



Great Divide Trail Association

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/23



www.greatdividetrail.com



greatdividetrail@gmail.com



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Indigenous communities have made the Rocky Mountains their ancestral home for countless millennia, and the Great Divide bears witness to an extensive tapestry of their rich history.

We honor and acknowledge that the GDT passes through traditional Indigenous territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Stoney (İyăĥé) Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Cree, Secwepemc, Lheidli T'enneh, Ktunaxa, Sinixt and Métis. The Great Divide Trail Association would like to invite you to advocate for what you love and to preserve nature for future generations to enjoy while educating yourselves and others on Indigenous history and perspectives.

MEET OUR TEAM



Doug Borthwick

Director: Board President



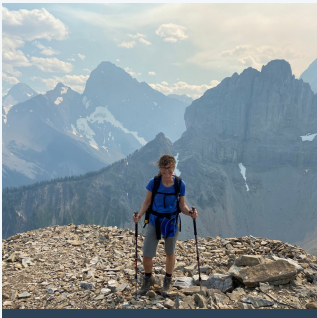
Ben Millen

Director: Vice-President
TPA Chair



Jeff Grutz

Director: Chair



Donna Rutherford

Director: Secretary



Mandi Parkins

Director: Vice-Chair



Glenn Mason

Director



Lisa Belanger

Director



Meaghan Underhill

Director



Kristine O'Rielly

Director



Gina Guild

Director



Erin Colwell

Director



Austin Hager

Director: Outreach Chair



Kate Hamilton

Executive Director



Bhawan Waraich

Director: Treasurer





VISION

The completion and long-term protection of the Great Divide Trail, providing a unique wilderness experience in the Canadian Rocky Mountains along the spine of the Great Divide.

MISSION

Provide a public amenity by planning, designing, constructing, maintaining, and obtaining formal recognition and protection for the Great Divide Trail as a significant heritage site in the Rocky Mountains of Canada; and

2

Educate the public about the Great Divide Trail, and promote and encourage its use in a manner consistent with the conservation and preservation of the scenic and wilderness value of the Rocky Mountains of Canada.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

The ten-year anniversary of the new GDTA is upon us and we are growing and evolving rapidly. This past year, recognizing the value of professional management, our Board approved the move to full-time hours for our first Executive Director, Kate Hamilton. Her exceptional management and people skills combined with insightful perspectives in the non-profit world of trail management are already paying huge dividends. This organization benefits from the greater coordination of volunteer skills and experience, which makes us more effective in maintaining, protecting, advocating for, and managing this over 1100 km linear trail.

The financial support for this important transformational move has been achieved by diversifying into new or improved fundraising activities, such as corporate sponsorships, merchandising and new donor programs, while better managing existing opportunities such as memberships, grants and trail supporter campaigns. Our membership numbers alone have increased by over 40% and brought a 150% increase in direct revenue realized from those new members. Building these membership numbers also has ancillary benefits in greater awareness, more effectiveness when working with trail managers and a boost to other fundraising programs.

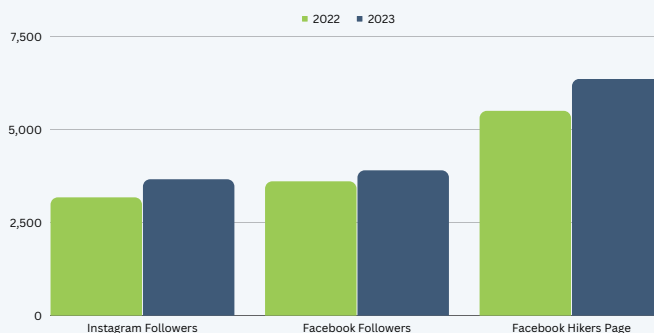
This past year all seven of our volunteer committees have benefitted from greater preparation and coordination between each other, as you can see reflected in the year-end report. The chairs and committee members have done an amazing job in achieving and bettering yearly goals and I would like to thank each and every one for their tireless efforts. The visibility and enhancement of our trail projects are only through the coordinated efforts of all these wonderful committees and their volunteer members working together.

In the coming year you can look forward to a significant improvement in long-term planning to help keep this organization grounded, give it some long-term objectives that reflect every user group, stakeholder and management area, and build a greater awareness and alignment of values and goals. This will be achieved through dedicated strategic planning that will involve everyone whom this trail impacts.

