



Great Divide Trail Association

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24



www.greatdividetrail.com



greatdividetrail@gmail.com



VISION & MISSION

The Great Divide Trail provides a wild and inspiring experience along the spine of the Great Divide. It is formally recognized and protected for future generations as a treasured Canadian hiking route.

Our mission is to collaborate with partners and communities to build, maintain, and protect the Great Divide Trail for the public's benefit. We educate, promote, and encourage use of the Trail in a manner consistent with the conservation and preservation of its scenic and wilderness value.

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



Lisa Belanger

Director: Board President



Ben Millen

Director



Jeff Grutz

Director: Chair



Katie Copeland

Director: Secretary



Tara Fleming

Director



Austin Hager

Director : Vice-President,
Outreach Chair



Glenn Mason

Director



Kristine O'Rielly

Director



Meaghan Underhill

Director



Bhawan Waraich

Director:



Steve Harvey

Director, Vice-Chair, ITC Chair



Kate Hamilton

Executive Director



Please note that this is the Board of Directors as of March 31, 2024, the end of the fiscal year.

All the information below covers the period from AGM to AGM (September 2023 - September 2024), except for the financial statements, which correspond to the fiscal year (April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024).



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Great Divide Trail Association Members and Supporters,

This past year has been yet another successful and exciting year for the GDTA. We've had the privilege of working alongside 150+ volunteers, a truly remarkable group of people who share a deep love and commitment to this trail and the surrounding landscapes.

While we, as with many charities, face the challenges of balancing endless passion for a cause with the reality of limited resources, time, and capacity, we've seen the GDT community consistently come together to get stuff done. The trail and our Association thrive today because of the collective generosity and energy of our members, volunteers, committees, board members, and partners.

I've had the pleasure of joining trail maintenance trips, and they are the highlights of my summers not only because I get to enjoy the amazing views and wilderness of the GDT, but also because I get to spend time with amazing people. Whether they've been involved for years (even decades!) or setting foot on the trail for the first time, we all believe in the vision that was set into motion 50 years ago by the people of Project Great Divide Trails. And for 50 years that vision has been bringing people together, creating a sense of community that is truly special.

We are incredibly grateful to have Kate Hamilton continue as Executive Director, who always goes above and beyond to bring our collective goals to life, and continue the momentum and growth in all areas of the Association. Her contributions over the past few years have left a remarkable impact, and continue to help integrate all the hard work of our committees and volunteers towards a shared vision.

Each of our committees has accomplished so much over the past year which you'll find in this Annual Report, and we continue work on the GDTA's strategic plan and key priorities for the coming years. I'm excited to watch our Association continue to grow in our membership, and in our capacity to serve our members, improve the trail experience, and advocate for its long term protection.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you this coming year, and encourage you to engage with us in new ways as well, whether you're interested to joining, a trail maintenance crew, or attend one of our events or webinars if you haven't already. Thank you for all of your support and for being part of the Great Divide Trail Association. As we celebrate 50 years of this incredible journey, I'm filled with anticipation for what the future holds for this trail and community.

See you on the trails,
Lisa Bélanger

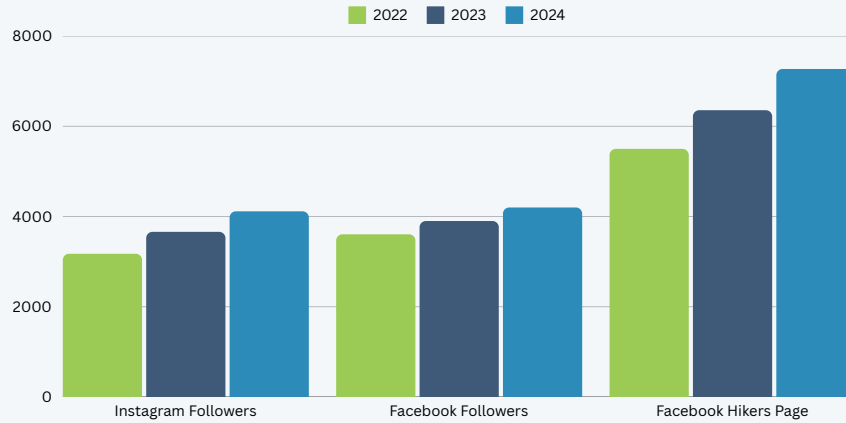
President, Great Divide Trail Association

