

ACCHS ANNUAL REVIEW

2024/2025



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of everyone at ACCHS, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you—our generous donors, dedicated partners, tireless volunteers, valued clients, and compassionate sponsors—for your unwavering support and commitment to our mission of ending homelessness and restoring hope.

This past year has brought both challenges and profound moments of inspiration. Because of your generosity and involvement, we were able to provide safe shelter, hot meals, essential services, and life-changing support to countless individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Your contributions—whether financial, in-kind, or through the gift of time—have played a vital role in ensuring that no one is left behind.

To our **donors**, your financial gifts have made an extraordinary difference. Your belief in our mission is evident in every dollar given, helping us to expand our services, maintain our facilities, and provide vital resources to those in need. You've helped turn despair into hope for many, and for that, we are truly grateful.

To our **partners**, thank you for standing beside us in collaboration and purpose. Your expertise, services, and support amplify the reach and impact of our work. Whether through job training programs, mental health counseling, housing services, or community outreach, your contributions have enabled us to take a holistic approach to helping our clients reclaim their lives.

To our **volunteers**, you are the heart of our organization. Your time, energy, and compassion create a welcoming and dignified environment for our guests. From serving meals and organizing donations to offering mentorship and a listening ear, you bring warmth and humanity to our shelter every day. We are inspired by your kindness and commitment.

To our **clients**, thank you for trusting us during some of the most vulnerable moments in your lives. Your resilience and courage motivate us to continue this important work. We are honored to walk alongside you on your journey toward stability and self-sufficiency.

Together, as a community, we are proving that homelessness is not an unsolvable issue—it is a human challenge that we can overcome with compassion, commitment, and collective action.

As we move forward, we are filled with hope and determination. With your continued support, we know we can reach even more individuals in need, provide stronger pathways out of homelessness, and build a future where everyone has a place to call home.

With heartfelt thanks,

Simone Fisher, ACCHS Executive Director
June 2025

As Treasurer of Athabasca Cares Community Housing Society (ACCHS), I am writing today to share my strong support for ACCHS. I have been on the board of directors for ACCHS since September 2021 and have supported the board in a number of roles including Secretary, Vice-Chair, and currently, Treasurer.

Since joining the board in 2021, ACCHS has grown from providing winter survival backpacks to running a 24 hour a day shelter during the winter months. This rapid and continual growth has been amazing thanks to a dedicated board of directors and staff, strong community support, and grant funding such as the Reaching Home grant.

Much like our mission and vision, our strategic plan is also simple. ACCHS has three goals we plan to meet over the next few years. The first is to develop a sustainable funding strategy, the second is to continue to increase operations and meet the needs of the clients by building both board and operational capacity, and the third is to advocate for unhoused individuals in our community to address the issues that are important to them as well as to reduce chronic homelessness.

In rural communities such as Athabasca, Alberta, the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness are often compounded by geographical, economic, and social factors. While urban areas tend to have a more robust array of services available to those in need, smaller towns like Athabasca face unique barriers in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. Currently, ACCHS can provide emergency support through our shelter including access to shelter, food, clothing, and other necessities.

We would like to be able to expand our services beyond these necessities to include helping clients navigate local housing markets and securing long-term accommodation. This would include aiding with rental applications, working with local landlords, and connecting clients to financial assistance programs. We would partner with local housing authorities and local government agencies to access available subsidies and resources aimed at increasing affordable housing options. Furthermore, ACCHS would have the means to advocate for policy changes at the municipal and provincial levels to increase availability of affordable housing, recognizing that without this foundational support, homelessness will persist. Through these efforts, we will be able to move from providing emergency support to providing a crucial safety net for individuals and families unable to access permanent housing, while also working on systemic solutions to the housing crisis in the region.

Our team at ACCHS is uniquely positioned to provide valuable insights on the lived experiences of individuals experiencing housing instability in Athabasca and surrounding areas. We are committed to participating in stakeholder meetings, offering data and feedback from our programs, and collaborating on actionable strategies to improve housing options in our community.

