

# Annual Report

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**Westerner Park**



# 2021

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## **President & CEO's Statement**

The events industry is tumultuous at the best of times, but it's fair to say that 2021 - 2022 has been especially so for Westerner Park. Though we were full of hope of the pandemic ending in 2021, hindsight tells us that it was a major factor impacting many events this past year. Just about every possibility happened, from cancelling a number of events before they got off the ground, to stopping them right in the middle. Our team of Westerners persevered though, and did everything possible to be there for our community in as safe a way as possible. We are proud of how our volunteers and staff showed the resiliency and adaptability to pivot on several occasions this year. We would also like to acknowledge the hundreds of event partners that Westerner Park works with and supports throughout every year.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, there still were many great reasons to gather and celebrate this year. The summer kicked off with the Wagons at Westerner Pony Chuckwagon races followed by full versions of both the Canadian Finals Rodeo and Agri-Trade. Although the long-anticipated return of the IIHF World Junior Hockey Championships to Red Deer were unfortunately cancelled, it was a banner year for the Red Deer Rebels, which led the way in having fans return to the Peavey Mart Centrum.

The cycle of planning an event can extend anywhere from twelve to twenty-four months and Westerner Park is setting resource and income expectations that reflect this, as the events industry bounces back on its feet. Although our annual report tends to be a record that focuses on reflecting on the past, we instead find our organization more focused on moving forward.

## In the coming year our priorities will focus on:

**STABILIZATION** - Our operations will be stabilized to a point where we are positioned well for sustainable growth.

**POSITIVE BRAND POSITION** - Westerner Park will be a recognized asset to its clients, guests, and the central Alberta community at large. Our stakeholders will recognize the value in utilizing, supporting and working with Westerner Park

**PREMIER EXPERIENCES** - Through our industry leading facilities and premier event management, we will be known for creating exceptional experiences for our clients, guests, volunteers, and staff.

**GOVERNANCE & STEWARDSHIP** - As the Board of Directors of a Registered Charity and Non-Profit Agricultural Society, we will steward the organization with governance practices that are current and industry-leading.

There have been several key developments for Westerner Park that have come to fruition this year that will serve us well as we begin to grow again:

### **City of Red Deer Relationship Framework Agreement**

As our landowner and our major funding party, we have established a Relationship Framework Agreement that serves the purpose to consolidate the numerous agreements that have existed over time between Westerner Park and the City of Red Deer. More importantly however, this agreement gives the City a strong connection and insight into the operations and governance of Westerner Park, while allowing us to maintain our independence as a Non-Profit and Agricultural Society with Charitable Status.

### **Facility Assessment and Asset Management Plan**

As part of our City of Red Deer relationship, Stantec Engineering has been commissioned to complete a comprehensive facility assessment and asset management plan for Westerner Park. Fundamental to our operations are the health and quality of our significant amount of assets. This consultation will serve to provide Westerner Park with an informed and future-focused view of what investment is required and what plans should be established so that we ensure our long-term sustainability and success.

## Red Deer City Soccer Association

Earlier this year, we were pleased to announce our agreement to host the Red Deer City Soccer Association (RDCSA) for the next 10 years. Not only does this give the RDCSA a secure home with the flexibility to manage its programs as they desire, it also puts our new Exhibition Hall to great use with a high utilization rate throughout the year.



## Peavey Mart Centrium

This year marks the first of five years with the newly established partnership between Peavey Industries and Westerner Park. We are so proud to have partnered with such a strong and notable business that puts Red Deer on the map with its success across North America. The alignment between our two organizations is strong and we are keen to see a long-standing relationship with Peavey Industries and their suite of retail brands.

## Deloitte Sustainability Audit

The Deloitte Sustainability Audit Westerner Park Report outlined recommendations for Westerner Park to address, including strategic alternatives, revenue & profitability, sales & marketing, cost management, facilities management, financial management, governance, strategy, performance management, community impact, people & culture, and COVID-19. When this report was completed, the consultants made the statement that if these items are addressed, this is when Westerner Park will be in a position where it is being well managed and stabilized. We are proud to say that we are well on our way to addressing each recommendation in this extensive report.

These and the other following notable developments from this year will certainly have a positive impact on our future. Our hope is you'll share with us in our sense of optimism and motivation towards Westerner Park returning as a key source of pride for our community.