This annual report elaborates on the various activities of the past year and gives some insight into what is to come. It is an impressive group of individuals with a common vision for this trail that has contributed in so many ways to the evolution of the Great Divide Trail Association. My role as President is made much easier with this community behind me, and I thank you all for that support. - **Doug Borthwick, GDTA President**

2022/23 HIGHLIGHTS

- The GDT is now officially a designated trail in Alberta Public Lands, under the Alberta Trails Act
- We have a trail management agreement in Height of the Rockies Provincial Park allowing long-term trail maintenance
- New online membership platform
- New IT Solutions and Security Committee
- Kakwa Lake officially became the Northern GDT Terminus, and sign was placed
- Agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC for a resupply management system operated by Robson Valley Backcountry Adventures at the Blueberry Lake Trailhead on the Holmes Forest Service Road.
- Increasing the Executive Directors hours from part-time to full-time
- New partnership with Prince George Backcountry Recreation Society, and management agreement with Kakwa Provincial Park through PGBRS
- Continuing partnerships with Wild Rockies Field Institute, Crowsnest Bible Camp, the Jr. Forest Rangers, Backcountry Horseman of BC and Alberta Equestrian Federation



We are continuing to see interest, knowledge, and support for the GDT grow. This past year our Instagram followers increased by 486, Facebook followers increased by 300, and our Facebook hikers page increased by 1,757 followers.

COMMITTEES

In addition to the Board of Directors, the GDTA has 7 committees that work all year-round to continue to move the organization ahead. Each committee has its own unique, and important role that is essential to the organization.

With over 50 people spread out over the 7 different committees, these complete a huge amount of work throughout the year.

Trail Protection and Advocacy

The Trail Protection and Advocacy Committee (TPA), led by Ben Millen, has had an extremely productive year beginning with the GDT becoming a designated trail in Alberta public lands under the Trails Act. In conjunction with this designation, TPA is now working with the Alberta Government to become the official Trail Manager of the GDT in this area.

Progress has been made to improve the GDTA's relationship with Parks Canada by connecting with Parks Canada Field Unit Superintendents. This growth in relationships resulted in two presentations (Jasper and Banff) to Parks Canada staff and representatives. We plan to nurture these relationships to work towards our common goals.

We now have a trail management agreement in Height of the Rockies Provincial Park allowing long-term trail maintenance.

A new partnership with Prince George Backcountry Recreation Society (PGBRS) was established, which led to a collaborative management agreement with Kakwa Provincial Park.

An agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC for a resupply management system operated by Robson Valley Backcountry Adventures at the Blueberry Lake Trailhead on the Holmes Forest Service Road.

An online relationship management database was established in order to better track the progress of relationships and actions across all land use, and land management areas.

COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Outreach Education and Engagement

The Outreach Committee, led by Austin Hager, has had a big year. At the last AGM, the membership voted for lifetime memberships, as well as free youth memberships (age 24 and under). This, combined with the new online membership system that the IT Committee created, has made becoming a member much more attractive, and membership is continually on the rise. We still have some amazing businesses offering amazing member benefits in support of the GDTA in order to encourage folks to become members.

There were many in-person events starting with trail-building information sessions, GDT presentations, and a series of Banff Mountain Film Festival locations. All of these events led to the success of growing knowledge of the GDT, as well as engagement within the GDTA.

The spring webinar series was a success for the second year in a row, helping hikers plan, and be prepared for their GDT summer hike. High attendance at these webinars lets us know that they are a valuable way to help people get organized, and they are something we will continue in the future.

The film fundraiser held in June raised both a large financial amount (\$9,000), as well as raised more interest and awareness about the GDT. Thank you to Wilderland Media for both creating and donating their amazing film for us to create a fundraiser around.

Outreach has also been creating more great merchandise such as titanium cups, and long-handled spoons, new neck tube styles, stickers, and most recently, art cards featuring the wonderful artist and hiker, Lynnie Wonfer. - **OUTREACH**



COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Organizational Excellence

This committee, led by Deb Yanchula, objectives are to support the board in the GDT's strategic planning and progress monitoring. It is available to support the board to solve organizational, governance, communication and coordination challenges. It assesses gaps in GDT governance policies and procedures and prepares these documents for board approval and implementation. OEC also supports the board in assessing and mitigating organizational risk.