For Athabasca Cares Community Housing Society, a key measure of success will be the empowerment of our community to adopt and implement these and other solutions, creating lasting change for those most in need. We look forward to hearing back from you to advance our initiative in northern Alberta.

Sincerely,
Courtney Lantz

Courtney Lantz
Treasurer, Athabasca Cares Community Housing Society

Message from the Board Chair

Courtney Lantz
Treasurer, ACCHS

June 2025

““A municipality as small as Athabasca is not going to fix rural homelessness ... and when I say 'rural,'...I mean small towns that are facing this extremely complex issue and we need increased access to resources in small towns.”“

- KRYSTAL ZAHARA, PRESIDENT
AND CO-FOUNDER

OUR MISSION & VALUES

MISSION:

TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY SHELTER AND
SUPPORT SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN THE
ATHABASCA REGION, FOSTERING DIGNITY,
RESPECT, AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION.

Organizational Overview

Summary

In April 2025, ACCHS celebrated three years of becoming an official, non-profit society. Within the last year, ACCHS has seen incredible progress. Our Annual Report is based on information collected through the emergency shelter operating period, guest feedback sessions, staff feedback, volunteer feedback and community partner feedback. This Annual Review addresses the emergency winter shelter program, highlights our partners and generous donors, and outlines long-term organizational goals.



Board of Directors



Courtney
Lantz,
Treasurer

Judy
Hemmons,
Vice
President

Krystal
Zahara,
President

Lee Deren,
Secretary

Otto Rottier,
Board Chair

Melanie Erickson,
Board Chair

Chelsea Kirby,
Board Chair

80%

OF OUR CLIENTS NEED IMMEDIATE
ACCESS TO SHELTER



**DELIVERING WITH
IMPACT**

Team Success and Growth



- Through the generous funding received for the 2023/2024 year, ACCHS had the capacity for internal team growth. In November 2024, ACCHS welcomed and onboarded a new executive team member, Simone Fisher (Executive Director) and additional funding also allowed for the onboarding of 4 additional frontline staff who have and will continue to play a key role in organizational development, longevity and growth.

EXECUTIVE STAFF AND TEAM LEAD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PROGRAM COORDINATOR





Program Overview

2024/2025

Operations Overview

The emergency shelter opened on November 1, 2024 and closed the morning of April 1st, 2025. The shelter was open from 9:00 PM to 8:00 AM and a total of 25 beds were available for guests use. In January 2025 the shelter received additional funding which allowed us to extend Shelter Operational Hours to 24 Hours - 7 Days a week.

The shelter was open for an additional 1,080 Hours compared to the 2022/2023 operating season and was open during extreme cold weather events (temperatures below -27 celsius).

ACCCHS would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Town of Athabasca for their letters of support and Mark Neaves for providing the Shelter space. We would also like to thank local businesses and volunteers for their support and understanding.

OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

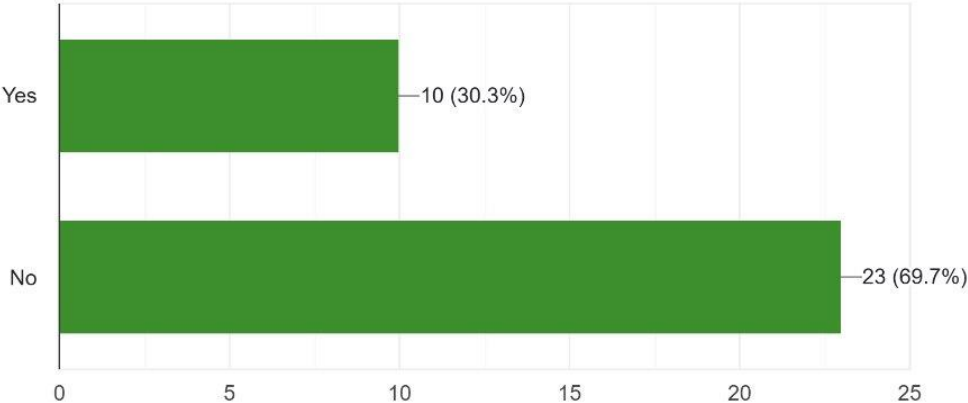
- Emergency Shelter
- Advocacy
- Support Services



CLIENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND SERVICES

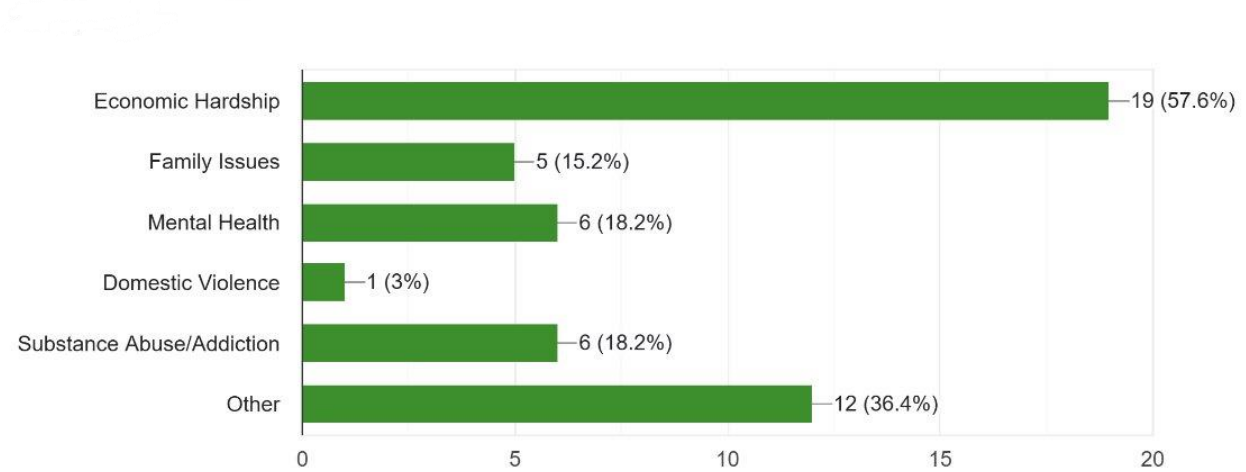
Number of Clients who have stayed at a shelter prior:

Have you stayed at our shelter before?

