



Bowls Alberta

2021 Annual Report





Bowls Alberta



2021 Annual Report Overview

Mission Statement: to advance the sport of Bowls in Alberta

Vision: to promote participation and excellence in the sport of lawn bowls for all ages and abilities

Overview

2021 began with hopes that we would be moving to an almost normal season. The third and fourth Covid 19 shots were being rolled out and the province had announced a plan to be 'open for the summer'. As such we supported clubs in their planning to welcome back members and we cautiously made plans to get back into provincial events.

Once again early in the year Bowls Canada Boulingrin (BCB) announced the cancellation of the 2021 Canadian Championships. This simplified the plans for tournaments and allowed us to focus on ensuring we gradually held events that first allowed for easy social distancing and then ones that didn't require traveling and finally ending with embracing a new club championship.



The year was to be the third year of the four-year Strategic Plans developed in 2018. Several plans had to be dropped and others altered to adjust to another year where the pandemic was still affecting individuals at the club level. We continued regular monthly zoom meetings with representatives of our members clubs in preparation for the season. These meetings also focused on ways we would support clubs with special projects and recruitment ideas.

The Bowls Canada Boulingrin 'Belonging in Bowls' campaign rolled out to assist clubs in becoming 'safe and welcoming spaces' and had various levels for the clubs to achieve. We supported the clubs with information and encouragement but found that most clubs' leaderships were not ready to embrace the campaign. They found that welcoming members back, recruiting new members and slowly getting back to welcoming corporate or other groups to their greens kept them busy enough.

Communication was stressed again this year and so the Bowls Alberta held regular meetings with representatives of their member clubs. Once a month from Jan through to April and then again from October to December meetings were held via Zoom with various topics of interest to the clubs or on new programs or coach course opportunities. These meetings led to increased collaboration and support among the clubs.

The Board of Directors met 13 times throughout 2021, meeting on the Zoom platform. Several committees of the association also met regularly from November through to May dealing with preparations for the season. Some committee business was dealt with by way of frequent personal phone calls, but this created some tense issues not only for committee members but also between committees. The president 'called' everyone back to open and respectful communication, the purpose and expectation of full committee meetings and the best practice of taking minutes of the meetings and circulating those to members of committees as well as to the board.

The Terms of Reference for committees was also reviewed and updated to ensure that all volunteers understood their work fit with the vision and mission of Bowls Alberta.

Pillar 1: Sustainable Future for Bowls

1. Increased sources of revenue

Sponsors and Supporters

In 2021 we received the following grants from Alberta Sport Connection:

- Association Development Program Grant (Provincial)
- Sport Participation Support Grant (Provincial & Federal)
- COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund (Federal)



We are grateful for the continued support through the annual program grant. The Sport Participation support grant for Para Bowls programming was received and about half the funding was used to begin coach and director training as well as equipment purchases to support players at the club level. We received the Covid-19 Emergency Support Funds in 2020 but used it year to offset the club membership fees which were significantly reduced to help support the clubs. We also purchased a Platinum membership for SignUpGenius so that all clubs could make use of the system to sign up for attendance at the clubs.



In 2020 we applied and were successful in receiving the Jump Start Sport Relief Grant. Because of the Covid-19 situation the funding was held over to be used for Youth Programming this year. Three clubs, Calgary Lawn, Commonwealth and Medicine Hat, all held special programming for youth and were supported by the grant with carts of training equipment and several youth sized sets of bowls. Representatives of the three clubs also worked to prepare a Youth Program Manual which was then piloted during the 2021 season. Late in the 2021-year manual was updated and revised and then was made available on the Bowls Alberta website for all our member clubs to use. The manual can be found on the [Youth Development page](#) of our website.

We missed out on the opportunity to work a casino again in 2021 and it looks like we will have to wait until 2023 for this funding to resume. Thankfully we have built a bit of a reserve by not hosting many events in 2020 and 2021 and not having to support sending athletes to Canadian Championships.



