

Central Alberta 40 Under 40

Class of 2026

Meet GenNEXT

The Next Generation of Community Leaders

GenNext brings together dedicated professionals in their 20s and 30s who are committed to shaping the future of our community. As an affinity group of United Way Central Alberta, GenNext empowers each of its volunteer members to develop a deeper understanding of local issues while igniting a passion for leadership and philanthropy to drive meaningful change.

GenNext in Action

Harnessing the skills, passions, and networks of our members, GenNext fosters local leadership and inspires collective action around community needs.
We mobilize the energy of our generation by engaging young adults in evolving community issues, creating valuable learning experiences, holding insightful discussions, and implementing hands-on initiatives and activities that drive positive change toward a brighter future.



Sarah Powell



Trent Nicolay



Daniel Mbewa



Zolikha Elgalad



Alexis Forbes
GenNext Facilitator

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Alexandria King

Digital Content & Engagement Specialist - Red Deer Polytechnic

Alexandria creates safe and engaging spaces for everyone in our community, both online and offline

Red Deer Polytechnic Alumni Association Board Member

Inspired by people who work to create lasting change for vulnerable community members, Alexandria is passionate about advocating for equity and fairness. She is a storyteller who amplifies others' voices through her professional and personal life. She stands out as a kind, understanding, respectful, and helpful person in her daily life, believing you never know what someone else may be going through. Even a small act can make a big difference for someone.

Alexandria's most recent volunteer role is with the Red Deer Polytechnic Alumni Association (RDPAA). As an alum of the RDP Visual Arts Diploma, she hopes to inspire and support past, present and future art students. "I enjoy engaging the RDP Alumni community as an RDP Alumni board member. In addition, the Alumni Association supports current students through scholarships, bursaries and sponsorships. We know what it is like to be a student, and we want to make the experience as memorable and enjoyable as possible!"

As a volunteer for RDPAA, Alexandria uses her community mind and leadership skills to help build community engagement, opportunities for students, and more! She believes in putting others first and building pathways to help others succeed. "It's about finding ethical solutions and ensuring you stand up for those who don't always have a voice. [Leadership is] about advocacy and supporting those around you. You don't leave people behind and find solutions for the betterment of the team."

Proud Central Alberta 40 Under 40 Sponsor:
Red Deer Polytechnic Alumni Association

The Red Deer Polytechnic Alumni Association (RDPAA) was founded in 1988 to assist students and help them stay connected with the institution.

Now, it is a key part of every RDP alumnus's journey, playing an important role in envisioning the future of the alumni relationship.

Learn more about the RDPAA and how you can get involved!

rdpolytech.ca/information/alumni/stay-connected/alumni-association

Red Deer Polytechnic
Alumni



Alice Koning

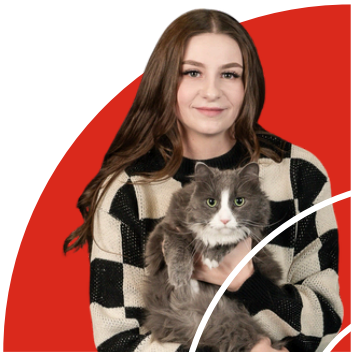
Head of Interpretation - Waskasoo Environmental Education Society

Alice is connecting people through nature, science and the night sky

Alice loves spending time in nature and believes it's intrinsically good for people from all walks of life. As the Head of Interpretation for Waskasoo Environmental Education Society (WEES), she gets to do what she loves and make an impact in our community.

Alice believes that a leader leads by example. This doesn't mean doing everything herself; rather, it means setting the expectations, then creating the conditions for others to contribute, find meaning, and make an impact. She is showing these skills in her leadership role in the summer camp collaboration between the Kerry Wood Nature Centre and Care for Newcomers, which takes youth new to Canada on a summer camping trip. Each summer, this camping trip is an indescribably fantastic experience for these youth. It helps them feel more connected to their new life in Alberta, connect with each other and their Canadian peers, and enjoy the benefits of spending time in nature and doing new, challenging things!

Reflected through all of her accomplishments is compassion, kindness, and the core belief that communities where all people, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, economic background, etc., feel included and respected are just plain better. Understanding that kindness and care towards others go beyond the small moments and create communities that are more interesting to live in, more environmentally friendly, more economically resilient, and more socially responsible.



Amber Nielsen

Volunteer Coordinator - Central Alberta Humane Society

Amber is creating volunteer opportunities that can lead to our furry friends finding their forever homes

Wanting to combine her love of helping people and creating change with her passion for animals, Amber joined the Central Alberta (CA) Humane Society as a volunteer coordinator. Now she does what she loves and inspires others to get involved in the community!

Amber coordinates many pieces for the CA Humane Society, including the Assisted Volunteer Program, which allows people with disabilities to volunteer with the support of another person, and the Alongside Companion Paws program, which provides a space at CA Humane for therapy dog teams to be evaluated.

Proud of the relationships she has built with volunteers and organizations across Central Alberta, Amber is creating a network of people who care deeply about animals and their community. She can also be proud of the growth that she has supported. It directly reflects the volunteers' dedication, but it also shows what can happen when people feel welcome, included, and inspired to get involved. "Seeing so many people come together for a shared purpose is one of the most meaningful parts of my work," shared Amber.

In her work, she has seen firsthand how much it means when someone is given a real opportunity to contribute. "When people feel respected and supported, they often discover strengths they did not know they had. Creating those opportunities is important because it helps people grow, builds stronger relationships, and allows more people to make a meaningful difference."



Amy MacTaggart

Process Engineer - Borouge International

Amy is helping create opportunities for rural young people to learn, grow, and gain confidence in themselves

Inspired by the feeling that none of us get where we are alone, Amy helps young people recognize their potential and gives them the confidence to pursue it. As a female engineer from a rural community, she is passionate about helping young people explore different career opportunities in STEM. Through initiatives such as Career Day, GenScience, SHAD tours, and the Central Alberta Science Fair, she has worked to increase awareness of post-secondary and STEM pathways while helping students see that those opportunities exist in both urban and rural contexts.