2023/24 HIGHLIGHTS

- The GDTA is now the official Trail Manager in Alberta Public Lands
- Received a corporate sponsorship from Osprey
- For the first time we were able to hire a Field Coordinator (Brodie Bauer) to help with summer operations
- New monthly WayPoints newsletter
- Became a member of the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC
- New member benefit through Zoleo
- New member benefit with Black Sheep Camps in Rocky Mountain House AB and Canal Flats BC
- Website overhaul, improving ease of navigation



We are continuing to see interest, knowledge, and support for the GDT grow. This past year our Instagram followers increased by 455, Facebook followers increased by 300, and our Facebook hikers page increased by 914 followers.

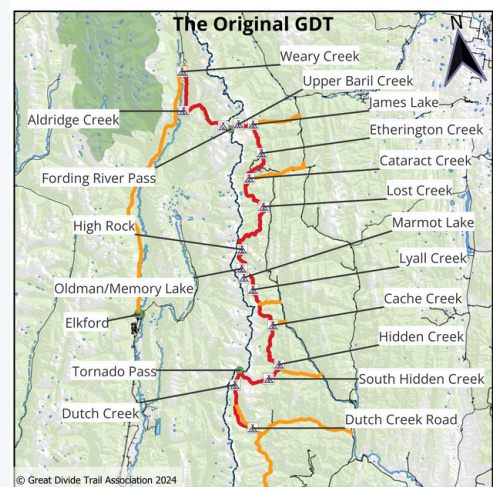


Honoring Project: Great Divide Trails

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Project: Great Divide Trails, the initiative that laid the foundation for the Great Divide Trail.

In 1974, six young Canadians, through the federally-funded Opportunities for Youth (OFY) program, surveyed and mapped a trail along the Continental Divide between Banff and Waterton Lakes National Parks. Their goal was to raise awareness about conservation outside of park boundaries and create new recreational opportunities.

The team’s work sparked public interest in preserving these wild areas and helped shape the GDT we know today. As we celebrate this milestone, we honor their pioneering spirit and the lasting legacy of the Great Divide Trail.



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

This year, the Trail Protection and Advocacy Committee (TPA) achieved some key milestones and focused on setting itself up for the future. Notably, the TPA assisted the GDTA in entering into a Trail Agreement with the Province of Alberta, pursuant to which the GDTA has become the official Trail Manager of the GDT on Alberta public lands. This agreement formalizes and simplifies trail inspection and maintenance procedures in these areas, while at the same time increasing the GDTA's legitimacy as a partner for other jurisdictions through which the trail passes.

The TPA Committee also continued to build the GDTA's relationships with Parks Canada, including through meetings with Parks Canada Field Unit Superintendents at Waterton, Lake Louise-Yoho-Kootenay, Banff, and Jasper; a meeting with the Director of Visitor Experience in Ottawa; and provided a presentation to Industry Canada (responsible for Canada's tourism strategy) and Prairies Economic Development Canada, the federal regional development agency for the west. These discussions fit within the TPA's goal to ensure the GDTA's advocacy is appropriately targeted at the local and federal levels.

In the latter half of the year, the TPA Committee has devoted time to the strategic review of its terms of reference and goals to ensure it is adapted to delivering its mission of effectively advocating for the formal recognition and long-term viability of the trail. We intend to complete this review and begin delivering on our revised goals this year. Two initiatives that will fit within these goals and that the TPA Committee began to work on this year are: (i) identifying strategic partners within gateway communities through which the trail passes and strengthening these connections with a view to enhancing the experience for both hikers and these communities; and (ii) deepening the reflection regarding the GDTA's relationship with Indigenous communities and our approach to reconciliation.

COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Outreach Education and Engagement

Over the past year, the Outreach & Education Committee has experienced significant growth and success, playing a vital role in both expanding membership and generating revenue for the organization. Since the end of COVID, the committee has seen a staggering 300% increase in membership, adding over 100 new members each year, reflecting its global reach and growing community. Revenue generation has also surged, with outreach profits exceeding \$30,000 in the last year—up from just \$7,000–\$8,000 in earlier years—thanks to a diverse mix of events, products, and initiatives.

Key milestones include the expansion of events such as the Film Fest and Geartrade Garage Sale, which have attracted increasing participation and engagement. The committee also launched popular merchandise items like maps, Kula cloths, and calendars, while continuing to innovate with new offerings like fair-trade hats. These initiatives not only drive revenue but also help spread awareness of the trail and the organization's mission.

Additionally, the committee has made strides in building its internal capacity, with the appointment of a Vice Chair to support leadership and the development of a new trade show booth to enhance its presence at public events. Social media and website efforts have also been pivotal, ensuring timely updates and communication—such as during the recent wildfire crisis—while continuing to engage and inform the broader community. Overall, the Outreach & Education Committee's work over the past year has been marked by expansion, innovation, and a collaborative team effort that is truly helping to shape the future of the organization.



COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Organizational Excellence

This committee's 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. The Organizational Excellence Committee (OEC) also supports the board in assessing and mitigating organizational risk.

The OEC continued to develop policies for the GDT based on recommended requirements for effective "Not for Profit" Boards. This included development of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, an update for the Code of Conduct to include a section on Conflict of Interest and a Communications/Media Policy.

Some existing policies: Organization and Governance Structure, Financial Management and the Budgeting, Planning and Procurement Policy were updated to include the role of the Executive Director and other changes.

The OEC provided board training material and supported new Board orientation. Board Orientation requirements were documented in the Organization and Governance Structure Policy.

Support for the Strategic Plan was provided. Development of a questionnaire, interviews of GDT stakeholders and help to collate data was provided.

OEC supported the Nomination committee with Board Skills Gap Assessment for the new Board recruitment. This will be further developed in 2024 along with Board monitoring and feedback plans.

A Rasci chart of all GDT roles and responsibilities will be rolled out in 2024 to clearly identify the specific tasks and items which each role is responsible and accountable for. This will support orientation of new volunteers.

OEC is a resource for the Board executive team, offering guidance on policies, corporate bylaws and risk management for the GDT.



COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Safety and Environment

The Safety Committee and Environment (S&EC) met in January for their annual review to assess 2023 Safety Feedback and to review any AHS and Work Safe BC Code and Regulation updates. A new Communications Policy and plan was approved by the board. This was rolled out to trip leaders and implemented during GDT fieldwork for the 2024 trail-building Season.

This year was a productive trail-building year. The S&EC provided trip leader training on May 11, 2024. This provided a refresher of Safety Manual content to Trip Leaders, rolled out a new communications policy using Zoleo Satellite devices, evaluated safety culture and causes that lead to accidents and provided a forum for trip leaders to clarify any safety topics.

This trail-building season included many trips between June and September (scouting, walking self-supported and hybrid trips) There was over 5390 hours of fieldwork completed in both planned trail maintenance and scouting trips. First aid support was provided for each of these trips. Currently there are 24 GDT members trained and qualified to support first aid on field trips.

UTV training was provided for 5 additional GDT volunteers this year to improve GDT requirements, consistent with Industry Best Practices. 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 10 GDT volunteers are trained and able to drive the GDT UTV.

Training for safe chainsaw use was provided for two volunteers. An advanced chainsaw training course was provided for one volunteer. An internal GDT session was held to share learnings from the advanced chainsaw course with other GDT chain saw workers. This supported extensive chain saw work for the Erris Lake maintenance trips.