2. Effective Leadership

A new board of directors was put in place the end of 2020 and we had high hopes that the many new skills of the board members was going to assist in moving ahead in our strategic plans. There were some bumps along the road as clarification of roles had to be redefined as board members of a provincial association with staff are run differently than club's boards. A 'governance learning time' was valuable for all.



To keep all committees on track with their roles in meeting goals and plans the association, the Terms of References for the various committees were reviewed, updated, and then sent off to S. Indig of Sport Law and Strategy Group (SLSG) for review and input. This gave everyone confidence that we were following best practices within our committees and for leading our sport.

Bowls Alberta joined the Lethbridge Sport Council to seek some assistance in working with the Lethbridge Lawn Bowling Club. We were able to update information on the council's website about the sport of bowls and connect them directly with leaders of the club.



3. Supporting Thriving Clubs

The clubs were supported by continuing the Presidents' Meetings which began in 2020. The meetings this year focused on a variety of topics of interest to the clubs and their membership. These meetings shifted from being primarily for the club's presidents to various groups like club coaches, marketing directors, and program directors. Some of the planning for the season were facilitated through these meetings and took less email communications back and forth with the clubs. All the meetings were well attended.

We encouraged the clubs to continue to learn about the new initiatives from Bowls Canada and to begin steps in the Belonging in Bowls project and in reviewing their Safe Sport Policies. Most clubs were a bit overwhelmed and didn't have the volunteers to move forward on the initiatives. We made a commitment to support the clubs in 2022.

A Grant Information Workshop was put together by the office after attending several webinars on grant writing. This workshop was requested by the Commonwealth Club and is ready for any other club that would like to learn more about the grant opportunities there are and how to go about creating a project that is more likely to receive approval.



4. Increased Awareness of our Sport

Most of the goals laid out in the long-range plans have been left unattended to because of other priorities in the past few years and because of the interruption to the seasons by Covid-19.



We did explore the Jack Attack Program being used in Australia as a program to attract new members. We corresponded with Bowls Canada as to how we could gain permission or work with those that developed the program to design something for use in Canada. The project is very worthwhile and will be picked up again in the future as Bowls Australia welcomed our interest and would support us in developing something similar here. The timing just wasn't right yet for this year.

2021 was a year of learning once again!

Our sport could be advertised and celebrated as a space distancing sport.

League play, with little other commitments, attracts the 25-45 age demographics.

Committee work and accountability is essential to a positive volunteer sport culture.

We can adapt our game to make it more accessible.

Youth do enjoy playing bowls if we make it fun for them!

A poor air quality policy is now an essential policy.

Getting wheelchairs on the greens without damaging them can be done.

Pillar 2: Strong & Unified Bowls AB Community

1. Membership and Participation Overview

Clubs opened gradually in 2021 and saw the return of many members that had chosen to stay home during The initial world pandemic. Then much to their surprise many new members walked through their doors as well. This was partly due to some new programs but also just by word of mouth that lawn bowls was an inexpensive and safe sport to play. People seemed ready to engage in something new!

Overall membership numbers went from 715 in 2020 up to 892 in 2021. Three clubs had a significant increase while many clubs went back to membership numbers consistent with what they had before the pandemic hit. Almost every club had regular members that did not return as they had hoped but welcomed new ones from their communities.

2. Player Development through Interclub and Tournaments

Some of Bowls Alberta sport programming returned for the 2021 season. Player development camps led by the Head Umpire were not scheduled but all Club Coaches were encouraged to hold coaching sessions not only for their new members but their returning members as well. Most clubs began to schedule more of their own tournaments with a great degree of participation and success.

Interclub leagues returned in both Calgary and Edmonton and led to some great competitions and club collaboration. These leagues give opportunity for an increase in competitive play alongside the club's recreational jitneys.

3. Development of a provincial awards program

Some work was completed on a new awards program proposal that ranked players for their involvement and achievement at provincial, national and international levels. Its purpose was solid...to increase participation of members in competitions at all levels. But there was much debate about the recreational players which make up most of the members of our clubs. It was felt that at this time the proposed awards program would not meet the needs of our members and would in fact be discouraging for several of our clubs. Further work needs to be completed in this area with input from a broad selection of members of all the clubs.