As a leader with the Central Lacombe 4-H Beef Club, she supports youth as they learn the club's practical skills in livestock management, finance, marketing, and judging, as well as social and community-minded skills like leadership, responsibility, and confidence. Amy believes in the importance of showing up consistently for others. "It's being present and creating space for people to grow into the best versions of themselves. Some of the most meaningful moments I've experienced haven't been my own accomplishments, but watching someone else gain confidence, overcome a challenge, and succeed." She shared.



Ariel Kolody

Process Engineer-In-Training - Borouge International

Ariel is demonstrating that it is never too late to take a new path

Ariel is making a meaningful impact in the community by showing up, getting involved, and working together to make a difference. Returning to university in her late twenties to pursue a degree in Chemical Engineering, Ariel took on the significant challenge head-on, learning the value of perseverance, determination, and believing in her own potential; she graduated with honours. "More than the degree itself, I am proud of the commitment and resilience it took to reach that milestone. It is an experience that continues to remind me to embrace new challenges, keep learning, and never underestimate what I am capable of achieving." Ariel shared.

To Ariel, leadership is not about being the brightest person in the room, but about helping others shine. Ariel knows these leadership traits well from her three years as a United Way Central Alberta GenNext committee member, and her involvement with the United Way Committee at NOVA Chemicals. She has supported fundraising initiatives, organized community events, and volunteered at events such as Festival of Trees to help create memorable experiences for children and families.

Ariel believes that when we pass that support on to others, we create a ripple effect of positive change that can reach far beyond what we may ever see. Knowing that even a small contribution can make a meaningful difference is what motivates her to continue giving back to her community and workplace. When communities and workplaces create an environment where everyone feels they belong, people are more empowered to share their perspectives, contribute their strengths, and reach their full potential. Ultimately, she believes that when we make space for everyone to thrive, we build stronger, more compassionate, and more successful communities and workplaces.



Ashley Reierson

Director, Business Development & Communications
Red Deer Regional Airport

Owner
Reier & Rose Marketing

Ashley is building relationships that are strong enough to take flight

Born and raised in Central Alberta, Ashley is proud to have professional roots and raise a family here. Ashley centers herself on helping create opportunities that strengthen our community, support economic growth, and inspire others to see the potential of our region. She is a leader who builds meaningful relationships, recognizes people's potential, and creates an environment where others feel valued, empowered, and motivated to succeed.

Ashley has mindfully chosen every career and volunteer position, making an impact on those she has worked with; this is reflected not only in the projects she helped to deliver, but in the relationships built, the opportunities created, and the doors opened for others. This work is exemplified by her accomplishments in helping plan and execute the 2023 and 2026 Red Deer Regional Airshows. Together, the two Airshows welcomed visitors from across North America, showcasing the ability to attract visitors and support regional tourism and economic activity on a large scale, creating a ripple effect that impacts many communities.



Austin Janes

Senior Commercial Account Manager

Austin is creating the Central Alberta he wants others to experience

Growing up in Red Deer, Austin enjoys being part of the community, and he hopes that through volunteering, he is helping create a community where everyone feels the same. "If I can work to help make Red Deer a better place to live, generations will follow in our steps, and we will continue to grow and thrive," Austin shared.

Austin is motivated by opportunities to make a difference in others' lives, often when they need it most. Austin volunteers because he believes that the volunteer work being done in his community helps others receive the support they might need to thrive. He understands that sometimes people are overlooked or not as fortunate, but that doesn't mean that they shouldn't have access to the resources a lot of us take for granted.

Austin has worked as a commercial account manager for the last eight years. In this role, he assists businesses in our community in obtaining necessary funding for operations so they can continue to grow and stimulate the local economy. He feels fortunate to help so many build their businesses, knowing the positive ripple effect it can create by providing more local opportunities.

In his personal life, Austin is proud of the family he has started with his wife; they welcomed a newborn daughter recently and are taking on the role of parents with happiness and pride. He is excited for what the future will bring. He looks forward to supporting a community that his family can enjoy for generations to come. "Family and my relationships in the community have gotten me to where I am in life and in my career, and I feel paying it forward is my civic duty to help others succeed in life."



Brett Wold

Teacher & Hockey Academy Instructor - Notre Dame High School
Head Coach - RDP Queens Hockey

Brett is coaching our community to a better place on and off the ice

As a teacher, coach, and mentor, Brett has spent over 15 years supporting hundreds of young athletes to become their best selves on and off the ice through the Notre Dame Hockey Academy, Red Deer Minor Hockey, and Hockey Alberta programs.

For Brett, leading means showing up and setting the example of how things should be done the right way. Teaching others to become better people, whether it's at home, during sports or at work.

His biggest inspiration is to build and coach programs that one day his kids would be proud to attend or play on. Coaching his kids' hockey has been a huge accomplishment, not by counting wins or trophies, but by the time spent doing what they both love together. "I teach my kids that Failure is the best, and it's an awesome tool to learn from and get better. Life has a funny way of teaching you some of the most valuable lessons by going through hard times and making the best of your situations. Embrace it."

Brett is also proud to be part of the hockey journey for so many Central Alberta youth, knowing the impact a Coach or Teacher can have on young athletes and helping them develop to achieve their goals.



Byron Hackett

Managing Editor - Red Deer Advocate

Byron is shining a spotlight on the stories, people, and moments that make Central Alberta a better place

As a coach, Byron has spent years helping young athletes reach their full potential while fostering a lifelong love of sport. Through his volunteer work as a volleyball coach, he has seen firsthand the impact that mentorship and encouragement can have on young people as they grow.

