



2022 WESTERNER PARK
Annual Report



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2022 - 2023 seemed almost anti-climactic in the aftermath of the preceding years of Covid laced chaos. To that, we Westerners all take a deep breath and say, Thank You. It is with a deep sense of gratitude that we thank our board, staff, shareholders, volunteers, partners, clients, and guests for supporting this organization and assisting us as we move forward in a stronger more focused manner.

Over the past year, our organization established key priorities that guided our actions. These priorities included stabilization, enhancing our brand reputation, delivering exceptional experiences, and ensuring effective governance & stewardship. They served as a compass, propelling us forward as we capitalized on the progress and expansion achieved during the restructuring phase amid the challenges posed by the Covid era.

Stabilization - Our refined agreement with the City of Red Deer positions us for success in 2023-24. Collaborating closely with them, we have achieved confidence in its effectiveness. It ensures accountability, reporting, and oversight to our funding partner.

Exceptional Experiences - We're delighted to witness a positive trend of events and bookings returning to Westerner Park and continue to strive for pre-Covid attendance. Additionally, our volunteer program continues to expand, offering meaningful experiences to the community members.

Positive Brand Reputation - We are actively improving Westerner Park's brand reputation through exceptional experiences and building trust among stakeholders in Central Alberta.

Governance & Stewardship - This past year, the board of directors embraced policy governance through intensive training and policy revisions, ensuring transparency, sustainability, and stewardship. This guarantees continuity as board members complete their terms.

In closing, we bid farewell to our CEO, Mike Olesen, who, despite his brief tenure at Westerner Park, has made a profound and enduring impact. His restructuring, thorough analysis of core business units, and efforts to rebuild crucial relationships will leave a legacy of value for years to come.

As we venture into the upcoming 2023 - 24 period, our organization is filled with optimism and excitement. The groundwork has been laid. We are confident that our dedication, resilience, and commitment to excellence will drive us forward and bring about a bright and prosperous future for our organization.



Deb Beck

DEB BECK

In the words of Sydney J Harris:

"Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time; what we really want is for things to remain the same but get better."

CEO'S REPORT

In our successful first year post-pandemic, we faced enduring challenges in managing major events at Westerner Park and for our clients. Despite shifts in consumer behaviors, procurement delays, and rising costs, our performance steadily improved with patience and perseverance. We ended the year on a strong note, surpassing our key metrics of venue utilization and event revenues. These accomplishments are crucial for our ongoing recovery and stability from past financial hurdles.

As we look ahead, there are a few key initiatives and changes that will continue to contribute to Westerner Park's position as a stable and well run organization. These are:

City of Red Deer Relationship Framework

& Loan Changes - Following our annual review of the Relationship Framework Agreement, Red Deer City Council reaffirmed its commitment to Westerner Park's recovery by making amendments to our loan agreement. This revision guarantees that our loan payment for the latest fiscal year-end will not exceed the available cash position. This change plays a crucial role in our stabilization and recovery efforts by granting our operations the necessary flexibility and time to recuperate, while maintaining our commitment to debt repayment.

Asset Management Plan & Westerner Park

Master Plan - We've assessed all Westerner Park assets in collaboration with the City of Red Deer, producing a report that outlines a 25-30-year outlook on optimizing asset lifespan and necessary investments. This valuable tool will inform future decisions. The next step is developing a "Master Plan" to envision the future of our grounds and assets, ensuring long-term service to our community and event clients. This plan will be integrated into the overall Asset Management Assessment, culminating in a final plan expected to be completed in late Q2 or early Q3 of Westerner Park's next fiscal year.



For the upcoming fiscal year, and since late 2019, it will be the first time that our operations won't depend on grant support for survival. While this signifies positive progress, we must maintain our momentum of increased utilization to achieve full recovery and independence from City grant support.

On a personal note, this is my last report as CEO of Westerner Park. I informed the Board of my resignation back in November 2022 and they have been working closely with me on this transition. Although a significant change, I am confident that the organization is now ready for its next leader to take it to a place of sustained growth.

It has been an honor serving as Westerner Park's CEO for the past four years. Despite the challenges we faced, I am confident that we have grown and learned from them, setting the stage for an exciting future. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Board, staff, and volunteers who have made my experience at Westerner Park truly unforgettable.