Pillar 3: Quality Sport Development and Achievements

1. Provincial events

We began in January scheduling a full slate of Provincial Championships and other tournaments. By spring we realized that starting slowly would lead to great success of the events as several clubs still did not feel confident in hosting tournaments. It was determined to start later in the season and host only four events...two that meant some may travel and one to be held in two cities so no travel was necessary.

We called the events ‘Covincials’ instead of ‘Provincials’ as we acknowledged that not everyone would feel ready to participate in tournaments but also because the events were not to determine Alberta Champions to represent Alberta at National events.

Events were held as follows:

July 23 - 25	Mixed Pairs Covincials	at Commonwealth Club in Edmonton
Aug. 3 - 5	Senior Triples Covincials	at Stanley Park in Calgary
Aug. 27 - 29	Southern Cash Triples	at Rotary Park in Calgary
Aug. 27 – 29	Northern Cash Triples	at Commonwealth Club in Edmonton

This was the first year that a tournament had to be stopped before winners could be declared! Poor air quality because of the smoke from the forest fires both in the mountains and up north led to stoppage of play and dual championships were declared. A policy will be required for future years.

2. An Active Youth Development Committee

The Youth Development Committee was very active during the first part of the year as they finished preparing a special Youth Program manual and purchased youth program ‘kits’ for the three clubs that would pilot a youth involvement project. This project was generously funded by a Jump Start Covid Relief grant and gave the clubs some extra smaller bowls and the equipment needed to create fun activities and supportive games and drills.

The project was successful at the three clubs, Calgary Lawn, Commonwealth LBC and the Medicine Hat Lawn Bowling Clubs. Each club ran the program at times which fit best for their club and for the number of volunteers they had, membership for the youth was supported by the grant, and youth from ages 8 to 16 were welcomed onto the greens. Each club deemed the program a great success and were looking forward to building on their success in 2022.

During the fall and into the winter months, the manual was updated and revised and then was made available on the Bowls Alberta website for all our member clubs to use. The finished product can be found on the [Youth Development page](#) of our website. A huge congratulations to those that worked hours on this project! It has already been requested and shared with clubs across Canada.

3. Athlete Development work

The Athlete Development Committee carried out the application process for identifying the 2021 Athlete Development Squad. There were 8 men and 5 women that applied, but due to further restrictions, each candidate was told that there would be no squad for this year. The plans that were in place to participate in the annual Alberta vs British Columbia Test Match, scheduled for the last weekend of May in BC, also were canceled as there were still too many obstacles to overcome.



Our Head Coach hosted the first Alberta Premier League with ten teams of five representing their clubs. The format was significantly different from what players were used to. Games were short and fast paced and music filled the atmosphere. Teams were given unique names and most teams dressed up in their club shirts. Food was served up and players celebrated with drinks after the day’s games ended. The event was successfully embraced by players across the province! The Stingers Team from Stanley Park LBC took home the trophy this inaugural year.

4. Coaching Development

Courses were back on thanks to further developments by Bowls Canada. The newly revised Club Coach course was redesigned in two parts...one to be taken online and the second half in person. The course was piloted in the spring and Alberta had ten participants in the two 3.5 hour Zoom sessions. The later half of the course was scheduled to be completed in June in Calgary and later in August in Edmonton.

All current active and new coaches were encouraged to take the NCCP Course: Leading a Return to Sport Participation. The current coaches were also encouraged to take the new required courses for club coaches: the NCCP Safe Sport Training course and the NCCP Emergency Action Plan course both available online through Coaching Canada website.

Bowls Alberta, working with Bowls Canada, held a Course for Coaches for Disabled Athletes early in July. This course was partially taught by Paul Brown, a coach from England and the Vice President of International Bowls for the Disabled (IBD). Facilitators Derek Dillon and Pat Vos were given extra training and then assisted in delivering the course in person. Fourteen participants attended made up mostly of coaches. There was an added component to the course for directors of visually impaired bowlers as well.

5. Officials Development

The Head Umpire worked online with a few candidates over the spring and into the start of the season. Once the education component was completed the in-person on the green training took place and three new umpires were added to the crew in Calgary.