That commitment to helping others succeed is rooted in how he views leadership. Byron believes leadership means being someone people can trust. And that a leader should bring out the best in those around them and empower them to believe they can achieve great things. Much of that perspective comes from the example set by his father. "My dad inspires me. He showed up for others his whole life. Didn't ask for recognition, didn't ask for any handouts or special treatment. I didn't appreciate it enough, how much of a superpower it was to simply show up all the time for others and never complain or ask for anything in return."

Professionally, Byron is making an impact as a trusted voice in his role as Managing Editor of the Red Deer Advocate. He understands the power of storytelling and the role journalism can play in bringing important issues to light and creating meaningful conversations within a community.

One of his proudest accomplishments came from his role as a professional journalist. In 2025, he was awarded first place in "Best column, editorial or opinion post" by the International Association of Fire Fighters for an opinion piece titled "Red Deer Fire Fighters Need More Support".



Carolyn Corrigal

Executive Director - Turning Point Society of Central Alberta

Carolyn is creating dignified pathways to support and belonging

Inspired by the people she serves, Carolyn is creating safe and inclusive spaces for those in need. Learning their stories and seeing the strength they show despite significant challenges and inequities has been one of the most humbling and inspiring experiences of her life. Their experiences remind her why this work matters and motivate her to keep going.

bioFor Carolyn, leadership begins with positive, trusting relationships. She believes that taking the time to build those connections with her team and community partners creates cooperation and confidence in the path they are walking together. Rather than viewing leadership as a hierarchy, Carolyn sees it as one role within a team, with everyone bringing strengths, supporting one another, and finding opportunities to grow. She strives to lead with honesty and fairness, ensuring her decisions reflect the values she asks others to uphold.

That same commitment to working together shapes Carolyn's approach to community impact. She is honoured to help strengthen supports for vulnerable community members, contribute to conversations about service needs, and work towards a more inclusive and dignified response to social issues.



Cayla Gabruck

General Manager - Sunny 94 and Central Alberta Online

Cayla is connecting the community through sports and media

Cayla helps connect the community through sports, teaching, and instilling confidence in young athletes by coaching and creating opportunities for rural youth. She does this by offering affordable volleyball camps at her property during the summer, working with the local non-profit board to make sure her community gets the new ice plant it desperately needs so kids don't have to leave our community to play hockey, figure skate, and more!

Her dad and the impact he had on the community that she grew up in inspire her. "My dad passed away in 2012, but before that, he was an active volunteer in many areas. I can't even list all of the things he did, people he supported, and the lasting impact he was able to create. When he passed away, it was amazing to see the impact he left. Not just in what he helped build, but in the people he helped. One person can make a difference, even if you maybe don't realize it at the time." Her son is also a huge inspiration in her day-to-day life. She is really passionate about making sure kids in rural communities have the same opportunities as those in larger centers. "I was so fortunate to have so many opportunities growing up that wouldn't have been possible without the volunteers in the community - I want to make sure [my son, and other children] have the same opportunities," shared Cayla.

Professionally, Cayla is making an impact as the General Manager at Sunny 94 and Central Alberta Online. She does this by creating a culture that encourages staff to get out there and volunteer, leading by example, and stepping up to support non-profits and community initiatives that strengthen Central Alberta.



Dr. Chelsie Goulet

Owner & Chiropractor - Aligned Together
Part-time Faculty - Red Deer Polytechnic

Chelsie has aligned her passion for health, education and community

Chelsie has worked to create connections and build opportunities through her chiropractic clinic, Aligned Together.

More than a clinic, she has built a space where practitioners collaborate, patients feel heard, and care is centered around the whole person. She believes community impact comes from creating opportunities, building relationships, and connecting people with the support they need.

Her connection to the community is largely shaped by Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP), which has been incredibly meaningful to her. Having gone from student to alumna, supporting student-athletes, and now teaching in the Kinesiology program, she has the opportunity to contribute at different stages of the student journey. She hopes that students recognize their potential, understand the value they bring to their communities, and feel supported as they pursue whatever their future holds.

Being a mom is also an important part of Chelsie's story and motivation. She wants to show her son that women can build meaningful careers, lead, make an impact in their communities, and still be fun and present mothers. She hopes he grows up knowing that people do not have to fit into one box or choose between ambition and family.



Constance Gallant

Athletics Sponsorship and Fundraising Officer - Red Deer Polytechnic

Constance is a team player, making a difference on and off campus

Since 2013, Constance has worked at Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP) with Development and Alumni Relations, building relationships with students, alumni, and the community.

Two years ago, her focus shifted solely to the Athletics department. Constance finds it hard not to be inspired when her work focuses on RDP student athletes and the community that supports them. RDP Kings and Queens Athletics has a strong tradition of excellence, and our current student-athletes continually rise to the challenge both in their sport and in the classroom – many of them are also involved in the community. The connections made with community supporters today not only alleviate the financial burden that comes with being a student-athlete but also lay the groundwork for what comes next.

Raised in a family that prioritized community involvement, Constance spent much of her teens and early 20s volunteering with Girl Guides and other youth groups. After having children of her own, she has shifted her focus to supporting their activities when she can, such as managing her son's lacrosse team and chairing a school fundraising committee.

Everything Constance has accomplished in her professional life has been part of a team. She is most proud of the incredible colleagues and mentors she has had the privilege of learning from and growing with throughout her career.



Courtney Ukrainetz

Executive Director - Canadian Mental Health Association
Professional Counsellor - Kids Help Phone

Courtney is championing meaningful mental health support

Throughout her career, Courtney has learned that meaningful leadership extends beyond managing people or organizations. It involves advocacy, strengthening systems, building relationships, and bringing people together around a shared purpose.