Admittance to Hospital: 1 Due to an illness which started prior to the trail-building trip and was unrelated to trail-building activities.

Incidents: 1 Fall due to slipping in stream - limited field work but no lost time injury

Near Misses: None

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.

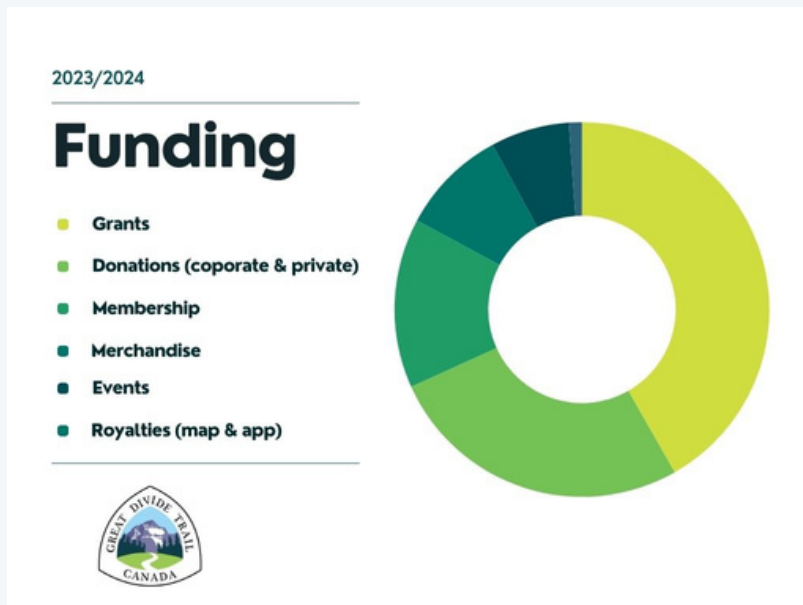
COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Ensuring Financial Capacity

The Ensuring Financial Committee (EFC) had a productive and multifaceted year. Amid inflationary pressures not seen in recent times, every member—both new and experienced—dedicated countless hours to writing, researching, brainstorming, and deliberating to secure funding for the GDTA, ensuring both short-term and long-term financial stability.

We celebrated success in our annual Trail Builder Fundraising Campaign and achieved membership in 1% for the Planet, securing essential operational funding opportunities. We also initiated our search for corporate sponsors, with our first sponsorship with Osprey Packs finalized. Additionally, new language was added to the website to guide individuals on how to include the GDTA in their wills, trusts, and bequests. Our inaugural Monthly Gift Giving campaign saw significant growth, with participation increasing from nine to twenty-five donors. Furthermore, we laid the foundation for new fundraising initiatives to be piloted in 2024, 2025, and beyond, promising exciting opportunities for innovative funding strategies. We also plan to reapply for Alberta Trails Act funding in 2025, which has been crucial in providing increased financial resources and stability.

The EFC remains committed to finding and securing the financial resources necessary to support the GDTA.