**Thank you!**

**Deb Beck**  
*President & Board Chair*

**Mike Olesen**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



# Westerner Foundation & Capital Campaign

The Westerner Foundation was established in January 2021 by local Community Leaders and members of the Westerner Park Board of Directors with the objective of promoting, fundraising, and investing in initiatives that will support the future sustainability of Westerner Park. This will help to ensure that Westerner Park will continue to serve the public by enhancing the quality of life for Central Albertans, advancing the agriculture industry, and generating economic benefit for our community.

The members of the Foundation are the stewards of the donations and funds raised and will direct their use to specifically support the defined Initiatives and Key Pillars, including a Capital Program, Innovation &

Events, Education & Community Engagement, and Other Programs or Services to support Westerner Park’s mission to provide exceptional guest experiences through premier facilities and service.

Born from a sense of community, the Westerner Foundation will help assure the sustainability of Westerner Park. For 130 years, Westerner Park has been Central Alberta’s destination for celebration - blending tradition with vision, rural with urban, and agriculture with sport and entertainment. Thank you to the “can-do” spirit of the donors of this campaign, we look forward with a sense of hope and excitement for generations to come.



Fundraising efforts to support the Capital Campaign pillar were led by a volunteer group of community leaders, who proudly announced that over \$7.6 million was raised through this initiative, which will enable major maintenance and future improvements at Westerner Park. To thank the donors for their incredible support, a luncheon was held December 9, 2021.

A commemorative print recognizing the donors and celebrating the achievement of the 2021 Capital Campaign will be featured in the lobby of the Peavey Mart Centrium.



# Cowboy Kicks

The third time was the charm for the inaugural Cowboy Kicks event, which was rescheduled three times to be successfully held March 18, 2022. The patience of the sponsors and fans was rewarded with an outstanding event, featuring special guest Brett Kissel and opening act Trevor Panczak. Guests enjoyed a hearty western meal and exciting live auction featuring one-of-a-kind experiences and 4-foot high fibreglass cowboy boots hand-painted by Albertan artists, as well as 2-foot high, hand-painted fibreglass boots. Thanks to the generous support of attendees, over \$375,000 was raised for the Westerner Foundation and the Canadian Pro Rodeo Sport Medicine Team.



# Event Highlights

## July - Wagons at Westerner

While Westerner Park was not able to host the full Westerner Days experience, in true Albertan fashion, we adapted to put on one of the key annual experiences, the North American Pony Chuckwagon Championships. Hosted Friday, July 23 through Sunday, July 25, and dubbed Wagons at Westerner, this marked Westerner Park's return to live events. Central Alberta came together to cheer on drivers from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba as they raced for the championship title in both Chariots and Wagons, while also enjoying a free cabaret with live music each night provided by local Alberta talent. With over 3,500 guests, beautiful weather and strong ticket and beverage sales, Wagons at Westerner exceeded expectations. We were proud to help re-engage the Central Alberta community with agricultural events.

## September - Red Deer Rebels

The Red Deer Rebels 2020/21 season saw an unprecedented 24-game regular season schedule from February through March, 2021 in response to COVID restrictions. In order to maintain their team cohort, the Peavey Mart Centrium suites became the full-time accommodations for the players and staff during this time, as no fans were able to enjoy the games.

The 2021/22 season saw a return to a full 68-game schedule with fans, though against Eastern Conference teams only, and with certain restrictions in place at times, and with games rescheduled as needed, in response to AHS guidelines and COVID protocols. As of March 1, the removal of restrictions allowed for full fan participation, with the Rebels finishing third in the Eastern Conference and advancing to playoffs. It was a highlight of the year to see the high fan attendance and playoff atmosphere, and Westerner Park looks forward to the 2022/23 Rebels season.

## October - Westerner Dairy Showcase

Attracting exhibitors from across the western provinces, and with over 150 cattle shown, the Westerner Dairy Showcase returned October 14 - 16 with the Youth Show, the Jersey Show, the Holstein Show, and trade show. An additional highlight this year was the \$7,800 raised through a live auction for The Mustard Seed Red Deer School Lunch Program, thanks to the generosity of Benchmark Commodities Ltd., Vold, Jones & Vold Auction Co. Ltd., Chubanna Holsteins, and Lucky Hill Dairy Ltd. It was a great cause and another great year!