She strives to lead with authenticity, fairness, and integrity, particularly during uncertainty or adversity. She believes we can be compassionate while maintaining accountability, and confident while remaining humble.

"I believe my impact on Central Alberta comes from nearly two decades of supporting individuals, strengthening services, and advocating for more accessible opportunities." Courtney's career began in frontline human services. Today, Courtney serves as the Executive Director of Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Central Alberta. She continues her work from past professional roles and builds on it through mental health education, brain injury supports, outreach, community partnerships, and public advocacy. Over time, Courtney's motivation evolved from supporting individuals directly to strengthening the systems and organizations that serve them.

Beyond her professional roles, she has contributed through youth mentorship, homelessness awareness initiatives, and longstanding volunteer leadership in minor soccer. Inspired by the resilience of people and the difference that genuine connection, compassion, and opportunity can make in someone's life.



Duncan Lowrie

Website Specialist - Red Deer Polytechnic

Duncan is helping people feel heard, encouraged and empowered to thrive

For Duncan, leadership begins with knowing your values and living a life that aligns with them. He believes that the right people come into your life when you are true to your values and lead by example.

He also knows that good leaders recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, surround themselves with people who can fill their gaps, and then empower those people to walk in their gifts and abilities as much as possible. "Empower the people around you and then get out of the way so they can do what they do best."

At Red Deer Polytechnic, Duncan makes sure decisions always serve students. He feels he does his job well when he is able to advocate for students and make choices that directly improve their experience. A firm believer in education, he wants students to access the information they need and complete any task with as few barriers as possible.

Outside of work, Duncan uses his skill set to support community organizations, helping them better serve the people they are trying to help and communicate in ways that build connection.



Gregory Glenn

Scotia Wealth Management - Consultant

Gregory is showing the importance of mentors in our community

Gregory is making an impact by leading by example, personally and professionally. His role is to create an environment where people feel inspired, supported, challenged, and accountable. He is deeply motivated by seeing his investment in youth, his community and his workplace translate into healthier relationships, personal and career development, engagement, participation and inclusivity.

Gregory is an active volunteer in the community, and urges others to get involved wherever they can. Currently, he holds the role of treasurer, board member and committee member for Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBBS) and Boys and Girls Club (BGC) Red Deer. He is proud of the incredible growth and participation by at-risk and marginalized youth within programming at Youth HQ, BBBS, and BGC. "We deeply value when our participants feel more comfortable in their own skin, grow confident in their abilities, grow in their friendships and relationships, and make progress in their personal development. Our vision is to allow all young people to discover and achieve their full potential. Our executive director and our board work diligently to ensure all youth do not experience barriers to our programming, including financial and non-inclusive barriers," shared Gregory. He is also proud to be part of Youth HQ launching the Centre for Social Impact. Understanding that social agencies face cost challenges, a building like this can create opportunities that reduce barriers to accessing essential services.



Jade and Colton Almberg

Owners - Prairie Shore Agronomy Inc.

Jade and Colton are growing connections and rural opportunities

Jade and Colton are helping strengthen Central Alberta's agricultural community by supporting local growers, creating stable employment, and investing in the future of rural Alberta. As founders of Prairie Shore Agronomy Inc., they have built a thriving business that helps producers navigate the ever-changing agricultural landscape with confidence.

Working alongside their team, they provide practical guidance and trusted support that helps strengthen farm businesses, local families, and the broader rural economy.

For them, leadership means showing up every day in their agricultural business and their rural community with consistency, accountability, and a commitment to building something that supports more than just their own family. With six full-time employees, they actively understand the need for strong leadership. "Leadership means creating stable jobs, providing clear direction, and making decisions that balance long-term sustainability with the realities of farming. Agriculture demands resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to take initiative, and we believe strong leadership reflects those same qualities."

Inspired to make an impact in their community and workplace by the opportunity to build something that genuinely supports people. They have worked hard to create a business that provides year-round employment, and are inspired by the idea of offering a positive, stable place for their team to grow. "Knowing our work supports their livelihoods, their families, and their long-term stability motivates us every day. We have done all of this while growing our family, balancing the demands of entrepreneurship with the responsibilities of raising children. These past four years have pushed us personally and professionally, and we're proud of the resilience, commitment, and teamwork that have carried us forward.



Jillian Vukovich

Partner - IG Private Wealth Management

Jillian is turning generosity into action to create impact

Jillian has never been content to sit on the sidelines when she sees an opportunity to make a difference. Whether through her career, volunteer work, or community leadership, she has built a reputation for bringing people together, taking action, and creating positive change across Central Alberta.

Believing that the measure of a great leader isn't just what they accomplish, but the people they lift up, the opportunities they create and the legacy they leave behind. Jillian has become a community leader to many. “Giving back has always been part of who I am. I was raised in a family that deeply valued generosity and community involvement. My parents encouraged me to give what I could, whether that was time, resources, or simply showing up for someone who needed help,” shared Jillian. “Now, as a mother, I have the privilege of passing those same values on to my daughter. Even at her young age, I can see her beginning to understand how fortunate we are and that even the smallest acts of kindness can make a difference.”

Jillian is inspired by knowing that generosity is contagious, and that generosity, kindness and compassion make our community so special. Being able to help individuals and families turn that desire into meaningful, lasting impact is incredibly rewarding. She is honoured to build a career where professional success and community impact aren't separate goals, but can grow together.



Joe Rattan

Partner - Warren Sinclair LLP

Joe is proving the collective is stronger than any one of us

As a lawyer, trusted advisor, and officer of the court, Joe embodies leadership and professionalism by always acting in the best interests of the Central Alberta community as a whole. Joe believes that leaders should show respect to everyone on the team, regardless of organizational hierarchy or authority positions. He believes the sum of the collective is much more powerful than any individual on its own.