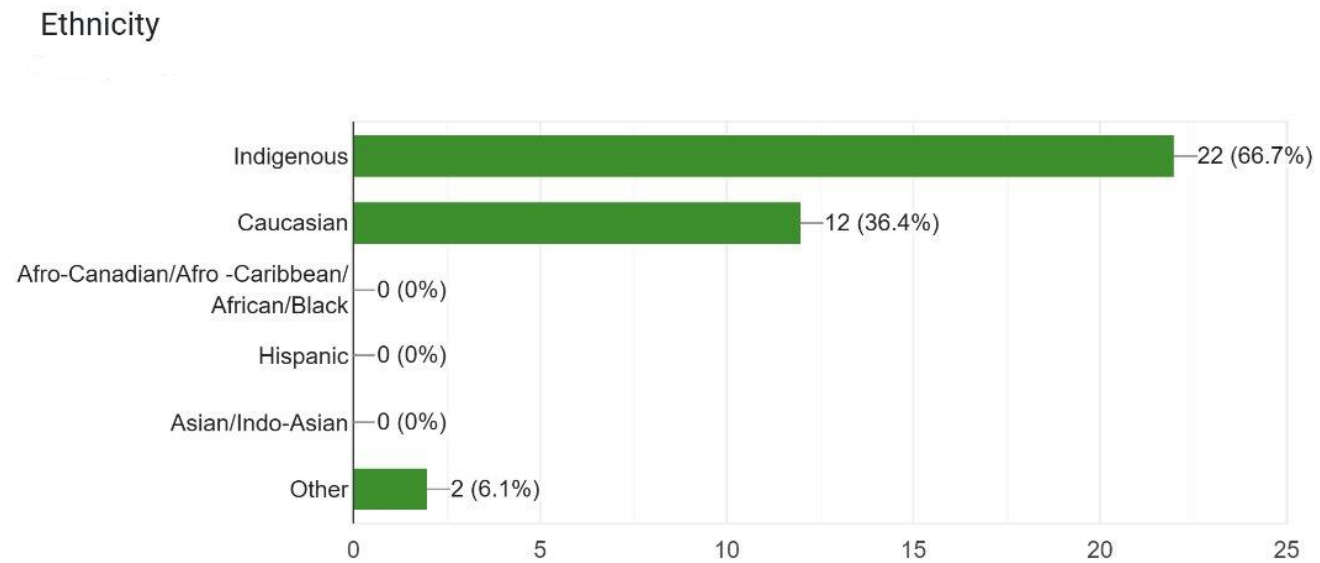


Reasons for using ACCHS services:

Reasons for using our services:

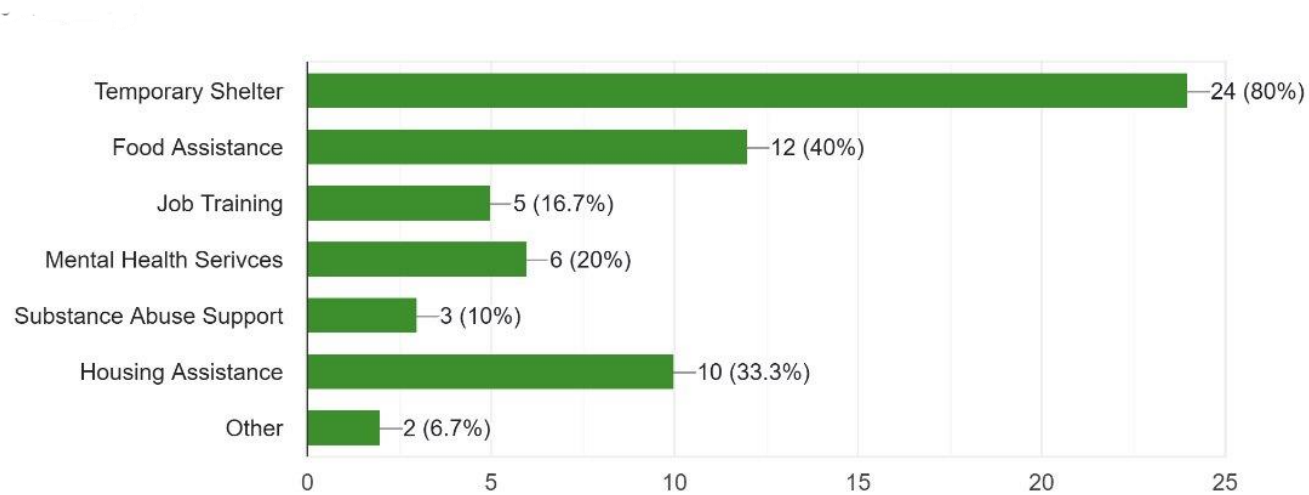


Ethnicity/Race Origin:



**Other support services
being used by Clients:**

What type of Support Services do you currently use or need:



Dorothy Mcleod,
Program Coordinator

**"Our clients need us.
They trust in our
organization and we
fight against the
negative stigma of
homelessness in our
daily work."**

Staff Survey & Feedback



During the feedback session, some important findings and recommendations were noted by staff and have been summarized below:

- 100% agreed that increasing ACCHS operational hours to 24/7 was highly impactful for local community and clients
- 100% agreed that the shelter is effective in providing services like housing, food, and emotional support to those in need.
- 100% agreed that the most important improvement for ACCHS is to increase operational hours to extend for the entirety of the year.