COMMITTEES CONTINUED

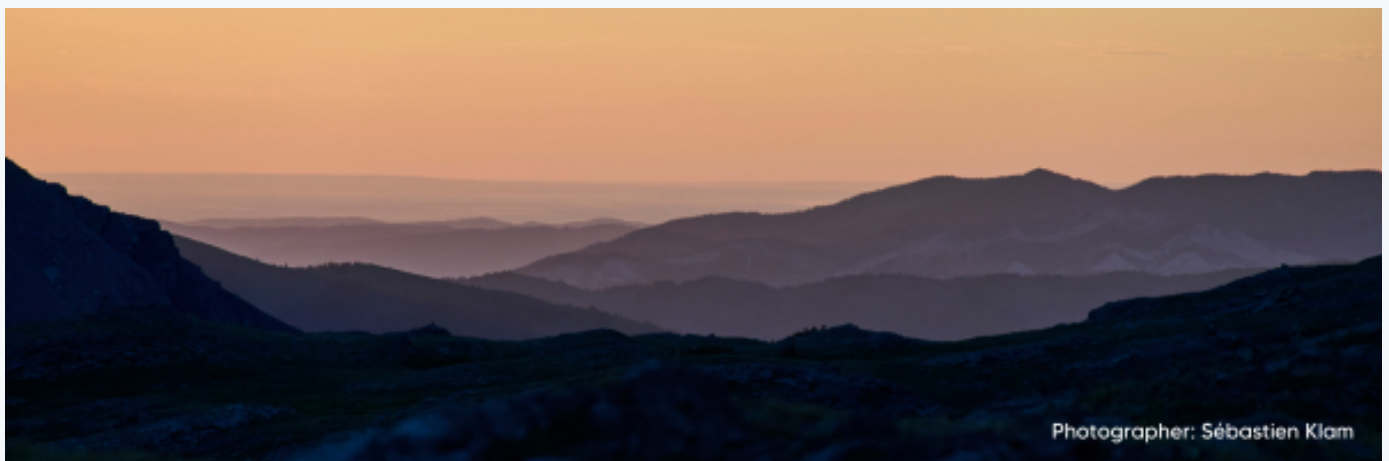
IT Security and Solutions

This year, the IT Committee made significant strides toward enhancing the GDTA's operational efficiency and communication capabilities, setting a strong foundation for future initiatives. A key achievement was the successful transition of the GDTA to Microsoft 365, a move made possible through our status as a non-profit organization, resulting in annual savings of approximately \$700 by eliminating the need for Dropbox, Zoom, and Eventbrite subscriptions. This transition has substantially improved communication among board members, committee chairs, and volunteers by streamlining file access and facilitating collaboration through MS Teams. Additionally, it has enhanced public interaction via shared mailboxes, allowing for more responsive communication.

The IT Committee is also focused on rolling out a variety of features that will further support the association behind the scenes, including shared calendars, project management tools, and business analytics capabilities. These tools will enable us to operate more effectively and support our mission.

In an effort to simplify member engagement, we have transitioned trail building trip signups from email to the website, making it easier for members to participate and reducing the workload for volunteer coordinators. Furthermore, we have improved access to section hiking information on the GDTA website, ensuring that our resources are readily available to all hikers.

As we look ahead, the IT Committee remains committed to optimizing our technological infrastructure to better serve the GDTA and its community.



COMMITTEES CONTINUED

Trail Building and Maintenance

Under the leadership of the Trail Building & Maintenance Committee (TBMC), Trip Leaders, and Volunteers, significant progress was made on the GDT this season. Volunteers contributed over 5,390 hours of fieldwork, with 123 dedicated individuals working on a range of projects, including trail maintenance, campsite repairs, and new trail development. Notable achievements include:

June: Field Season Begins

The season kicked off at the end of June with two trips into the Blaeberry area:

- Collie Creek Alternate Trip: Crews cleared and restored 11 km of historic and new trail, repaired existing tread, and flagged access routes to the Amiskwi Ridge alternate.
- Blaeberry Trip: Crews improved temporary log bridges over the Blaeberry River and Cairns Creek, cleared deadfall on the David Thompson Heritage Trail, and made repairs at Lamb Creek campsite.

July: A Busy Month for Trail Maintenance

July was one of our busiest months, with eight trail maintenance trips:

- Erris Lake Trail Construction: Trail building began on the new Erris Lake Trail. Four trips (Erris A-D) were completed, with crews clearing 6 km of trail and building 4 km of new tread. A base camp was set up at Fred Bridge, where crews used a side-by-side and trailer to transport gear to the worksite.
- Women's Walking Trip: The second annual women's trip focused on maintaining 35 km of the Original GDT, including extensive trail clearing, blazing, and campsite assessments.
- Height of the Rookies: Crews cleared deadfall along North Kananaskis Pass and the Palliser River.
- Tornado Mountain Trip: A team re-routed the trail up Tornado Saddle, repaired facilities at the Dutch Creek Campground, and cleared the trail around Dutch Creek Bridge.
- Hidden Creek Bridges: Two new bridges were installed in the Hidden Creek area, along with light trail clearing and enhanced signage.