Through his professional work and volunteer endeavours, Joe strives to make a meaningful impact in Central Alberta, helping a wide range of individuals and organizations across many industries and sectors.

Being a Central Alberta native, he has a vested interest in seeing this community succeed and prosper. Red Deer and Central Alberta have changed significantly throughout his life, and he wants to be part of the region's positive growth and change, so he is doing his part to help the community prosper economically and socially.

Inspired by his wife and son, along with his extended family, Joe works hard to make a positive, lasting impact in the community so his family and others can grow and live in a welcoming, positive community.

Joe is an active volunteer for the Papp Charitable Foundation. Taking on the roles of director and member of the planning committee, Joe has been a dedicated volunteer since the inception of the Foundation, which celebrated its 6th annual charity golf tournament in 2026. Over the past six tournaments, the team has donated over $100,000 to various local and community organizations and charities, as well as fully funded an athletic scholarship at Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP). Through this work, the Foundation is making a lasting impact on the community that Joe hopes will be sustainable for many more years.



Jon Davies

Clinincal Counsellor & Owner Social Shift Therapy & Wellness and Davies Psychology

Jon is shifting stigma and providing positive supports for mental health

In his previous role as a high school Teacher Counsellor, Jon taught a Leadership class, and over time, learned that the students taking this class benefited most when they focused on understanding and practicing leadership styles that invested heavily in the team.

Now, as a business owner and leader of groups, it's important to him to honour these lessons from his past class. "We review our business values regularly to ensure our team is living them. We review the opportunities to collaborate by providing time and space for our team to gather, share, and grow together. And finally, our team comes first and foremost in our decision-making, and is at the centre of how we make decisions on our business's growth and development. These values and perspectives on leadership have followed me into my work, but also when volunteering in the community."

When Jon and his wife started their family and became parents, it felt important to help create the community they wanted their kids to grow up in. "I have a strong belief that when people are well, their community is well. So, we continue to help people access mental health care in an accessible way because, while each individual deserves to be healthy and access the care they need, our community also deserves to be healthy and cared for too," shared Jon.



Kalcy Dube

Associate Dean-School of Health & Wellness - Red Deer Polytechnic

Kalcy is building pathways for the next generation of healthcare professionals

Born and raised in Central Alberta and starting her career as a nurse in a rural hospital, Kalcy is passionate about contributing to the future of the region that shaped her.

She does so through her leadership philosophy of creating a shared vision and helping people see how their individual contributions connect to something bigger. Kalcy creates environments where people feel comfortable asking questions, learning from one another and contributing their ideas. Understanding that some of the best growth comes from a fail-forward mindset.

Her impact is rooted in her work in healthcare and post-secondary education, where she helps develop and expand programs that prepare future healthcare professionals to serve their communities.

Through her role at Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP), Kalcy works alongside healthcare partners, educators, and community organizations to create opportunities that respond to changing workforce needs. This includes supporting the development of new healthcare programs, strengthening partnerships, and exploring innovative approaches to education for learners who want to start a career close to home. As demand for healthcare professionals grows, Kalcy's responsibility extends beyond delivering programs to asking how she can improve access and educate differently. She is particularly passionate about improving access to healthcare in rural areas and exploring innovative ways that can connect education to real community needs.



Katelyn Ruiz

Contract Instructor - Burman University
Talent Analyst for Learning and Development - AltaGas

Katelyn is supporting personal and community growth

As a long-time Central Alberta resident, Katelyn is proud of the region's growing diversity and opportunities. She works to create a community where everyone has space to contribute, believing that every person's story matters and that everyone deserves a sense of purpose and belonging.

By coordinating volunteer opportunities and elevating the voices of those who call Central Alberta home, Katelyn brings people together in service. Her work has helped provide meals, clothing, family-based programs, adult-learning opportunities, and funding where it is needed. Beyond these immediate outcomes, she is proud of recruiting, training, and organizing volunteers to help build a sustainable system of care.

A proud accomplishment for Katelyn came from a United Way employee campaign she led. After recruiting volunteer Champions from across departments and teams, a planning discussion raised questions about unmet needs within the organization. Those questions led to conversation, advocacy, and policy decisions that aligned employee engagement and support activities with organizational strategy. The resulting change expanded access to food security for students who had previously been ineligible because of their program of study, improving the quality of life of 50 to 100 people immediately and potentially many more over time.



Katherine Rauch

Customized Employment Specialist - Open Door Group

Katherine is bridging gaps in health care and soical serives

Throughout her career, Katherine has worked with people whose circumstances are shaped by systemic barriers, including poverty, discrimination, and limited access to services.

These experiences have reinforced her belief that effective community support requires compassion, cultural awareness, and a willingness to examine the systems in which we work. Her impact is reflected not only in the individuals she has helped, but also in the stronger partnerships, more responsive services, and greater understanding she has helped foster. "I am committed to contributing to a Central Alberta community where people facing significant barriers are treated with dignity, can access meaningful support, and have a genuine opportunity to improve their circumstances," shared Katherine.

Inspired by the belief that everyone deserves dignity, support through difficult circumstances, and a genuine opportunity to build a better future, Katherine helps those who need it with compassion. Throughout her career, she has supported individuals and families facing significant barriers, seeing firsthand how access to the right resources, or a consistent source of support, can make a meaningful difference. Knowing that her work can help the community motivates her to continue learning and contributing with compassion and accountability.

Katherine believes that many different voices and opinions can create beautiful and well-thought-out communities. She knows that inclusion requires more than treating everyone equally; it means recognizing that people have different experiences, needs, and barriers, and being willing to address them thoughtfully.



Kaylee Oracheski

Broker & Client Optimization Lead - Navacord

Kaylee is helping our community navigate life's uncertainties

Through her work with Navacord, Kaylee plays an important role in helping clients prepare for life's unexpected moments. While much of her work happens behind the scenes, she takes pride in supporting her team and helping ensure clients receive the guidance, advocacy, and protection they need when it matters most.