Strategic planning for one and three-year goals of each committee was facilitated by the OEC. Progress reporting on these goals was done at monthly board meetings.

A gap analysis was prepared to review GDT's current policies and governance documents, compare them to similar documents of other trail associations and NFPs and identify gaps. These gaps were identified and priority was set for the development of these governance documents.

The Employee Manual was reviewed and updated. The full-time role of Executive Director is the first full-time, staff position for the GDTA.

A Privacy Policy was created and implemented. This aligns with an update to the GDTA website.

A Corporate Sponsorship Policy was developed and implemented to support the work of the Ensuring Financial Capacity Committee and to provide the board with consistent guidelines to execute their work.

A bylaw proposal was developed to enhance the options for Board membership. This was approved by the Board and will be voted on by the membership at the AGM. - **OEC**

COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Safety and Environment

This year, the safety committee, led by Deb Yanchula, updated the Safety Manual to revision 4 this year to reflect the changes to the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code which came into effect on March 31, 2023. The Safe Work Practices (SWPs) were reviewed and updated as part of a 3-year review process. Safety Manual and SWPs are made available on the GDT website for access by all GDT members and the public.

The Safety committee provided trip leader training on June 3, 2023. This provided a refresher of Safety Manual content to Trip Leaders, included breakout sessions to discuss and evaluate some case studies and provided a forum for trip leaders to clarify any safety topics.

First aid support was provided for each of summer's trail-building trips. Currently, there are 21 GDT members trained and qualified to support first aid on field trips. UTV training was provided this year to improve GDT requirements, consistent with Industry Best Practices. A UTV day-long course was held for GDT volunteers on June 17th at the Atlas Staging Area. This training supports the use of the side-by-side, purchased in early 2023 to move volunteers and equipment to remote working locations along the GDT. Currently, seven (7) GDT volunteers are trained and able to drive the GDT UTV.

Trip Leader training session included training on environmental awareness for species at risk and sensitive landforms and habitats. A small section of trail on the HRT was rerouted to move it out of an environmentally sensitive area. A new trail scouted last year was routed to avoid sensitive environmental areas.

Input to campsite layout based on the principles of "Leave No Trace" and other Industry Best Practices is in the development process to support Infrastructure work for the 2024 trail-building season.

There are two incidents reported in over 6200 field hours of GDT volunteer work. One pertained to volunteers walking alone without a means to communicate with camp and one was an injury due to the rugged terrain, which required first aid. Feedback from volunteers and trip leaders is encouraged. It is reviewed and incorporated where applicable to improve the GDT Safety Program.

Congratulations to trip leaders, assistant trip leaders, Safety Officers and volunteers for creating a positive safety culture and practicing safety every day. - **SAFETY**

COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Ensuring Financial Capacity

The Ensuring Financial Committee (EFC), led by Alex Northey, was filled with successes thanks to the countless hours of dedication and hard work of its committee members. This year welcomed new members and retained others to a place where we have a great mix of folks.

EFC had success in writing and receiving grants from entities like Athletic Brewing, the Alberta Equestrian Federation and BC Parks. Additionally, we were able to apply and be successful in getting funding from the Alberta Trails Act which will provide long-term funding to the GDTA for people, equipment and trail work. Finally, in collaboration with the Policy Committee, EFC was able to craft and get Board approval on Corporate Funding, which will be able to be used for many years and find new sources of funding.

We will be continuing to work to diversify the GDTA's income to ensure long-term sustainability. - **EFC**

IT Security and Solutions

The IT Solutions and Security Committee, led by Steve Harvey, is responsible for guiding the GDTA toward transparent, sustainable, and responsive IT solutions, and to offer technical advice and assistance to the Board and other committees.

Started just last year, the IT Committee has been focused on identifying the IT systems in use and cataloguing the IT needs of the Association. Over the winter a new Members Area was added to the GDTA website to support member signup and renewal. Following many months of research, the IT Committee will soon be championing the harmonization of our IT services into a cloud platform, and facilitating the transition should the proposal be approved. This change will modernize the tools in use, protect association data, facilitate easier collaboration, and save the Association money. - **IT**

COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Trail Building and Maintenance

Led by committee chair, Jim Schieck, this was the most ambitious year in the field for the Trail Building and Maintenance Committee crews to date. This summer there were over 6,000 field work hours put in by 153 volunteers.

