

## 2024 Presidents Report

All right we're going to start off with a quick roll call as we have some guests here to observe.

I do need to let you know that our numbers are a little low as we have several families down in Washington participating in the Pacific Northwest Battle of the Border and, unfortunately, we also have some of our board out of town attending a funeral. Our quorum is 15 though, which we are well over, so we are good to go to address the business on the agenda.

I'm really excited to provide this report. The overarching goal of this association has been to provide inclusive opportunities for the development of lacrosse as a sport for all, as well as to facilitate team and individual athlete objectives wherever possible. Did we ever accomplish a lot since our last AGM!

I'm going to have our amazing volunteer committees dive in after with more details, but here are some of the highlights (there's a lot, so buckle in):

- Let's start with your board. We had to do a bit of a cabinet shuffle after the last AGM due to personal lives throwing a few curve balls. We also voted as a board to get back on the pre-covid rotation that was modified by a previous executive, in order to be congruent with our bylaws and regulations and to be fair to our hard-working volunteers! Thankfully we had amazing volunteers that were able to be flexible and step up to the tasks and BYLAW 4.5 that allowed us to make the changes that were needed!
- As you know sports are expensive and the board has worked tirelessly to keep the inflation costs minimal to our membership. This has involved some fundraising. We did the Milk River Kinsmen raffle at Park Place Mall and we were even able to jump in and cover some shifts that another organization couldn't fill (primarily thanks to Tanya), but we got it done! We did the Raffle Box Progressive 50/50, our Floorbusters Raffle, some game day 50/50's and next weekend we will be doing the Domestic Diva's Christmas Market at the Exhibition. Also of note, the Juniors did the WEST JET Gift of FLIGHT Raffle. Due to some fantastic record keeping by our volunteers and the report that JJ and Tanya submitted, our AGLC licensing is successfully in the bag for another year! As well, I was chatting with an agent from corporate registries on Friday and they complimented our association! Did you know that it is public record that Lethbridge Lacrosse is the only association south of Calgary that has fluidly remained in good standing as a non-profit society for the last 10 years??? Even through covid! Well-done you guys!
- Over the last two years, we have been able to do some athletic subsidization and sponsorship for athletes that were incurring extraordinary expenses or participating in unique ventures. Something really special about this board, that I'm so proud of, has been the recognition that sports costs aren't specific to registration costs. Players need

equipment. We all know that equipment failures only happen when we're far away from home! There is travel to extra practices. Extra time off of work. Every player needs a fan club and whether they're injured or homesick, or scored a goal, looking up into the stands in an unfamiliar barn and seeing your people is meaningful. Family members experiencing their athlete's highs and lows is meaningful, so this board was very mindful of being all inclusive in supporting families with pre allocated scholarship and sponsorship efforts.

- Early in the New Year, we unveiled the Rockies Junior Development program that could provide additional programming beyond league play for those players that were looking for alternate options in their development path. This has allowed for extra coaching, extra practices, tournament travel teams, off season programming, winter skill development, introduction of recreational field programming, presentations on the path to junior ball and NCAA scholarships, forging partnerships across the province and cross border with like minded organizations and much more that I can let our committees expand on shortly.
- Cudas, Rockies and Pioneers online stores were launched and the SWAG is everywhere, especially in all of the schools.
- Speaking of schools. Our volunteers really took the ball and ran with it on school visits this last year. We offered introduction to lacrosse, as well as some schools brought us in to learn how to roll lacrosse into their phys. ed curriculums. I'll let Devon talk more about that with his report, but it was amazing. Every student was given a business card inviting them to the next COME TRY event where we hosted record numbers! Sometimes we would get over 50 new children for a session.
- What we were finding was that there were unique demographics of different socioeconomic backgrounds, ESL children. A huge number of families that would not have had the opportunity to try out a stick in their child's hands. In our goal for inclusivity and breaking down the barriers to make our sport accessible to all, that led us to our recreational programming pilot this past year. We had 39 new children sign up. Rick will tell you more about that when he's up.
- As part of our initiative to connect with more families and make the sport more accessible, we did our first big equipment bank and swap. The awe on the faces of these families when they realized they were gearing up their child at zero or minimal cost was one of the driving forces for me sticking out this year. I've never felt more humbled and honoured. And a quick shout, some of our biggest contributors of equipment were the Pioneers.