For Kaylee, leadership means being someone others look to for guidance and support. Doing everything you can to help others reach their potential and find their own way. A true leader is not a defined management role or title, but someone who is a safe place to ask questions, to feel heard and supported, and who is open to connecting with others in a genuine way. She is pleased to work for an organization with a strong presence and community ties where she has the benefit of seeing the impact of charity and donation at large in our community.

Although she is relatively new to Central Alberta, Kaylee has quickly come to appreciate the strong sense of community that exists throughout the region. Working for an organization with deep community connections has given her the opportunity to see firsthand the impact charitable giving, volunteerism, and local organizations have on others' lives.



Kirsten Davis

Business Improvement - Borouge International

Kirsten is inspiring the next generation of STEM leaders.

Kirsten was born and raised in Red Deer, where her experiences growing up in Central Alberta sparked many questions about engineering and science, especially before starting her post-secondary education.

Now she gives much of herself to being available to friends and family to offer mentorship and advice, and to participate in youth volunteer opportunities centred around engineering and science. Many of these young people have entered engineering- or science-based careers, and she is proud to be a female mentor for youth in STEM, creating an impact in her community.

When thinking about what differentiates a good leader, Kirsten thinks of the ability to create a common goal and motivate people to work toward it. She believes being a good leader comes down to creating a culture of respect and openness that lets others share their knowledge and experience with the team. Her inspiration to make a positive impact in her community and workplace comes from her family. They are amazing teachers who have dedicated their careers to helping students reach their full potential. "I have always been inspired by their selflessness, and they motivate me to use my gifts in science and math to create opportunities for youth who have similar passions to find their path and give back to our community," Kirsten shares.

She is proud to continue growing her career through continuous learning as she begins her MBA in January 2027. Throughout her career, she has had the opportunity to present awards, judge science design competitions, and support the Central Alberta community of young and developing science and engineering students.



Makenna Bunch

Detox Case Manager -Safe Harbour Society

Makenna is helping community members rediscover hope, dignity and belonging

Through her work supporting individuals facing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges, Makenna has learned that leadership isn't always about having the answers; it's about being willing to listen, advocate, challenge stigma, and show up when it matters most.

"I want my leadership to be reflected in the people who feel supported because I showed up, the voices that are heard because I spoke up, and the positive change we create together. A stronger community starts when we stop asking who will make a difference and recognize that we each have a role to play."

Makenna is making an impact through the relationships she's built, the people that she advocates for, and the compassion she brings into her work every day. Working alongside individuals experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges has shown her how important it is to look beyond someone's circumstances and see the person behind them.

She hopes her impact extends beyond the immediate support that she provides. She wants to help break down stigma, strengthen connections between people and resources, and contribute to a community where everyone has the opportunity to rebuild, grow, and feel a sense of belonging.



Marissa Stryker

Director of Community Relations - sylvan Lake Gulls Baseball Club & the Gulls Give Foundation - Director of Community Relations

Marissa hits it out of the park with community building and relationships

Marissa shows her leadership style by taking the time to understand people as individuals, recognizing their unique strengths and creating opportunities for them to stand out.

She believes that truly knowing your team means delegating based on ability and potential rather than simply availability, and recognizing that the progress and success of a team is a shared accomplishment. Above all, Marissa is leading with integrity, choosing what is right over what is easy and holding herself to the same standards she expects of others.

Through her public-facing roles, Marissa has had the opportunity to connect with many people and organizations across Central Alberta. Her community impact comes from bringing those people together, creating opportunities, and making others feel seen, heard, and supported. She hopes her contributions are reflected in the relationships she has built, the opportunities she has helped create, and the commitment she brings to every initiative she has been a part of.

For Marissa, her work with the Gulls Give Foundation has been especially meaningful. "Beyond funding, we seek opportunities to raise awareness and strengthen the work of organizations that are making a difference in our community," shared Marissa. "I often laugh to myself about the career path I've followed- I've never been much of a sports person and yet I have built a career beside a baseball diamond (and before that in a hockey rink). But I recognize that the nature of my work has always been secondary to the people it brings me into contact with. The human connection is what makes it all meaningful."



Max Kilian

Portfolio Manager - RBC Dominion Securities

Max is investing his financial expertise to build a stronger, more confident community.

Max believes in leading by example, holding himself to the standards set for the team, and treating people with respect and empathy to build trust.

As a newcomer to Central Alberta, Max has made it a priority to take the time to integrate into the community. Along the way, he has met new people who have helped shape his curiosity into a sense of where his time could make the greatest difference. Getting right to work to make an impact, he drew on the financial expertise that he has built through his professional career and began a financial literacy program with a local women's shelter to help individuals build confidence, plan for the future, and get back on their feet.

Max's greatest inspiration is his two daughters. "I want them to grow up knowing that a strong community is something you help build, and that showing kindness has power." Max believes that everyone has something to offer, and when we share it, we shape the future we hope to see. His hope is that, watching him and his wife, his daughters learn that no contribution is too small. By leading by example, he hopes to pass on to them the meaningful gift of supporting and growing the community.



Paige O'Dwyer

Owner, Director & Speech Language Pathologist - Communication Options Inc.

Paige is advocating and removing barriers to communication

Paige has learned that being a leader doesn't mean having all the answers, it means being willing to listen, to learn, to take risks, and to surround yourself with people who bring different strengths and perspectives to the table.

As a business owner, one of the most rewarding parts of leadership for her has been watching the people around her grow. She wants to create an environment where people feel valued, supported, and confident enough to try new things, share ideas, and become leaders themselves. She believes leadership is measured by the people you lift up, the opportunities you create, and the positive impact you leave behind.