The season started with parallel trips into the Blaeberry: one, a hybrid trip to Collie Creek to complete the revival of an old trail to take the GDT off the logging road and the other a backcountry self-supported trip on the David Thompson Heritage Trail to complete trail repairs due to a major avalanche last year.

Trail work on the Highrock Trail between Alison Creek and Window Mountain Lake was completed over 6 backcountry trips, including a new trail completed to take 2 km of the GDT off steep ATV tracks. New signs were installed at key intersections along the route. Deadfall was removed between Window Mountain and South Hidden Creek, and the South Racehorse Creek bridge was repaired. Some trail was rerouted to protect an environmentally sensitive area.

A new bridge was installed across Baril Creek. A self-supported backcountry crew replaced the temporary log bridge and completed trail maintenance work up to Fording Pass and between Baril Creek to just over the ridge to the south.

The first women's only walking trip from South Hidden Creek to North Racehorse Creek took place in late July. Trail clearing, blazing, and an assessment for Backcountry campsites were completed.



Trail Building and Maintenance Continued...

In Section A, a walking trip from Sage Pass to Scarpe Pass included trail maintenance and blazing along 14 km of trail, 600m km of trail construction from Scarpe Pass to La Coulotte Ridge and an assessment of the campsite at Sage Pass.

Once again, the GDTA partnered with Friends of Jasper to clear and maintain the trail on Maligne Pass in Section E, clearing encroaching small trees and shrubs along 500m of trail east and west of Marry Shaffer Campground.

Two parallel trips were coordinated in Section G. A walking trip from Sheep Creek to Cecelia Lake completed trail clearing and maintenance that was started in previous years. The construction of a bridge at Cecilia Creek was done in parallel and both crews and tools were helicoptered in and out.

Two trips into the White Goat Wilderness area were completed in collaboration with the Trail Protection and Advocacy Committee to set up and take down trail counters and wildlife cameras at the beginning and end of the trail season. This will help gauge activity along the Cataract Creek trail, to help convince the Government of Alberta to permit maintenance of that trail.

Several scouting trips were completed near the Dutch Creek Campground in preparation for the 2023 trail-building season, and for new trail reroute in the upcoming 2024 season.

It was a successful season working in challenging conditions of heat and smoke. Thanks to all our volunteers and especially to our hard-working trip leaders who organized each of the trips. - **TBMC**

We're always looking for new volunteers to join our committees and would be happy to match your interests and skills with a role that works for you. Please let us know if you'd like to get involved!



MEMBERSHIP



Membership Matters.

Not only does membership provide financial support but also helps in building a committed community, increasing influence, ensuring accountability, and sustaining the organization's efforts to achieve its mission. Thank you to all our committed GDTA members for sticking with us.

The growth of the past number of years has been incredible, and we are looking forward to continuing to watch membership rise.

Thank you to these amazing businesses who continue to offer GDTA member benefits:

- Geartrade.ca
- Wild Mountain Eats
- Durston Gear
- Jasper Downtown Hostel
- Friends of Jasper National Park Gift Shop
- Country Encounters accommodation
- Mount Engadine Lodge
- Peter Lougheed Provincial Park resupply
- Smartwool in Banff
- Wild Mountain in Jasper
- Flat Out Feasts
- Teadore Co
- Calgary-Waterton Shuttle
- Robson Backcountry Adventures