Volunteer Survey & Feedback

An in-person volunteer feedback survey was distributed to reflect on the 2024/2025 operating season and receive suggestions from our valued volunteers. Results from the feedback form revealed that:

- 94% are likely to continue volunteering with ACCHS
- 92% stated that they saw a positive impact when the Shelter increased operational hours to 24\7.
- 100% agreed that the most important improvement for ACCHS is to increase operational hours to extend for the entirety of the year.



Revenue and Funding Sources

Our organization operates primarily through a combination of government grants, community donations, and local partnerships:

- **Government Grants:** In 2024, our organization received additional funding from the federal government, distributed through the Rural Development Network. This funding supported the expansion of shelter services to 24 hours a day during the winter season, covering staffing wages and operational costs.
- **Community Donations:** Local businesses and individuals have contributed significantly. For instance, TC Energy donated, and funds were raised through events like the Community Christmas Dinner and the Chamber of Commerce's Gala.
- **In-Kind Contributions:** Our organization has received non-monetary support, including food donations from the Food Bank, Athabasca Native Friendship Centre, quilts from Quilting for Humanity, Athabasca Regional Waste Services, and snow removal services from Done Right Contracting.

Expenditures and Operational Costs

- **Staffing and Operational Costs:** Operating the shelter 24/7 during the winter months incurs expenses ranging over \$100,000, primarily for staffing and operational needs.
- **Program Expenses:** Funds are allocated to purchase essential items such as bedding, sanitary supplies, hygiene products, warm clothing, and food to support clients
- **Infrastructure and Utilities:** Costs for utilities like heat, water, and power, as well as insurance, are ongoing expenses covered by grants and donations

Fundraising Initiatives

- **Crowdfunding Campaigns:** Our organization has utilized platforms like Rafflebox and Zeffy to raise funds for specific programs, aiming to provide emergency shelter during cold months. We also received donations when attending community barbeques and conferences (ex. Small Farm Women's Conference).
- **Community Events:** Events like silent auctions and raffles have been organized to generate funds and raise awareness about homelessness issues in the area.
- **Community Partnerships and Sponsorships:** Collaborations with local businesses and organizations, including Athabasca University and the Athabasca Native Friendship Centre, have provided both financial and in-kind support

Community Partnerships



ACHIEVEMENTS



- **Expansion of Shelter Services:** In January 2025, we extended our shelter operations to 24 hours a day, providing continuous support to individuals in need during the winter months. This expansion was made possible through the Reaching Home grant from the federal government, distributed through the Rural Development Network.
- **Community Engagement and Support:** We have received significant support from local businesses and individuals. Notable contributions include a donation from TC Energy and funds raised through events like the Community Christmas Dinner and the Chamber of Commerce's Gala. In-kind donations have also been received, such as services from Athabasca Regional Waste and quilts from Quilting for Humanity.
- **Partnerships with Local Agencies:** We collaborate with various local organizations to provide comprehensive support to our clients. For instance, a private counseling company, who provides group, trauma-informed, and addiction counseling sessions.
- **Recognition of Leadership:** Krystal Zahara, the founder and president of ACCHS, was honored with an Alberta Blue Cross Community Wellbeing Award in 2024. This award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the health and wellness of their communities.

Plans for the Future



Expansion of Shelter Services

- **24-Hour Shelter Operations:** In January 2025, we extended our shelter hours to operate 24/7 during the winter months, providing continuous support to individuals in need. This expansion was made possible through the Reaching Home grant from the federal government, distributed through the Rural Development Network. We hope to extend operational hours in the future; longer operational hours reflect a commitment to dignity, care, and effective solutions for ending homelessness in our community.

Exploration of Long-Term Housing Solutions

- **Community Engagement:** Our organization is engaging with local residents and stakeholders to gather feedback and support for long-term housing solutions. By creating inclusive opportunities for support and dialogue, we hope to build a united, compassionate network dedicated to addressing homelessness.