### November - Canadian Finals Rodeo

After a 24-month absence, the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) and Westerner Park were proud to host the 47th Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR). ATB Financial assumed the title sponsor role, with many previous and new sponsors also joining in for the 6 performances of the excellence and quality of experience that competitors and fans have come to expect. Featuring all the major rodeo events, plus Breakaway Roping at select performances for the first time ever, CFR brought in over 25,000 to the rodeo itself, with thousands more taking in the free on site activities, including the Buckle Presentations, the official CFR Trade Show, and nightly Cabaret with live music. Congratulations to the 2021 Canadian Champions.

### November - Agri-Trade

Westerner Park and the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce are proud hosts of one of Canada's premier indoor/outdoor agricultural events, the Agri-Trade Equipment Expo. Held annually since 1984, Agri-Trade displays the latest equipment, showcases the most innovative technology, and offers opportunities to help farmers prepare for the upcoming



planting and growing season. Attendees from across western Canada, as well as international visitors from several countries, took in over 475 exhibits. In addition to \$250M in direct equipment sales, the event brings a significant amount of tourism spending to the Central Alberta Region and the City of Red Deer.

# Event Highlights

## December - 2022 IIHF World Junior Championship

Red Deer was proud to be named co-host of the IIHF World Junior Hockey Championships with Edmonton. Hockey fans were able to take in two of the pre-competition games and enjoy the Ice Barn fan festival, though both the event and the rivalry series were unfortunately cancelled on December 28 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Red Deer looks forward to hosting Hockey Canada events going forward, including the Hlinka Gretzky Cup July 31 - August 6, 2022 in partnership with the Red Deer Rebels.

## Additional events with long-term partners here at Westerner Park in 2021

**Festival of Trees** was hosted over two weekends in November, raising funds for the Red Deer Regional Hospital's Operating Room.

March 4 - 6, the **Red Deer Home Show**, featuring new home builders, renovators, design experts, and more.

We were also proud for the Exhibition Hall to be home to the first **Red Deer International Powwow**, held October 22 - 24.

Thank you to the many event providers who trust Westerner Park as their host venue.



Tickets Alberta was the proud ticket provider to the Blackfalds Bulldogs Junior A Hockey Club for their inaugural season at the Eagle Builders Centre.

Tickets Alberta partnered with the Daines Ranch Pro Rodeo for the first time as the ticket provider for their rodeo September 2 - 4, 2021, and are looking forward to an ongoing partnership.



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# Community

As a not-for-profit and agricultural society, Westerner Park knows the importance and value of community support, and pays it forward by providing gift-in-kind venue rental to a number of community events and other not-for-profit organizations too.

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## Alberta Health Services Testing & Vaccination Centre

Westerner Park continued as the location of the Alberta Health Service's COVID-19 testing and vaccination centres, where thousands of individuals received their vaccines. As access to vaccination doses increased for pharmacies, the centre downsized and moved off site in September, 2021.

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### Food Truck Drive & Dash

To provide a safe opportunity for people to enjoy their favourite food trucks and support these local businesses, Westerner Park's northwest parking lot was home to a drive-thru experience featuring local food trucks on Fridays from May through August.

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### Red Deer's Annual Shelter Ribfest

Red Deer's Annual Shelter Ribfest was hosted August 27 - 29 in the northwest parking lot, raising funds in support of the Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter.

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### City of Red Deer 2021 Municipal Election in October

The Harvest Centre and Exhibition Hall were host to Municipal Elections for the City of Red Deer, as well as trustee elections for the Red Deer Public School District and the Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division in October 2022.

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## 8 Days in November

As the official kick-off to the Canadian Finals Rodeo and Agri-Trade, Westerner Park participated in the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce event, 8 Days in November. Held in the "District 50 Alley" in downtown Red Deer, participants enjoyed food, beverages, and music to lead the community engagement of these two large central Alberta events.

# Board of Directors



(left to right) Mike Olesen, Gil Vallee, Al Lucas, Dave Harvey, Garrett Cupples, Tanya Handley, Rick Polutnik, Tyler Nightingale, Deb Beck, Scott Wzykoski, Christine Moore, Frank Wong, Dianne Harder, Tara Lodewyk.

Note: The names listed below are the current Board of Directors, which may differ from those in the photograph.