This year hats were purchased for the umpires and each current and newly graduated official received two of them. Bowls AB also continued to subsidize umpire shirts available from Bowls Canada Boulingrin.



6. Marketing

This year we were able to get Alberta feather flags designed and a few ordered for the clubs that were hosting the Youth Projects. These attractive flags were well received, and we quickly learned that we needed one for all our member clubs. That will be a new goal for in 2022.

The committee also worked on shirts and hats to sell to the membership. These were ordered in the spring and made available for purchase through the newly added 'store' to our website. Sales didn't reach the numbers we had hoped for as several clubs were ordering and selling their own club shirts. We have the items in stock to sell for a few more years as they are as attractive as Australian shirts are!

7. Awards Committee

The annual awards were still given despite the limitations to the season. The Volunteer of the Year award went to Glen Brunelle, member of the Stanley Park LBC, for his work recruiting and then training wheelchair curling athletes. He completed the training from Bowls Canada for working with Athletes with disabilities and attended Alberta's first Inclusive Triples Tournament held at the end of the season.

Our Long-Term Service Award was presented to Val Wilson, a member of the Royal LBC, for her many years of contributions to the sport of lawn bowls in Alberta as a coach, committee member, board member and as an athlete.

8. Welcoming Para Athletes on to the Greens

The BCB pilot project, *Just Roll With It*, after being postponed for two years, was finally run at the Commonwealth Lawn Bowling Club. The project included training for coaches, directors and volunteers and included a six week try it program for those with disabilities. The project targeted those that could be classified to compete in lawn bowling at the provincial, national, and up to the international level. Only one individual in a wheelchair learned to bowl and committed to returning and one visually impaired young boy tried the sport for two weeks, but it was too challenging for him. For the rest the program attracted members of our community with cognitive impairments as well as some with both cognitive and physical impairments. The volunteers adjusted on the fly and the program was still a great success introducing approximately 40 new participants to our sport. About 30% attended all six weeks and were eager for the program to be offered again the following year.



In conjunction with the project and with our own new ‘Becoming Para Ready’ project, we also held the first ever Inclusive Triples Tournament. This event featured several wheelchair athletes, one player who plays with an assistive bowling arm and 7 coaches and athletes. The event helped us discover some of the challenges of playing together and helped us work towards solutions.



In September of 2020 the Alberta Government offered a Sport Participation Support Program Grant. We developed a program entitled *Becoming Para Ready: Welcoming Para Albertans onto the Lawn Bowling Greens* and applied for the grant. We were successful in receiving the funds to carry out this program in conjunction with the BCB pilot project, in 2021 and then continuing the work into the first half of 2022. Clubs excitedly received bowling assistive devices, half received kits for welcoming members with visual impairments and a few received equipment to allow them to accommodate wheelchairs onto their greens. All coaching courses offered in 2021 had a component of coaching athletes with a disability added and coaches and volunteers were encouraged to take the NCCP courses that were applicable as well. The grant funded project left a great legacy behind at all our clubs and have helped start inclusive programming at several clubs.

In Conclusion

At the end of the 2021 season, Bowls AB completed 19 of their 34 key action items identified in the annual plans with an additional 5 items still in progress. Many of the action plans were again postponed or changed altogether. Three plans have been dropped because of the work Bowls Canada Bowling is doing on behalf of the clubs or because we don't have the capacity to complete certain items.

This year we discovered that many people were *covid-weary* OR they were just *covid-stressed*. More tension was felt in several meetings and at some of the clubs than had ever been experienced before. It felt like we limped into 2021 with a hope that we could all adjust to a new normal and thankfully that was somewhat realized. By the end of the season members were again upbeat and thankful for the many opportunities to engage and play their favorite sport with each other. Hopes were built up for the 2022 season, a return to Canadian Championships, and for welcoming more Albertans to our greens again through more corporate groups and school classes.

56% of the action ideas in the 2021 Plans were completed, up from only 34% in 2020. 2022 already looks so much better.

Some clubs just know how to have fun!
Rotary Park Lawn Bowling Club 2021