Strengthening Community Partnerships

- **Connect with Local Agencies:** We collaborate with various local organizations to provide comprehensive support to our clients. Future plans to increase community engagement for our shelter include, hosting workshops, and continuing to organize local donation drives and campaigns.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** Our organization continues to encourage community involvement through volunteering and donations to support our initiatives.



How you can help

1. Financial contributions directly support our emergency shelter, programs, and client services. Every donation helps us provide essential care, including meals, shelter, and support.
2. Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting our operations, from assisting at the shelter to helping with fundraising events or providing administrative support.
3. You can support us by organizing or participating in fundraising activities. Whether through charity events, community drives, or online campaigns, your efforts help us raise awareness and secure funding.
4. If you represent a business or organization, consider becoming a corporate partner. Your support can help provide resources, funding, or in-kind donations that make a significant difference.

Donate
Volunteer
Fundraise
Partner with Us



On behalf of the entire team at Athabasca Cares Community Housing Society, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the people of Athabasca and the surrounding area for your ongoing support, encouragement, and generosity. As a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring safe, accessible, and shelter for those in need, we are continually reminded that we could not do this work without the strength of the community standing behind us.

Your kindness has helped us grow, thrive, and most importantly, serve those who need it most. Whether through volunteer time, financial donations, spreading the word about our mission, or simply offering kind words of encouragement, each and every contribution has made a difference. Because of your support, more individuals and families in our region have access to shelter and the opportunity to build a better future.

ACCHS, in 2024-2025, has provided 35 individuals experiencing homelessness with a warm and safe space to rest. Through our advocacy efforts, ACCHS has and continues to have the capacity to offer community-based support and has facilitated feedback opportunities and open dialogues with shelter clients, community partners, staff, and volunteers with the goal of incorporating recommendations, lived experience, and diverse perspectives in program design and approach.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to transparency, compassion, and community-driven solutions. With your continued support, we hope to expand our programs, increase housing availability, and ensure no one in our community is left without a place to call home.

Conclusion

Appendix A.

Athabasca Cares Community Housing Society
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED March 31, 2024

		2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
REVENUE				
	Donations	\$34,433.83	\$20,745.25	\$8,111.41
	Government Grants	\$110,374.61	\$50,000.00	\$40,000.00
	Interest Income	\$641.03	\$252.13	\$26.95
	Fundraising Income	\$5,914.74	\$6,918.63	\$191.40
	Other Income	\$25,513.67	\$32,276.21	\$24.13
	Other Grants	\$5,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00
TOTAL REVENUE		<u>\$181,877.88</u>	<u>\$125,192.22</u>	<u>\$48,353.89</u>
EXPENSES				
	Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	Education / Training	\$834.00	\$350.50	\$325.50
	Administration	\$6,396.05	\$2,136.96	\$2,754.10
	Overnight Shelter Program	\$15,693.85	\$10,007.69	\$6,502.18
	Salaries	\$99,475.54	\$80,618.50	\$32,611.04
	Building Renovations	\$1,170.75	\$1,714.25	\$1,306.70
	Fundraising Expenses	\$1,210.00	\$3,148.52	\$50.00
	Client Support	\$0.00	\$770.65	
TOTAL EXPENSES		<u>\$124,780.19</u>	<u>\$98,747.07</u>	<u>\$43,549.52</u>
NET INCOME FOR THE YEAR		\$57,097.69	\$26,445.15	\$4,804.37
RETAINED INCOME FROM Previous Yr		10129.84	<u>\$9,292.82</u>	<u>\$4,488.45</u>
TOTAL RETAINED INCOME		<u>\$67,227.53</u>	<u>\$35,737.97</u>	<u>\$9,292.82</u>

Appendix B.

TownandCountryTODAY.com

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BARRHEAD LEADER, WESTLOCK NEWS

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Athabasca Cares to open 24 hours in January

'It's just so special': Co-founder Krystal Zahara reflects on continued community support



[Lexi Freehill](#)
Jan 3, 2025 1:06 PM

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ATHABASCA CARES
Community Housing Society