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## **Deb Beck**

*President*

## **Tyler Nightingale**

*Vice President*

## **Janice Wing**

*Past President*

## **Garrett Cupples**

*Elected Director*

## **Dianne Harder**

*Elected Director*

## **Dave Harvey**

*Elected Director*

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## **Al Lucas**

*Elected Director*

## **Rick Polutnik**

*Elected Director*

## **Gil Vallee**

*Elected Director*

## **Marty Vellner**

*Elected Director*

## **Scott Wzykoski**

*Elected Director*

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## **Vesna Higham**

*Appointed Director,  
City of Red Deer*

## **Lawrence Lee**

*Appointed Director,  
City of Red Deer*

## **Christine Moore**

*Appointed Director,  
Red Deer County*

## **Mike Olesen**

*Chief Executive Officer*

## **Tara Lodewyk**

*Acting City Manager & Advisor,  
Appointed by The City of  
Red Deer*

# Staff & Volunteer Long Service

The success of Westerner Park is due in large part to the over 800 volunteers who contribute their time and expertise. In 2021 alone, these committed individuals recorded over 6,276 volunteer hours.

**Our Volunteers are Committed | Invested | Family. They are Westerners!**



(left to right) Yvonne Roberts, Graham Heron, Rod Kennedy, Al Watson, Ed Dickin, Jane Compton, Jake Zondag, Arlene Bain, Guy Barnabe at the 2022 Volunteer Appreciation Banquet

## 25+ Year Life Volunteer Awards

Our long service volunteers have provided knowledge and commitment to Westerner Park on a continual basis for over 25 years. Thank you for your dedication to making Westerner Park Central Alberta’s Destination for Celebration!

- Arlene Bain
- Guy Barnabe
- Arnold Brauner
- Jane Compton
- Ed Dickin
- Graham Heron
- Lorraine Hough
- Rod Kennedy
- Yvonne Roberts
- Al Watson
- Jake Zondag

## Staff Long Service Awards

Congratulations to Hubert Knox for 30 years here at Westerner Park.

Thank you for all of your hard work over the years!



# Celebrating Our Volunteers

Recently established in the spring of 2021, our Volunteer Program advisors provide valuable input into the Westerner Park volunteer program and act as our ambassadors in the community. Our thanks to Breanna Beck and Gerry Johnston.



## Culture Leadership Award

Engaging with guests, fellow volunteers and staff with positivity and empathy. Demonstrating the spirit of a true Westerner, **Mark Stoller**



## The Donald Family Emerging Leadership Award

Recognizing volunteers between the ages of 15-25, this award is named after the Donald Family, who have dedicated a lifetime of volunteer service to Westerner Park and inspired generations of youth to aim high and contribute to their community. Showing their skill development for coachability, leadership, self-awareness, and taking the initiative in problem-solving, congratulations to **Luca Ferrara**.



## Agriculture Leadership Award

As an agricultural society, Westerner Park is proud to recognize the volunteers who are involved in agricultural events and the western community. Our thanks and recognition to **Dianne Harder**, who has contributed her Agricultural knowledge and passion as a Board member and event volunteer in support of Westerner Park.



### Outstanding Achievement Award

These individuals or groups help Westerner Park to move our organizational goals forward, provide operational support at events, and uphold our Core Values of being Community & Westerner Team Focused, Welcoming, Agriculturally-Rooted, Deliberate Stewards and Socially Responsible

**The Cowboy Kicks Committee:** Kathy Lacey, Lyn Radford, Barb McKee, Christina Vertichio, Joan Donald, Adele Poratto, Wendy Barnes, Tracy Kinsella, Diane (Finstad) Harder, Kathy Saunders, Lynn Van Laar, Deb Coleman, and Margaret Towers.

### Multi-Generational Commitment

This award acknowledges the deep respect Westerner Park has for family member contributions of at least two generations, as they make a notable impact and support the direction and growth of Westerner Park’s vision. Congratulations to **George & Pat Young, Deb Beck, and Breanna Beck.**



### Canadian Association of Fairs and Expositions (CAFÉ) Distinguished Service Award

In conjunction with the Canadian Association of Fairs and Expositions, Westerner Park presents the Distinguished Service Award, recognizing individuals for outstanding volunteer service to the Association for ten or more years, and for the service of Past Presidents.

2021 award winners are: **Graham Heron and Damian Zapisocky.**



# Our Valued Partners

## Major Funding Party



## Corporate Sponsors



## Government