Paige hopes the impact she has on Central Alberta is ultimately measured by the people and families she has been able to support and the opportunities she has helped create for others.

One of her proudest professional accomplishments has been taking over Communication Options, a speech-language pathology practice with a 30-year history in Central Alberta, and continuing to grow it while staying true to the heart of what made it special in the first place. She truly believes communication is a fundamental human right and is passionate about removing barriers so that every family has access to the support they need.

Being a mom has also inspired her to think about the example she is setting for her children. She wants her children to grow up understanding that success isn't just about what you accomplish for yourself, but about what you contribute to the world around you.



Randi MacDonald

Program Coordinator - Between Friends

Randi is helping show us all how to be a good friend and an even better community member

For Randi, leadership means creating the conditions for others to succeed, feel supported, and contribute in meaningful ways. It means listening, building trust, helping others grow, and being willing to take on the less visible work. She believes leadership is not about being the person with all the answers, but about creating a safe and supportive environment where everyone feels confident and capable. She is exemplifying this with her work with Between Friends, where she helps create opportunities for people with disabilities to build friendships, grow their confidence, and feel a sense of belonging. Randi is passionate about expanding accessible programming across Central Alberta and helping create a community where everyone has the opportunity to participate, connect, and feel valued.

Inspired by the work that her organization takes on, she has a front-row seat to see how deeply it matters to individuals and families in our communities. Randi isn't afraid to jump in and do the work to create more opportunities for everyone to experience that sense of belonging.

She is proud of the legacy she is building, both as a parent and through her work with Between Friends. She hopes to raise children who are compassionate, inclusive, and mindful of the impact they have on others, while also helping create a community where everyone feels valued and has a place to belong.



Sabrina Asher

Chief Information Technology Officer (CIO) - ity of Red Deer

Sabrina is expanding possibilities through people-centred leadership and technology

Sabrina is making an impact in Central Alberta by widening access to leadership ideas, emerging technology, and community support. Through her LinkedIn newsletter, Unframed Thinking with Sabrina, she challenges familiar assumptions about leadership and encourages people-centred approaches to change. Her leadership spans enterprise transformation, client experience, financial and operational performance, and talent development, connecting functions to turn strategy into practical change. As a volunteer, Sabrina has given keynote speeches for various community events, served as a Career Mentor for Junior Achievement, volunteered with Girls in Aviation Day, the Red Deer Food Bank, and Boots on the Ground Alberta.

For Sabrina, leadership lives where people and possibilities meet. She believes leadership is about bringing people together around meaningful work, empowering them to grow, and helping them reach their fullest potential. By building trust and confidence in others, she helps turn a shared vision into reality.

Sabrina's connection to Central Alberta is also deeply personal. Her nine-year-old daughter, Ariya, is growing up here and inspires Sabrina to contribute to the community that supports them. Sabrina wants Ariya to see the strength of people who show up for one another, the opportunities created through collective effort, and the impact of giving back. Through her example, Sabrina hopes to show the next generation that leadership means using their strengths to help others move forward.



Sean McIntosh

Multimedia Journalist - Red Deer Advocate

Sean is telling stories that not only inform but also celebrate Central Alberta

For Sean, leadership is about recognizing when to step forward and when to observe. During his ten years with the Red Deer Advocate, he has led by example, by taking on challenging stories, continually improving his skills, and supporting colleagues who need direction.

In the field, he understands that his role is to listen, witness what is happening, and help the community understand it.

Sean has been a significant voice in Red Deer journalism, covering hundreds of stories across public interest, including crime, politics, sports, and more. Some of those stories have had major implications and have received national coverage from major outlets. Others have been much smaller in scale, catering to Red Deer locals. He always makes an effort to highlight the work local groups and organizations are doing. Whether covering a theatre production, an important city council decision, or a fundraiser for someone facing illness, Sean wants Central Albertans to know what is happening around them.

His interest in storytelling began in childhood, when he and his friends made short movies with an old camcorder and created comics. Later, he attended journalism school in Ontario, where practical experience confirmed that journalism was the right career for him. Today, he continues to enjoy meeting people, sharing their stories, and seeing what publication can mean to community members whose contributions might otherwise be overlooked



Shaun Kolody

Process Engineer-In-Training - Borouge International

Shaun is engineering opportunities for others to learn, grow, and succeed

Proud to call Central Alberta home, Shaun is inspired by the opportunity to give back to the community that helped shape him. He believes making an impact does not have to mean doing something extraordinary or receiving recognition.

Sometimes it is simply about showing up, offering your time, and being willing to help when there is a need. Shaun has put that belief into action as a previous volunteer with United Way Central Alberta's GenNext Committee, as well as contributing to initiatives that support people throughout the community. He knows that he may not always see the direct results of his efforts, but believes every contribution matters when people work toward a common goal.

For Shaun, leadership means bringing out the best in people, especially when things get difficult. His leadership style began taking shape through years of playing soccer and serving as a team captain, where he learned the importance of keeping morale high and helping others remain positive when things are not going their way.

Shaun believes leaders can be direct, honest, and practical while still treating people with respect. To him, leadership is not about making others feel inferior. It is about setting clear expectations, communicating openly, and helping people understand how they can improve. By creating an encouraging environment, he gives others the confidence and motivation to overcome challenges and become the best versions of themselves.



Shital Chamadia

Marketing Specialist and Finance Program Facilitator, Career Assistance Network

Shital is using her experience to help others move forward

For Shital, leadership means recognizing a need and taking action before anyone asks. Her understanding of leadership was shaped by rebuilding her life as a single mother in a new country without a safety net. It was never about holding a title; it was about choosing to keep moving forward rather than remaining stuck.

Having immigrated to Canada in 2012, Shital navigated divorce while raising a baby without family support and spent seven years rebuilding her life. Those experiences now inspire her to help other women, especially immigrants and single mothers, to see that their stories are not weaknesses. They can become sources of strength that prepare them to lead.