- Carrying on our focus of inclusion, we partnered with Lacrossing Barriers and were able to support funding, facility rental, coaches and athlete volunteers to really enhance the experience for individuals with a broad range of diversity.
- One of our coolest moments as well, was when we had to replace some jerseys this year, we were able to provide a full set of blue and white Cudas jerseys to our friends at Ability Resource Centre for their sports league. Loudest fans in our stands too! Thank-you Chance for creating that friendship!
- We really worked hard to increase our bank of certified coaches and provide them with additional training. Chris works nonstop for this club. We've got Junior Players coming back to coach, NCAA athletes. They come back because they know what is needed, they respect what was done for them and they respect what we're trying to do for current players and players coming up.
- We have a diversity training curriculum being designed with some of our First Nation Communities that will be available to coaches, volunteers, players, officials and families in the New Year!
- We have seen a 35% membership increase in our program this year. We also include the Juniors and Seniors in our membership which has really created some meaningful partnerships and support for athletes. We share trainer resources, guest coaching, special fundraising events – you name it. We work extremely well with each other and I think Lethbridge now has lacrosse players as young as 4 and all the way up to 64?
- With that, we currently have 2 RMLL Major League Teams with LLA with the revival of the Senior C Pioneers – and what a comeback! Jon will tell you more in a bit.
- In partnership with the Pioneers, the Cudas and the Rockies, the Lethbridge Lacrosse community raised an unprecedented \$4000.00 for the Cindy Garant Memorial Cancer Fund. What an honour! The Garant family attended. It was a beautiful day with a whole lot of lacrosse! We invited all of Southern Alberta and Alberta Lacrosse to participate and are hoping that they will take us up on the invite next year! I'm also really hoping the teams actually washed the pink socks so that we can wear them next year and continue to grow the event.
- Floorbusters was another outstanding success which Dawn's report will outline.

- We had several players participate in the Missoula Battle of the Border and currently in the Pacific Northwest Battle of the Border.
- You've heard the word Inclusion a lot in this report. For LLA, Inclusion also means athletes that want more than parity ball having the right to explore those opportunities and not having to always leave their communities to do so. We've heard from some of the most successful lacrosse players in the province on what they needed to get where they are, and it is significantly more than what has been offered in the south to date. We've heard the argument that if we offer true A ball, that it will come at a cost of B Ball, but what isn't acknowledged is that we are losing league players to A ball in other communities because we aren't offering it here. When we look at real inclusion, a player may have the desire and the skill to play up, but may not have the resources to travel to Calgary 4+ times a week, so I hope that at some point we can evolve in that direction. The majority of players coming out of minors can make a pretty seamless transition into Tier 2. Those that haven't had the more elite opportunities often struggle making the jump to Tier 1. We can do better by those players at the minor levels if we provide the opportunities here and that will also support the Tier 1 needs.
- We have multiple players from Lethbridge that have made the roster for HOKS A ball.
- We have multiple players from LLA that made the Junior Roughnecks Roster.
- We have multiple players from LLA on the Alberta Indigenous Games Rosters.
- Our tournament teams did extremely well this year! We were able to partner with Rockyview and the U15 showdown at Canada Day was a total barn burner!
- We have a Team Alberta Field Lacrosse Player that won Bronze at Nationals.
- We have a Team Canada Box Lacrosse Player that won Gold at Worlds.
- Lethbridge earned 3 / 5 SALA Banners U11, U15, U17.
- Of our two divisions that were eligible for Provincials, they BOTH made it to the finals with our U15's bringing home Silver and our U17's bringing home Gold.
- We have a record number of Junior A call ups coming out of Lethbridge, straight out of the draft onto the rosters, but also 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year Tier 1 players being called up! Even though that impacts the balance of our Junior Program, we always wholeheartedly support individual players goals and help pave the way wherever we can.

- We also have not one, but 2 Lethbridge Lacrosse players that made the NLL this year. One with the Calgary Roughnecks and one with Colorado Mammoth.

**ALMOST LOOKS LIKE THIS GANG IS DOING SOMETHING RIGHT DOWN HERE!**

In addition to all of those amazing accomplishments, my biggest take away from this past year has been watching these players endless smiles, life lessons and forever friendships. Lacrosse is more than a game. The skills gained shape people for life.

Sports is a huge investment of time and money. It is competitive at all levels. The passion that our players show on the floor was inherited from all of us, so it can be expected that there will be some conflicting interests that can create noise behind the scenes. When I first sat down to write this report, I was a little stuck in that background noise. Then I reminded myself of where I come from. Many of you know that I am a fierce Neuroscience geek, behavioural analyst and post secondary educator. My job is to look for quantitative and measurable outcomes. So, once I was dialed in to that, I was able to recognize that 2024 was a banner year for Lethbridge Lacrosse! More often than not, taking the path of least resistance is the easy way. But like Einstein told us, if you keep doing the same things and expected different results – you’ve found the definition of insanity. To grow means not being afraid to swim upstream and make change. It’s also simple evolution. If you want to see a board of directors that will put it all on the line for children and youth to have opportunities for inclusion, fair play and reaching beyond the safe status quo – these are your people! They are on the right side of history and I am so blessed to have served with them. When I put my head on the pillow at night, I am confident that we have and continue to do right by our association and by the great sport of lacrosse. Thank you for the opportunity!



Outgoing President

Lethbridge Lacrosse Association