August: Wildfires and Adjusted Plans

August was impacted by wildfires across the GDT region, resulting in the cancellation of the Maligne Pass trip and the rescheduling of the Colonel Creek trip to September. However, one trip in Section G proceeded:

- Sheep to Shale: Crews cleared 27 km of trail from Shale Pass to 2 km south of Casket Creek camp, brushing, trimming, and clearing deadfall and encroaching trees.

Trail Building and Maintenance Continued...

September: Trail Building Resumes

The cooler weather in September allowed for more trail-building trips:

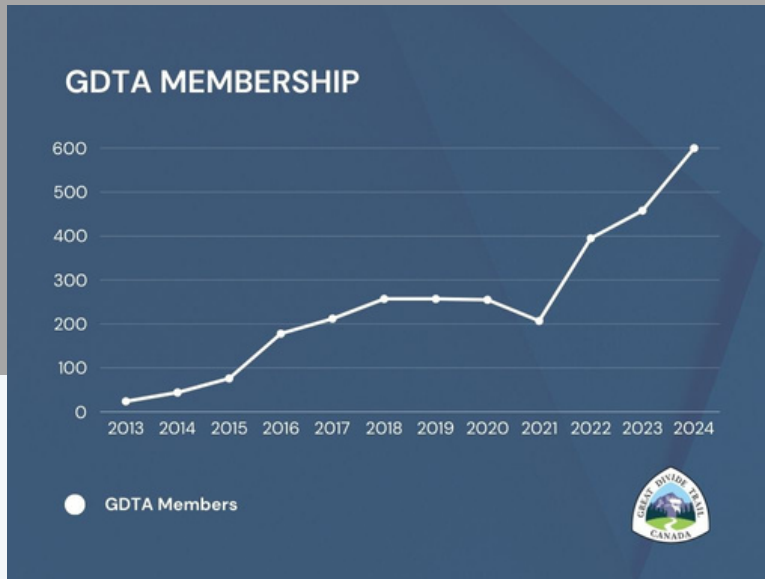
- Erris Lake E Trip: Crews scouted, flagged, and cut the remaining trail corridor, bringing the trail to within 450 meters of Erris Lake.
- Colonel Creek Trip: Rescheduled from August, this trip focused on improving the Colonel Creek campsite and clearing trail between Colonel Creek and Upright Creek. Crews also scouted a possible location for a future bridge over Upright Creek.



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
- Black Sheep Camps
- Peter Lougheed Provincial Park resupply
- Smartwool in Banff
- Wild Mountain in Jasper
- Flat Out Feasts
- Teadore Co
- Calgary-Waterton Shuttle
- Robson Backcountry Adventures
- Zoleo

STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Planning

A Strategic Plan is the critical document that ensures that everyone involved in the building, maintaining, and promoting of the Great Divide Trail (GDT) are all aligned in vision and action. A Strategic Plan sets the objectives and focus; it provides insight on current activities, a means of prioritizing future activities, and the ability to evaluate the success of these actions.

Over the past year, the Great Divide Trail Association (GDTA) has undertaken a comprehensive strategic planning process to realign its long-term goals. This process began with an in-depth environmental scan and extensive outreach to stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives. The Strategic Planning Committee formulated key questions to obtain critical insights from each stakeholder group. The collected data was then analyzed and presented to the Board. This environmental survey informed a thorough Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which in turn formed the basis of our self-evaluation.

The key finding from this exercise is that the GDTA undertakes a lot of work and is succeeding in its mission – there is a lot of great work going on, and it needs to continue. At the same time, the SWOT exercise highlighted a handful of key foundational areas that the GDTA needs to prioritize in the coming years. These have become our Strategic Priorities and cover aspects of the trail, the association, and our partnerships. By providing focus on these specific areas, we will be able to increase momentum for activities in support of these areas.