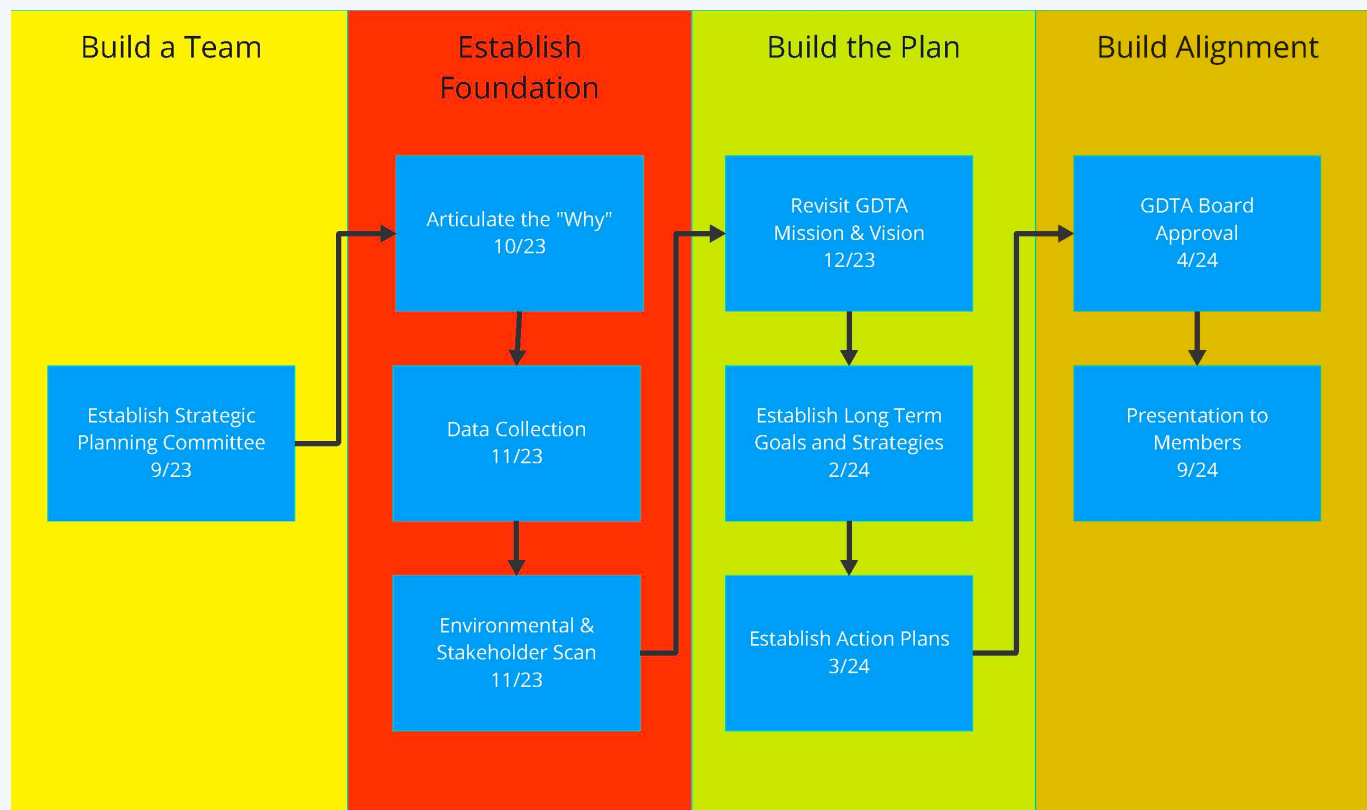
2023/24

LOOKING FORWARD

Strategic Planning

The Great Divide Trail Association is moving into a long-term strategic planning phase is essential to ensure its sustainability, address increasing demand, manage resources effectively, and engage stakeholders. This strategic planning process will help maintain the trail's ecological integrity while enhancing the experience for all who use and enjoy it.

Over the next 6 months, stakeholders can expect to be consulted about the current GDTA environment, as well as to gain an understanding of where you would like us to take the organization.





SUPPORTERS

The GDTA relies on a diversity of generous supporters to fund operations, and we could not be more grateful for the support we received this past year.

In addition to the many corporate donations that we received this year, the GDTA has received \$163,000, to be used over 2 years, in funding from Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism to continue our work in Alberta public Lands.

The GDTA was also fortunate to have grant funding for this year's work from Columbia Basin Trust, BC Parks, Athletic Brewing, and Alberta Culture and Status of Women.

Thank you to our supporters, we couldn't do it without you.



\$100,000+

Alberta

\$50,000+

Columbia
Basin **trust**

\$5,000+



\$1,000+



Sawyer

\$500+



FINANCIAL REPORT

Great Divide Trail Association
Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 132,049	\$ 143,231
Investments (Note 4)	30,876	30,752
Inventory (Note 5)	5,479	-
Prepaid expenses and deposits	350	1,752
	168,754	175,735
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 6)	19,765	10,862
	\$ 188,519	\$ 186,597
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 5,994	\$ 6,141
Deferred revenue (Note 7)	66,191	82,240
Deferred Capital Contributions	5,460	-
	77,645	88,381
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	55,874	43,216
Internally restricted - capital fund (Note 8)	35,000	35,000
Internally restricted - operating fund (Note 8)	20,000	20,000
	110,874	98,216
	\$ 188,519	\$ 186,597