MIKE OLESEN



THE RETURN OF WESTERNER DAYS

Finally! 2022 saw the return of our marquee event, the Westerner Days Fair & Exposition. The first post-pandemic fair was a resounding success, with ideal weather and tens of thousands of Central Albertans joining friends and family at Central Alberta's largest summer celebration. Our dedicated volunteers and staff seamlessly delivered the positive experience our guests have come to expect. Alongside the classic Midway, Grub-Hub, Pony Chuckwagons, and 19th Street Market, we also delighted attendees with three Peavey Mart Centrium concerts.

In 2023, we look to build off this momentum and reimagine Westerner Days, incorporating new experiences that increase value and memories for those that attend. We are confident that this goal will be achieved, and people's excitement for our event will shine brighter than ever.

HORSE EXPO

The Horse Expo hosted at Westerner Park is a premier equine event, proudly holding the title of Canada's largest equine trade show. With over 200 exhibitors specializing in various aspects of the equine industry, the Expo serves as a comprehensive hub for horse enthusiasts.

One of the highlights of the event is the thrilling weekend-long training competition, where renowned horse trainers from across North America come together to showcase their skills. These skilled trainers work closely with a young colt, captivating the audience with their training techniques and strategies.

The Expo fills four pavilions at Westerner Park, creating a vibrant marketplace for vendors and offering continuous equine demonstrations in our Ag centres for three full days. It serves as a platform for networking, education, and the exchange of knowledge among equine professionals and enthusiasts.

Our vision is to establish the Horse Expo as an integral part of the equine community in Western Canada for many years to come. By fostering a rich and immersive experience, we aim to strengthen the equine industry and celebrate the remarkable bond between humans and horses.



RED DEER REBELS

Fans of the Red Deer Rebels were treated to another season that saw the game night experience and the team's success on an upward trajectory. It was obvious that the Peavey Mart Centrium was host to more families on game nights than in years past, and the team played like there was renewed excitement in the building. With the return of key overage players Ben King, Jace Isley and Christoffer Sedoff, the team also brought in a duo of rookie goaltenders Rhett Stoesser and Kyle Kelsey. The back end rounded out to become one of the best in the league, and the forward core proved to be deep and fast.

This season was the first season in a while where we were not victims of restrictions, and it was obvious that the hockey fans of Central Alberta were ready to come and join in on the fun. Rebels' President and General Manager, Brent Sutter commented that "we haven't seen that kind of atmosphere in the building since the early 2000's."

The team rallied from some key injuries over the course of the season and enjoyed another successful run, coming up just short of advancing to the third round of the play offs. Despite the outcome, the coaching staff and the players are optimistic about the upcoming season. A young core of returning players including Kalan Lind, Kai Uchacz, Matteo Fabrizi and Hunter Mayo who are receiving interest by NHL teams for the upcoming draft, should make for yet another season that gives Central Alberta a reason to cheer.

CANADIAN FINALS RODEO

The 48th Canadian Rodeo Finals took place from November 2nd to 6th, delivering an exhilarating experience for attendees. Despite facing challenges, such as cold weather and road closures, we witnessed an increase in ticket revenue compared to the previous year. To enhance the event, we introduced more “breaks” featuring an in-crowd host who conducted giveaways and interviews. This not only fulfilled our sponsor obligations but also provided opportunities for new activations and allowed guests to leave their seats quickly without missing any rodeo action.

To expedite service and improve guest experience, we implemented beer hawkers throughout the concourse and timed event end, resulting in faster-moving lines. This successful initiative will continue to expand in the future.

One exciting addition was the revival of the intermission show. In 2018 and 2019, the break was unproduced, and in 2021, due to COVID concerns, there was no break. However, this year, we elevated the production value and showcased a show during five of the performances. The feedback from guests was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting their enjoyment of the enhanced entertainment.

Overall, the 48th Canadian Rodeo Finals captivated the crowd, generated increased ticket revenue, implemented effective crowd engagement strategies, and successfully brought back the beloved intermission show. We are proud of these accomplishments and look forward to building upon them in the future.





AGRI-TRADE

The Partnership of Agri-Trade began in 1984 and has continued to this day and is a joint venture between Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce and Westerner Park. Agri-Trade is one of the best farm equipment shows to do business in North America. It is one of the shows in Canada that is supported by the major equipment retailers as a “National Stand.”

Agri-Trade Equipment Expo attracts annually over 30,000 qualified agriculture buyers and over 475 equipment manufacturers and agricultural services to Red Deer. Agri-Trade generates an estimated \$300,000,000 of economic impact annually in equipment sales and tourism spending for vendors in the Central Alberta region.