Concurrently, the Board and Strategic Planning Committee have reviewed and updated the GDTA’s Mission, Vision, and Values to ensure they reflect our current priorities and aspirations. This document outlines the outcomes of these efforts, including the refined strategic plan and the updated mission, vision, and values.





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 a \$5,000 corporate sponsorship from Osprey Packs.

The GDTA was also fortunate to have grant funding for this year's work from Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism, Columbia Basin Trust, BC Parks, Athletic Brewing, and Alberta Equestrian Federation.

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



\$100,000+

Alberta

\$50,000+



\$5,000+



\$1,000+



\$500+



FINANCIAL REPORT

Great Divide Trail Association
Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 230,641	\$ 132,049
Investments (Note 4)	31,491	30,875
Inventory (Note 5)	7,652	5,479
Interest receivable	1,017	-
Prepaid expenses	-	350
	<u>270,801</u>	<u>168,753</u>
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 6)	<u>16,944</u>	<u>19,765</u>
	<u>\$ 287,745</u>	<u>\$ 188,518</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 4,689	\$ 5,993
Deferred revenue (Note 7)	165,402	66,191
Deferred Capital Contributions (Note 7)	4,831	5,460
	<u>174,922</u>	<u>77,644</u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	57,823	55,874
Internally restricted capital fund (Note 8)	35,000	35,000
Internally restricted operating fund (Note 8)	20,000	20,000
	<u>112,823</u>	<u>110,874</u>
	<u>\$ 287,745</u>	<u>\$ 188,518</u>

Great Divide Trail Association
Statement of Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended March 31, 2024

	Unrestricted	Internally Restricted Capital Fund	Internally Restricted Operating Fund	2024	2023
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 55,874	\$ 35,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 110,874	\$ 98,216
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	<u>1,949</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,949</u>	<u>12,658</u>
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	<u>\$ 57,823</u>	<u>\$ 35,000</u>	<u>\$ 20,000</u>	<u>\$ 112,823</u>	<u>\$ 110,874</u>

FINANCIAL REPORT

Great Divide Trail Association
Expenses
(Schedule 1)
Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
<u>Trail Operations</u>		
Contracted Work	\$ 28,965	\$ 13,654
Tools and Equipment Rental	10,017	8,830
Transport	6,375	3,565
Supplies	4,993	1,911
Training	2,217	1,933
Operational Support	1,524	1,436
Volunteer Appreciation	467	179
Food	-	1,720
	<u>54,558</u>	<u>33,228</u>
<u>Outreach</u>		
Merchandise Expense	10,481	3,430
Marketing	2,891	201
Outreach Events	1,068	2,272
Affiliations	197	-
Volunteer Recognition	-	450
	<u>14,637</u>	<u>6,353</u>
<u>Administrative</u>		
Wages & Salaries	86,406	29,567
Accounting Fees	11,417	6,248
Office Costs	2,285	2,033
Amortization	2,822	3,673
Insurance	2,059	1,646
Bank and similar Fees	1,812	1,787
Vehicle	1,008	482
Software & Social Media	856	1,448
Board and Committee Costs	607	1,438
Website Costs	402	-
Advertising	-	651
	<u>109,674</u>	<u>48,973</u>
	<u>\$ 178,869</u>	<u>\$ 88,554</u>

Great Divide Trail Association
Statement of Revenues and Expenses
Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
REVENUES		
Grants	\$ 74,988	\$ 20,590
Donations	47,496	49,683
Memberships	26,254	18,090
Merchandise Sales	16,331	7,144
Outreach Events	12,196	886
App Royalties	1,895	1,631
Interest	1,658	138
Trail work fees	-	2,400
	<u>180,818</u>	<u>100,562</u>
EXPENSES <i>(Schedule 1)</i>	<u>178,869</u>	<u>88,554</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES FROM OPERATIONS	1,949	12,008
OTHER INCOME		
Gain on disposal of property and equipment	-	650
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	<u>\$ 1,949</u>	<u>\$ 12,658</u>

See notes to financial statements



**Thank
You**



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