accounts receivable | 2,740 | 7,373 |
| Inventory | 20,563 | 20,563 |
| | 261,494 | 318,043 |
| EQUIPMENT | 3,100 | 4,113 |
| | 264,594 | 322,156 |
| | | |
| LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | | |
| CURRENT | | |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 13,820 | 27,146 |
| Deferred contributions (Note 5) | 50,122 | 159,330 |
| | 63,942 | 186,476 |
| NET ASSETS | | |
| Invested in equipment | 3,100 | 4,113 |
| Unrestricted | 197,552 | 131,567 |
| | 200,652 | 135,680 |
| | | |
| | \$264,594 | \$322,156 |

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Statement of changes in net assets

Year ended March 31, 2021

| | Invested in equipment | Unrestricted | 2021 | 2020 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| | equipment | Omestricted | \$ | \$ |
| NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR | \$4,113 | \$131,567 | \$135,680 | \$205,304 |
| Revenue over (under) expenses | -1,013 | 65,985 | 64,972 | -69,624 |
| NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR | \$3,100 | \$197,552 | \$200,652 | \$135,680 |

Statement of operations

Year ended March 31. 2021

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| REVENUE | | |
| Grants (Note 6) | \$167,834 | \$184,049 |
| Casino fundraising proceeds | 44,690 | 57,201 |
| Donations | 24,329 | 17,168 |
| Memberships | 20,173 | 18,334 |
| Bookstore | 10,250 | 5,295 |
| Other | 8,070 | 14,527 |
| Interest income | 86 | 2,555 |
| | 275,432 | 299,129 |
| | | |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Program expenses and contract services | 93,895 | 160,025 |
| Staff wages | 54,658 | 74,619 |
| Office | 24,211 | 57,445 |
| Insurance | 12,995 | 11,840 |
| Bookkeeping and financial audit | 10,236 | 8,525 |
| Advertising and promotion | 7,320 | 23,688 |
| Travel | 3,606 | 16,232 |
| Interest and bank charges | 1,086 | 1,138 |
| Amortization | 1,013 | 1,291 |
| Bad debts | 857 | 368 |
| Telephone and utilities | 583 | 2,782 |
| Donation to Edmonton Community Foundation | 0 | 10,800 |
| | 210,460 | 368,753 |
| REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES | \$64,972 | -\$69,624 |

