

# Committed to **your** wellbeing

2022 COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT





**More than \$400,000 provided  
to 112 community projects**

ACROSS ALBERTA THROUGH OUR COVID  
COMMUNITY ROOTS PROGRAM



**Caring Company  
certification**

THROUGH IMAGINE CANADA

**70% of Albertans  
have a more positive  
impression of  
Alberta Blue Cross®**



BASED ON OUR  
COMMITMENT TO THE  
COMMUNITIES WE SERVE



**More than \$60,000  
raised to support  
85 charitable  
organizations**

THROUGH OUR EMPLOYEE  
GIVING CAMPAIGN

**\$13,926**

TO 7 CHARITIES THROUGH  
OUR EMPLOYEE  
CASUAL FOR A CAUSE  
FUNDRAISERS



**55 Alberta  
charitable  
organizations**

SUPPORTED THROUGH  
HEARTS OF BLUE



**14,000 copies of the  
*Keeping Well* seniors resource  
distributed across Alberta**

**102 applications for our  
Built Together program**





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# Introduction



## Introduction

At Alberta Blue Cross, our customers and communities are at the heart of our Blue For Life® vision. We are proud of our deep and long-standing commitment to the communities we serve. As we launched our refreshed Blue For Life vision in 2022, accompanied by a new 10-year corporate strategy, the positive impact we have on our communities continued to be top of mind for our organization.

Through both our Vision and Corporate Strategy, we reaffirmed our commitment to continuing to expand our involvement in the communities we serve. This commitment recognizes that driving impact in our communities has a reciprocal benefit for Alberta Blue Cross in advancing wellbeing for our customers and communities while strengthening the meaningful connections between us.

At Alberta Blue Cross, being accountable to the communities we serve means not only advancing our commitments to wellbeing and living our social purpose, but ensuring our community involvements are indeed impactful. Whether that impact is through our touchpoints with the Indigenous communities we serve; through our commitments to advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; or through our many health and wellness partnerships across the province—we want our community initiatives to create positive outcomes.

For this reason, we assess our community practices against global best practices in ongoing consultation with the London Benchmarking Group (LBG). The LBG is a global network of hundreds of companies that use the LBG model to improve the management, measurement and reporting of corporate social investment. The LBG model is recognized as the global benchmark for measuring corporate community and philanthropic investment. For 2022, our percentage of community investments eligible for reporting as community impact ranked best in class at 97 per cent.

We are also proud to maintain Caring Company certification through Imagine Canada. The Caring Company trustmark is Canada's premier public expression of excellence in community investment and social responsibility. More than 70 leading Canadian companies maintain this certification.

At the same time, we align our community investments with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education and Reduced Inequalities.

We appreciate the opportunity to play an active role in the communities we serve and advance the wellbeing of our communities.





Structure  
and strategy



# The ABC Benefits Corporation Foundation

Funding for community involvement is provided through the ABC Benefits Corporation Foundation, drawing upon interest from \$15 million endowments from Alberta Blue Cross.

- Created in 1998 in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Alberta Blue Cross.
- Foundation is overseen by an independent volunteer Board of Directors.
- Provides Alberta Blue Cross with a mechanism to support community engagement on a sustainable basis with funds that otherwise may not be available.

We align our community impact initiatives in fulfillment of our social purpose strategy with the UN Sustainable Development Goals of Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education and Reduced Inequalities.

## Board of Directors

### The ABC Benefits Corporation Foundation

RAY PISANI  
Board chair

SHARON CARRY  
Director

ROBERT CARWELL  
Director

BRIAN GEISLINGER  
Director

TANYA OLIVER  
Director

SCOTT THON  
Director





# Where our impact begins

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROMOTION

Activities undertaken in the interest of fulfilling our purpose and legislative mandate including leading and supporting province-wide health and wellness initiatives focused on the following areas:

- Supporting those facing chronic health challenges with access to health and wellness resources and services.
- Supporting intergenerational wellbeing and socio-economic equity through access to post-secondary education.
- Empowering youth in building foundational healthy habits.
- Supporting seniors in maintaining life-long wellness.
- Supporting families and communities through community vibrancy and access to active living.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Activities undertaken in the interest of corporate citizenship and for the betterment of the community at large with a focus on the following:

- Employee citizenship and volunteerism.
- Ongoing initiatives to reduce our environmental footprint.
- Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion within our organization and our communities.
- Living our commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

## OUR SOCIAL PURPOSE

Social purpose defines an organization's reason for existence, beyond its products or services. It serves as the core connecting point for an organization's vision, mission, values and strategies. By keeping our social purpose—empowering people to live their best life—at the centre of our work, we are truly serving Albertans in the most meaningful way possible.



# Programs

# Committed to vibrant communities

1 of the cornerstones of our community impact initiatives is providing programs to help Albertans thrive in the communities where they live, work and play. Through these programs, we work to ensure more Albertans can access the supports they need to live well—because living well goes hand-in-hand with living your best life.

## BUILT TOGETHER PROGRAM

We promote wellness through our popular Built Together grant program by helping Albertans build spaces for active living in their communities. Since introducing the program in 2013 and with total funding exceeding \$2 million, we have supported more than 40 infrastructure projects across the province ranging from sports courts, outdoor gyms and playgrounds to bike and skateparks. Each year, we award \$50,000 grants to projects in Edmonton, Calgary, a secondary city, a rural community and an Indigenous community.

In 2022, we received 102 applications for the Built Together program, including a record number of 9 applications from Indigenous communities across the province, and were pleased to award grants to the following projects:

- A playground re-development for Weinlos Parents' Education Society in Edmonton.
- An outdoor basketball court update for Sherwood School in Calgary.
- A playground project for the Robina Baker School Parent Fundraising Committee in Devon.
- A musical playground in Barrhead.
- A walking track for the Paddle Prairie School in the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement.

Also in 2022, in consultation with the Alberta Centre for Healthy Communities, we completed a review of our Built Together program and confirmed its value and long-term impact on the communities supported. 1 of our considerations for the Built Together program is ensuring geographical equity through the life of the program and, as we enter our 10th year of the program, we are happy to report it has provided support to dozens of communities across all regions of the province.



**In the fall of 2022, Prescott Learning Centre in Spruce Grove—a 2021 Built Together recipient—celebrated the grand opening of their new playground.**

The Prescott Learning Centre is a school of more 800 students and, until recently, had no playground. Parents and community members had been fundraising since the school opened in 2016. At the grand opening celebration, Brian Geislinger, vice-president of Corporate Relations and Community Engagement for Alberta Blue Cross, spoke about the importance of building play spaces for our children and our commitment to building such important infrastructure. Mascot, Big Blue, and the Alberta Blue Cross street team were also there to help the community celebrate with face painting, cake cutting and handing out promotional items.



## COVID Community Roots program

In 2020, we launched our COVID Community Roots program with the intent of supporting rural and remote communities at a grassroots level through the pandemic. We decided to continue the program through 2021 and into 2022 based on its success and a continued high level of interest and in recognition that many communities were still coping with the impact of the pandemic.

As we brought this program to a close in late 2022, we reflected on this significant impact it had in supporting the communities we serve through the pandemic. The program awarded a total of \$412,000 to 112 diverse projects across Alberta with recipients ranging from public libraries and Indigenous communities to municipalities, seniors' groups and youth support organizations. All projects had a common thread in supporting the mental, physical and social wellness of community members through the pandemic.

1 project supported by the COVID Community Roots program was the Cremona Community Engagement site's programming for community seniors suffering from isolation during the pandemic.

**“As a senior woman who lives alone, the restrictions made it difficult to get together with friends, especially those who share my passion to quilt, knit, point or explore other mediums. The Cremona Community Engagement site has been wonderful in providing weekly craft kits, videos to learn new things, classes held over Zoom and cooking and baking ideas, and has been a way to interact with others while staying safe. Thank you to all those who’ve worked hard to keep our spirits up during a challenging time. You might not realize how important this funding has been to so many of us.”**

*Dianne Howells, community senior*



Partnerships

## Committed to health equity

Alberta Blue Cross works closely with dozens of organizations across the province to collectively make a positive impact in our communities and ensure Albertans have access to programs and services to support and promote their health.

### ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

We recognize access to healthy food is a key determinant of health and, for this reason, we support a variety of initiatives across the province that address food insecurity. Our support ranges from sponsorship of the Fresh Routes program in Calgary and the Free Play for Kids healthy snack program in Edmonton to funding the creation of community gardens in rural communities through our COVID Community Roots program.

Leading up to the 2022 holiday season, we acknowledged that it had been a particularly tough year for many Albertans who were exacerbated by the continued impact of the pandemic combined with high inflation. With Alberta having the highest rate of food insecurity in Canada, we know the critical role our food banks play in addressing the issue. As such, we were pleased to provide a \$25,000 donation to Food Banks Alberta to help address the issue of food insecurity across our province.

### SUPPORTING THE WELLBEING OF ALBERTA'S YOUTH

In the fall of 2022, we were pleased to see the Government of Alberta introduce a new curriculum for kindergarten to grade 6 students that includes an expanded focus on health and wellness. A key focus of our community support is health promotion for children, based on the understanding that healthy kids become healthy adults. We engage extensively in wellness promotion at Alberta schools through a multitude of involvements that impact tens of thousands of students in hundreds of schools across the province, including in Indigenous communities.

Our involvements include the following:

- Sponsorship of the Alberta Medical Association Youth Run Club, which is active in hundreds of schools across Alberta and supports upwards of 26,000 participants.
- Supporting Free Play for Kids, an initiative that provides after-school sports opportunities for disadvantaged children. More than 60 schools participated in this program in 2022 and, as the snack sponsor, we provided free snacks to 240 kids 5 times a week for the entire year.
- Sponsorship of Apple Schools, an organization that provides wellness programming in more than 75 schools across Alberta with a goal of preventing chronic diseases related to childhood overweight and obesity.
- Supporting NSTEP, a dietitian-led program in schools across Alberta to teach children, parents, teachers and communities about healthy eating and healthy activities.
- Sponsorship of the Lung Association's Breathe Smart program to educate children on the risks of vaping and youth smoking, which was delivered to 40 schools in 2022 and will continue into 2023.

We also actively promote youth mental health through initiatives like our ongoing sponsorship of the MoreGoodDays program, which delivers daily text messages of advice, support and inspiration. Both our Built Together program and our COVID Community Roots program promote wellness in schools with many grants provided to schools and parent councils to support school-based infrastructure and programs that promote active living.



### PROMOTING WELLBEING FOR OLDER ADULTS

Promoting the wellbeing of older adults is a growing area of focus for us as we advance the concept of wellbeing at any age and support Alberta's aging-in-place strategy.

Based on incredible demand for printing of the *Keeping Well* booklet for older adults in 2021, we worked with the Alberta Injury Prevention Centre to promote the resource online and sponsor reprinting of the booklet for distribution across the province again in 2022. Keeping Well is a practical resource for seniors and contains a myriad of useful information on topics like activity and exercise, healthy eating, fall prevention, medication use, vision care, mental health and fraud prevention.

With falls being the leading cause of injury among seniors in Alberta and the impact of the rising population of seniors on our health care and long-term care systems, we continued to work with Finding Balance, an initiative of the Injury Prevention Centre, to help prevent falls among seniors.

In April 2022, we sponsored the Alberta 55 plus Provincial Winter Games hosted in Edmonton. From curling and darts to pickleball and bowling, more than 1,000 participants competed in 14 events across the city. Our Street Team was on site to cheer on participants, interact with attendees and had the opportunity to present medals to some of the competitors.

In May 2022, we sponsored the Top 7 Over 70 Gala, which recognizes exceptional contributions of older adults in our community. As we continue to expand on our commitment to promote wellness for older Albertans, we were so pleased to be in attendance to honour these amazing individuals.

### ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH AND DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

As a champion for diversity, equity and inclusion, we have a wide range of involvements across the province that focus on health equity.

In 2022, this included sponsoring initiatives of YW Calgary and YWCA Edmonton, whose missions are to advance gender equity by responding to urgent needs in communities through advocacy and grassroots initiatives. We continued to sponsor YW Calgary's transitional housing program to help women in crisis or transition improve their emotional health and build skills for personal interest, healthy eating and potential future employment. We also sponsored YWCA Edmonton's counselling services and GirlSpace program. The counselling services sponsorship allowed them to offer services on a sliding-scale framework so cost wouldn't be a barrier to accessing services. As a result, 99 per cent of their sessions were partially or fully subsidized. GirlSpace is their youth programming to build leaders and foster lasting, positive benefits that girls can carry into young adulthood.

**“In 2022, our Transitional Housing program provided more than 320 women with housing and case management support. Alberta Blue Cross's focus on client engagement wellness activities had a significant impact on the mental health and overall wellbeing of many of the women who came through our program.”**

Salwa Naalu, manager, Housing and Outreach, YW Calgary





In our ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the importance of mental health, we support National Depression Screening Day (NDSD) every October and sponsored the initiative in 2022. Hosted by Calgary Counselling Centre, the free public service is offered to Calgarians and beyond through a short, easy-to-complete and anonymous online questionnaire, available at [areyoufeelingok.com](https://areyoufeelingok.com), and by encouraging those with depressive symptoms to seek help. From October 3 to 9, a total of 2,766 people took the quiz.

While Momentum Counselling YEG had to cancel its in-person Mental Health Awards in 2022 due to the pandemic, we were still able to support this event, which recognized 17 outstanding nominees through online and personal recognition. Alberta Blue Cross received an award in recognition of our innovative COVID Community Roots program.

As an ally of the LGBTQ2S+ community, we were also pleased to continue our support of the 2022 Calgary PRIDE festival. We also celebrated PRIDE month with our team members in 2022 to show our solidarity and allyship for the LGBTQIA2K+ community.

#### **PROMOTING WELLBEING AMONG MÉTIS AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

We are committed to authenticity in our relationships, positively impacting the communities we serve and working together to advance wellness. Our Indigenous Pathway that guides our involvements is overseen by a steering committee that includes representation from leaders in the Métis and Indigenous communities of Alberta. A key focus of our commitment is advancing youth empowerment and physical activity.

Some of the Indigenous events we sponsored in 2022 included the following:

- The virtual Rise Up Forum, hosted by the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association to empower Indigenous youth, saw more than 80 participants aged 13 to 29 years old.

- The annual Still I Rise ᑭᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦ Summit, which celebrates Indigenous stories, fosters resilience for Indigenous youth and encourages reconciliation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike, all while focusing on positive mental health and wellbeing. The free, virtual event welcomed more than 2,000 students in grades 6 through 12 from 78 schools across Alberta.
- The Forward Summit, held at the Grey Eagle Event Centre on the Tsuut'ina Nation, brought corporate Canada and Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses together for meaningful discussions on how we can create an economy that is equal to all.

1 of the many organizations we were pleased to support in 2022 through the COVID Community Roots program was the Dene Tha' First Nation Recreation and Cultural Society. The society serves the Chateh community, 1 of Alberta's northernmost Indigenous communities. We funded the society's Great Recreational Activities for Children's Engagement (G.R.A.C.E) program, which organizes various games and non-competitive activities for the community's 100 children and youth including basketball, volleyball, ping-pong, chess, music, singing and cooking.

Meanwhile, we are proud to be a founding sponsor of the Keep Tobacco Sacred Collaboration. This community-based initiative with collaborative leadership and broad participation from First Nations communities across Alberta is intended to advance commercial tobacco use prevention among Indigenous communities by engaging First Nations Elders, knowledge keepers and youth to develop and implement local initiatives to prevent and reduce commercial tobacco use and support cultural knowledge restoration of sacred and traditional tobacco.