Shital's impact on Central Alberta centres on helping people and organizations move from uncertainty to a clear path forward. Through her work with Career Assistance Network, she connects employers with the talent they need and helps job seekers find opportunities that can change their lives. She also teaches financial literacy through workshops and individual coaching, helping people understand money, build savings, and make confident financial decisions.



Tanner Johnson

Senior Private Banking Advisor - ATB Wealth

Tanner is investing in a stronger and more connected Central Alberta

Throughout his career in banking, Tanner has seen that the best outcomes for clients and organizations come from breaking down silos. Leading cross-functional teams and partnering across wealth and commercial banking requires clear communication, trust, and shared accountability.

He believes that true leadership extends beyond the workplace into community stewardship. To him, leadership is rooted in service. It means using his influence, time, and energy to champion causes bigger than himself and leave a lasting, positive impact on the community.

Living and working in Red Deer, Tanner views community involvement as an ongoing responsibility rather than an occasional initiative. As an Acting Board Member with the Piper Creek Optimist Club, he helps support youth programs and local projects.

Tanner's impact is also reflected in more than a decade of supporting Central Alberta's business owners, agricultural leaders, and families. Through his work, he has built lasting relationships that help protect local wealth, encourage business growth, and keep the regional economy resilient.

What inspires Tanner most is the direct human connection between intentional effort and lasting, generational growth. Living and working in the same community means he does not simply observe the outcomes of his work from a distance; he experiences them alongside the families, entrepreneurs, and neighbours he serves.



Taryn Nelson

Mental Health & Wellbeing Coordinator - Red Deer Polytechnic

Taryn is creating a safe and connected campus environment

When leading others, whether colleagues or students, Taryn tries to ask questions to get to the root of their goals and make sure she is supporting them in a meaningful way.

Growing up in Central Alberta taught Taryn the importance of giving back. That value followed her to Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP), where volunteering and living on campus helped her develop a deep connection to the school community. RDP became an important part of her journey, and returning as an employee has given her the opportunity to contribute to the community that helped shape her.

Inspired by her own experience as a former RDP student, Taryn understands how meaningful involvement and mentorship can be. Her post-secondary journey was unique, and she did not become fully involved in campus life until about halfway through her studies. The volunteer opportunities she found and the mentors who supported her played an important role in helping her reach where she is today. Now, she hopes to offer students that same encouragement, create opportunities for them to become involved, and open doors that help them grow.



Tatyanna Hansen

Recovery Coach

Tatyanna is advocating for a community where everyone is able thrive

Throughout her career in emergency medicine, diversion, corrections, and management, Tatyanna has learned that compassion, accountability, and the ability to listen are essential qualities of a strong leader. She believes people do their best work when they feel supported, respected, and valued.

Working with vulnerable populations has also shown Tatyanna that leadership extends beyond the people someone supervises. It means advocating for others, recognizing their potential, and creating opportunities for them to grow.

Tatyanna believes her greatest impact on Central Alberta has come from being there for people when they need someone in their corner. Throughout her career as a paramedic and through her work in diversion, leadership, and corrections, she has met people on some of the hardest days of their lives. These experiences have shaped who she is and how she approaches helping others.

She has learned that even the smallest interactions can make a meaningful difference. Treating someone with dignity, taking the time to listen, or simply showing that someone cares can go a long way. Tatyanna knows she cannot change every person's circumstances, but she can influence how they are treated during a difficult moment. If she has helped someone feel valued, supported a colleague, or given someone a reason to try again, she knows she has made a difference.



Vanessa Ouellette

Assistant Principal - École Lacombe Upper Elementary School

Vanessa is helping students discover not only who they are, but who they can become.

As an educator and school leader, Vanessa sees the power of leadership in small, everyday moments. It can be helping a student recognize their potential, encouraging a colleague to step outside their comfort zone, advocating for someone who needs a voice, or simply bringing joy to someone's day.

Vanessa knows that making a difference does not always require a grand gesture. Often, the greatest impact comes from helping people feel seen, supported, and connected. Through her work with young people and their families, she has the opportunity to invest in Central Alberta's future by helping students become kind, confident, and compassionate community members.

Creating a sense of belonging is especially important to Vanessa. She wants every student to feel seen and capable of success, regardless of their circumstances. Whether she is advocating for additional support, helping a family through a difficult time, or believing in a student who struggles to believe in themselves, she hopes those moments have a lasting impact. She also values bringing local businesses, organizations, and families together through school initiatives.



William Siliezar

Gasoline Alley Farmers Market -
Parkland Nurseries -
Sabor Latino -

William is connecting culture with community to create space for celebration

As a queer Latino who has lived in Central Alberta for over 15 years, William has worked to amplify voices that are often overlooked through community events, cultural programming, and partnerships.

Whether it's bringing people together through food, art, or celebrations, his goal is to build bridges between Indigenous, Western, and multicultural communities so future generations inherit a stronger, more connected Central Alberta.

For William, leadership is like being a pollinator. A leader plants ideas, helps others grow, and welcomes the possibility that a community can transform an original vision into something even bigger.

William's past reminds him why the present matters. After immigrating from El Salvador and experiencing the hardships faced by many queer people, he learned that although challenges do not disappear, strong communities can change how people face them. That journey inspires him to create opportunities for young people, newcomers, and underrepresented communities to find mentors, resources, and confidence. For William, every event, partnership, and conversation is an opportunity to make someone's future a little brighter.

At the heart of William's work is the belief that communities become stronger when everyone feels they belong. As an immigrant, he knows how deeply feeling welcomed can affect someone's confidence and ability to contribute. He believes people arrive with different experiences, cultures, and advantages, and that those advantages bring a responsibility to create space for others.