Great Divide Trail Association
Statement of Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended March 31, 2023

	Unrestricted	Internally Restricted - Capital Fund	Internally Restricted - Operating Fund	2023	2022
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 43,216	\$ 35,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 98,216	\$ 80,219
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	12,658	-	-	12,658	17,997
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 55,874	\$ 35,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 110,874	\$ 98,216

FINANCIAL REPORT

Expenses
(Schedule 1)
Year Ended March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
<u>Trail Operations</u>		
Contracted Work	\$ 13,654	\$ 11,278
Tools and Equipment Rental	8,830	17,114
Transport	3,565	2,194
Training	1,933	363
Supplies	1,911	8,872
Food	1,720	-
Operational Support	1,436	2,337
Volunteer Appreciation	179	1,607
	<u>33,228</u>	<u>43,765</u>
<u>Outreach</u>		
Merchandise Expense	3,430	1,931
Travel	1,339	-
Outreach Events	933	-
Volunteer Recognition	450	-
Marketing	201	315
Affiliations	-	147
	<u>6,353</u>	<u>2,393</u>
<u>Administrative</u>		
Wages & Salaries	29,567	-
Accounting Fees	6,248	4,794
Amortization	3,673	1,463
Office Costs	2,033	692
Bank and similar Fees	1,787	1,259
Insurance	1,646	1,179
Software & Social Media	1,448	2,287
Board and Committee Costs	1,438	100
Advertising	651	-
Vehicle	482	-
Website Costs	-	131
	<u>48,973</u>	<u>11,905</u>
	<u>\$ 88,554</u>	<u>\$ 58,063</u>

See notes to financial statements

Great Divide Trail Association
Statement of Revenues and Expenses
Year Ended March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
REVENUES		
Donations	\$ 49,683	\$ 35,412
Grants	20,590	29,359
Memberships	18,090	7,290
Merchandise Sales	7,144	1,830
Trail work fees	2,400	-
App Royalties	1,631	1,859
Outreach Events	886	-
Interest	138	310
	100,562	76,060
EXPENSES (Schedule 1)	88,554	58,063
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES FROM OPERATIONS	12,008	17,997
OTHER INCOME		
Gain on disposal of property and equipment	650	-
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$ 12,658	\$ 17,997

Notes to Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2023

9. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (continued)

(c) Market risk

Market Risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. Market risk comprises three types of risk: currency rate risk, interest rate risk and other price risk. In the board's opinion, the Association is not exposed to significant market risk.

Unless otherwise noted, it is management's opinion that the Association is not exposed to significant other price risks arising from these financial instruments.

10. HEALTH PANDEMIC

In early 2020, Covid-19 was identified as a world-wide pandemic. In response, the Government of Alberta declared a public health emergency, and during 2020 and 2021 varying restrictions on the activities of organizations and individuals in the province were enacted. The financial impact these measures had on the Association cannot be quantified with certainty nor separated from other cyclical factors and normal organizational changes.

SEE NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Dear Volunteers,

We want to extend a heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you. Some of you may be out in the field, working tirelessly to construct and preserve our trail, while others are diligently contributing your skills and passion to various committees. No matter your role, each of you is a vital piece of the puzzle that makes our mission possible.

Looking ahead, please know that your contributions will have a lasting impact. The Great Divide Trail you help protect will continue to benefit future generations, promoting a love for the wilderness and fostering a community dedicated to its preservation. We understand that volunteering can be challenging at times, requiring long hours and personal sacrifices. Your perseverance and dedication have not gone unnoticed.

Once again, We extend our sincerest thanks to all of you for your unwavering commitment as GDTA Volunteers. We are profoundly fortunate to have such a dedicated group of individuals as part of our volunteer team. Your collective efforts exemplify the true spirit of community and volunteerism, and we are grateful beyond words for your continued support.

Thank you for being the trailblazers that you are. Your hard work and dedication are an inspiration to us all.

With heartfelt appreciation,

GDTA Board of Directors



**Thank
You**



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Ave SW Calgary



greatdividetrail.com



[@gdtassociation](https://www.instagram.com/gdtassociation)



greatdividetrail@gmail.com