# Scholarships



# Committed to removing financial barriers to education

Post-secondary education opens doors to youth to lead better lives and improves the health and wellness of our communities. Through this scholarship program, we are committed to easing some of the financial barriers for students in Alberta.

Our scholarship program supports more than 80 awards each year for full-time students based on academic achievement and financial need. The awards are administered directly through accredited post-secondary institutions across the province.

**“Thank you for your generosity to help support students like me. I am truly honoured to have received your scholarship. It is very encouraging and makes me feel that my hard work is valued and recognized.”**

Xue Yan Guo, pharmacy student at the University of Alberta and recipient of the Alberta Blue Cross pharmacy scholarship

Through our Indigenous scholarship program, we work to address the education inequity faced by Indigenous peoples in Alberta by making post-secondary studies more financially accessible. The \$1,500 awards are based on scholastic achievement, financial need and community involvement. Scholarship recipients are selected by an external committee with expertise in academia and Indigenous education. In 2022, we awarded 3 scholarships to Indigenous students who were completing their high school education and entering their first year of post-secondary study, as well as 3 scholarships to mature students entering their first year of post-secondary education. Based on a high level of interest in the program, we expanded it to include a total of 6 scholarships for mature students in future years.







**MEET AN INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP  
RECIPIENT, LUKE KLUG**

Luke Klug, a member of the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation band and a kinesiology student at the University of Alberta, learned about our Indigenous scholarship program from his uncle, a coordinator for the Athabasca Tribal Council.

“Receiving this amazing award has allowed me to devote more of my time to my studies and less to working, so I don’t have to stress about paying my rent and supporting my son,” said Luke.

After completing the Personal Fitness Trainer program at NAIT, Luke became inspired to become a physiotherapist and help people move without pain. He suffered a knee injury at the age of 16 and underwent 8 years of medical appointments, tests and medications before he found a physical therapist who was able to help him overcome the injury and relieve his pain. After being involved in a serious car accident in 2019, he decided to finally go back to school.

Luke operates a personal training business and has spent countless hours researching and speaking with physical therapists and medical professionals to be able to provide the best results for his clients. He places a high value on his physical wellbeing, working out 6 times or more a week, and enjoys riding his motorcycle and playing video games in his spare time. He has also spent time giving back to his local community by sitting in on group therapy sessions for youth, where he provides first-hand experience and offers a unique perspective.

Studious and hardworking, Luke intends to apply for the University of Alberta's Rehabilitative Medicine program, which is among the best in the world. After graduating as a physical therapist, he plans to open a clinic and hire other therapists, creating the freedom for him to travel and learn more about the human body.





# Environmental commitments

## Committed to a better world

**Alberta Blue Cross is committed to reducing our environmental footprint in the realization that our actions as an organization impact our environment and that together, we can reduce our impact.**

Through 2022, we significantly advanced this commitment as we continued to incorporate an environmental sustainability lens across our facilities and operations. We have aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to support responsible consumption and production, as well as climate action.

While our shift to hybrid workstyles through the pandemic has been a factor in our ability to reduce our environmental footprint, we continued to focus on business practices such as reducing paper consumption through increasing digitization. This has resulted in our paper costs being cut in half from 2021 to 2022.

As we continue to promote direct bill and online claims submission for health providers and plan members alike, we are seeing a significant reduction in paper claim submissions. Between 2020 and 2022, our total number of paper claims scanned dropped from 2.57 million pages to 1.22 million pages—a reduction of more than a million pages.

At the same time, through a focus on operational efficiencies, we have also been able to realize reductions in our electricity and water consumption.







Our ambassadors

## Our ambassadors

### COMMITTED TO BEING CHAMPIONS FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

At Alberta Blue Cross, our team members share our passion for making a positive difference in the communities we serve and play an active role in our community involvements. Our team members are true champions for our communities.

#### EMPLOYEE GIVING CAMPAIGN

For decades, our team members have been our most avid champions for supporting our communities. In the fall of 2022, we decided to build upon this strong foundation by reframing our annual employee giving campaign. This was a timely change considering our renewed commitment to our communities through our refreshed Vision and Corporate Strategy and the evolution of our workplace with many of our team members now working remotely.