VOLUNTEER DRIVE

Pre-Covid, Volunteer Canada proposed a fun drive-thru event to appreciate volunteers. In 2022, Westerner Park embraced the idea for National Volunteer Week by organizing entertainment, distributing swag, and offering snacks to participants. We hosted a single drive-thru session from 10 am to noon, and approximately 25 cars participated. While it was a success, we aimed to expand its reach and impact.

For 2023 National Volunteer Week, Westerner Park reached out to nearby non-profit organizations and businesses, inviting them to participate in our volunteer drive-thru appreciation event. Several organizations, including the Central Alberta Humane Society, Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Health Services, and CARE for newcomers, expressed interest.

Early morning, all participants gathered with their banners, tents, noise makers, to welcome our volunteers. Over 60 cars came through the drive-thru. It was a joyous experience for everyone involved! Each person who drove through received a cookie, coffee/tea, a heartfelt thank you card, and some groups even had swag to give out. City of Red Deer Mayor, Ken Johnson made an appearance, expressing gratitude to the volunteers and distributing goodies. It was an opportunity to meet new volunteers, reunite with familiar faces, and showcase the unity of our community.

WESTERNER FOUNDATION 2022 - 2023 INVESTMENTS

The four key pillars of the Westerner Foundation are to:

- Innovation & Events - In support of Westerner Park, facilitate the creation and enhancement of events which advances the agricultural industry through innovation and education or generates economic benefits to the Central Alberta community.
- Capital Programs - Invest in activities and projects to improve and ensure the sustainability of the Westerner Park event centre in order to ensure other charities, non-profits and groups have opportunities to gather and promote their own causes.
- Education & Community Engagement - Invest in education and training programs which increase the leadership capacity of the Westerners who serve the Central Alberta community.
- Support other programs and or services that support Westerner Park's mission.

In 2022, the Foundation focused on the delivery of our mission 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. Thanks to the successful Capital Campaign donor program and first Cowboy Kicks event, the Westerner Foundation supported 15 capital projects at Westerner Park for a total investment of over \$700,000. The investments made by the Foundation were much needed and high priority items and upgrades for Westerner Park.

From purchasing a new ice cream machine and pizza oven to meet event-goer demand, renovating several concessions, upgrading the Peavey Mart Centrium building management system and purchasing additional technological equipment, these investments will enhance the event experience for all attendees which helps to ensure the economic viability of Westerner Park.





(Left to Right) Garrett Cupples, Tyler Nightingale, David Harvey, Al Lucas, Lawrence Lee, Christine Moore, Deb Beck, Tara Lodewyk, Mike Olesen, Darcy Mykytyshyn, Gil Vallee. Please note: The names listed below are the current Board of Directors, which may differ from those in the photograph.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elected

Deb Beck, *President*

Tyler Nightingale, *Vice President*

Janice Wing, *Past President*

Garrett Cupples

Dave Harvey

Al Lucas

Richard Lorenz

Gil Vallee

Marty Vellner

Appointed

Vesna Higham, *City of Red Deer*

Lawrence Lee, *City of Red Deer*

Brent Ramsay, *Red Deer County*

Ex Officio

Mike Olesen, *Chief Executive Officer*

Tara Lodewyk, *City Manager and Advisor*
Appointed by City of Red Deer



STAFF LONG SERVICE

At Westerner Park, we are proud to recognize and celebrate the dedication and commitment of our staff who have been with us for a significant period of time. Our team members are the backbone of our organization, and their hard work and loyalty have contributed significantly to our success over the years. In 2022 we celebrated:

DIONE GLENDINNING - 5 YEARS
General Service Employee - Grounds

RODNEY HERGOTT - 30 YEARS
Sports and Entertainment Manager



CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

The success of Westerner Park is due in large part to the over 800 volunteers who contribute their time and expertise. In 2022 alone, these committed supporters recorded over 7100 volunteer hours.

Our volunteers are committed | Invested | Family. They are Westerners!

Culture Leadership Award - Dave Harvey, Board of Directors

Emerging Leadership Award – Emmalee Cooper, Rebels game volunteer

Agriculture Leadership Award – Jillian Hastie, Westerner Dairy Showcase Committee

Outstanding Achievement Award – Float Committee – Al Watson, Claudio Bustamante, Glen Tisdale, Mark Stoller, Tom Chapman, Gerald Hildebrand, Dave Savage & Guy Barnabe.

Our Volunteer Program Advisors provide valuable input into the Westerner Park volunteer program and act as our ambassador in the community. Our thanks to Breanna Beck and Gerry Johnston.



OUR VALUED PARTNERS

MAJOR FUNDING PARTY



GOVERNMENT



CORPORATE SPONSORS



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