1 key objective of evolving our employee giving campaign was to provide our team members with greater personal choice in giving while being more inclusive of our team members' differing interests and priorities. As such, we decided to match each team member's donation, up to \$100, directly to the Canadian charitable organization of their choice.

We also introduced a new employee giving advisory committee in 2022 to provide year-round input and support for our team member-led charitable endeavours. These include our annual employee giving campaign, our monthly Casual for a Cause event and other employee-led giving initiatives. We were pleased to have 19 team members from across our organization volunteer to be part of this committee.

Our reframed employee giving campaign began in mid-October and concluded November 30, raising more than \$60,000 and supporting 85 different charitable organizations. This included the following:

- More than \$2,000 for Autism Edmonton through a special fundraising challenge organized by our advisory committee.
- More than \$16,000 in team member donations to the United Way.
- More than \$27,000 in team member donations to organizations through the employee giving campaign, with more than \$16,000 being matched by our community foundation.



## HEARTS OF BLUE

Our Hearts of Blue employee-led charity continues to support dozens of grassroots organizations across Alberta through donations of needed items and volunteer support. We provide an annual match of employee donations to Hearts of Blue from our community foundation. We support organizations ranging from homeless and women's shelters to organizations that support children and Indigenous communities.

2022 was an extremely busy year for Hearts of Blue, with our team members donating more than \$46,000 to 55 different charitable organizations. Some examples of our 2022 donations include the following:

- In December, we supported École Providence School's wellness program in McClelland in northern Alberta by helping fund teen hygiene packages for 25 students in need from grades 5 to 8. The school's wellness worker sent us a heartfelt thank you after delivering the packages to students, who were delighted to see all the products.
- In August, we delivered various food items, crafts and art supplies to Youth Unlimited Edmonton, which provides a safe space, food, activities and care to teens who often live in unsafe homes and don't get to eat regularly.
- In June, a group of team member volunteers and Hearts of Blue committee members planted flowers in the Pilgrims Hospice courtyard. The volunteers greatly enjoyed their time, and Hearts of Blue also made a donation to the Pilgrims Hospice Society to help with their work to support those diagnosed with a progressive, life-threatening illness and their loved ones by providing compassionate family-centred care.

- In January, we delivered art supplies to the Alcove Addiction Recovery Centre for Women in Calgary, which gives women the opportunity and support to break the cycle of addiction and abuse in their families and for future generations.

**"From the bottom of our Alcove hearts, what amazing gifts for the women of Alcove Addiction Recovery Centre. Currently we have 16 women in residential treatment, and they were over the moon to have received the gifts of arts and crafts so they can have access to creative outlets and the ability to express themselves in artful ways. We thank Alberta Blue Cross for this wonderful gesture."**

*Alcove Addiction Recovery Centre for Women*

## RECOGNIZED FOR OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITIES

On November 15, we were thrilled to receive 2 National Philanthropy Day awards in the health category at an event at the Edmonton Convention Centre. The awards were presented to Alberta Blue Cross in recognition of our ongoing support for Compassion House Foundation and STARS Air Ambulance.



**“So many of the residents, clients, family members, staff and volunteers enjoy being out in the courtyard. The flowers add so much peace, comfort and beauty! Thanks so much, Alberta Blue Cross.”**

Loreen Chapman, volunteer,  
Pilgrims Hospice Society

# About us

**Alberta Blue Cross is the largest benefits provider in Alberta and one of the largest in Western Canada.**

We serve more than 1.8 million members with benefits coverage through more than 5,000 small and large employer group plans, personal plans and government-sponsored programs. In 2022, Alberta Blue Cross processed more than 77.2 million claim lines with a value exceeding \$3.5 billion.

Alberta-based and Alberta-grown, we provide health and wellness plans, programs and services on a viable, not-for-profit basis for the financial protection and wellbeing of our communities.



