



2023-2024 Annual Report

Growing Communities one idea at a time

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO



Our Mission: *To facilitate rural diversification through business and community economic development*

Our Vision: *Healthy, thriving, diversified region*

Our Purpose: *The purpose of Community Futures Peace Country is to support community economic development, encourage rural diversification and innovation, stimulating and diversifying the regional economy through viable business plan development and developing innovative economic development initiatives*

Our Values: *Innovative • Entrepreneurial • Accountable economic diversification strategies*

Community Futures (CF) is a national economic development program supported in western Canada by Prairies Economic Development Canada. Community Futures are nonprofit organizations guided by volunteer boards of directors and staffed with business professionals. Together, CF staff and community volunteers are actively engaged in helping develop and implement community-based economic development and diversification strategies. These strategies create growth within our rural communities one idea at a time.

Access to Capital - CF organizations (CFs) are developmental lenders. Priority is given to viable business ideas that result in wealth generation for the business and economic development for the community or region. CFs may invest in qualified business projects to a maximum of \$150,000.00.

Business Services - CF provide a wide range of coaching, training and technical assistance to businesses, including support with business planning.

Strategic Community Planning & Support - For rural communities to continue to compete in a fast-changing world full of economic uncertainties, they must adopt new economic development strategies. These strategies must be focused and intentional, but also flexible enough to allow the community to capture new opportunities presented by a truly global market place. CF organizations provide essential community support, and at times, community strategic planning leadership.

Meet Our Team!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



George Leger
Chair
Sub Region #1
Grimshaw & area



Frank Light
1st Vice- Chair
Sub Region #2
Peace River & area



Marie Dyck
2nd Vice-Chair
Sub Region #2
Peace River & area



Cathy DeZutter
Director
Sub Region #2
Peace River & area



Carolyn Kolebaba
Director
Sub Region #2
Peace River & area



Dalen Richardson
Director
Sub Region #5
Fairview & area



Rene George - Director
Sub Region #1 Grimshaw & area
Unfortunately Rene passed away in November after a short battle with cancer. We will miss his contributions and his witty sense of humour. Rest in Peace Rene.

STAFF



Randy Hodgkinson
General Manager
After a stellar 28 year career at CFPC, Randy retired in January. We still see him often, and appreciate his insight, mentorship & visits!



Sherry Crawford
BA/General Manager



Heidi Dubé
Business Analyst



Judy Pepler
Office Administrator



Dani Wearden
Projects Coordinator



Vanessa Burns
Communications



MESSAGE FROM THE GM

The 2023-2024 year was all about new projects and new faces! We had a highly successful year with 20 loan approvals worth 1.2 million, and 26 jobs created and/or maintained.

Long time Board member Cheryl Anderson said goodbye to us at last years AGM after a great run. Sadly, we lost fairly new Board member Rene George to sudden illness in November, he will be missed. We welcomed new Board member Dalen Richardson in March from the Fairview area. The past year also saw several new additions regarding staffing; we were without an Office Administrator early in the year until June 2023 when we hired Judy Peppler in a part time position. Judy has been an absolute delight and truly brightens up the office with her classy style and gentle nature. We hired part time Business Analyst Heidi Dubé in July and she has taken the job to amazing new levels with her passion, high energy and dedication to our clients. Vanessa Burns led the charge for the 15th Annual Women in the North Conference and remains a shining light who does an excellent job as our Communications Coordinator, she also filled the role of the RRRF Coordinator and started work on the 16th Annual WIN Conference before handing the reins over to Dani Wearden in December of 2023. You may recognize Dani's name as the Assistant Editor of MoveUp Magazine, and we are extremely lucky to have such a stellar talent on our team to take on the role of Projects Coordinator! And finally, in anticipation of long time General Manager Randy Hodgkinson's retirement, the Board offered the role of GM to me, so I left behind my BA duties and officially took over the job on February 1st. Randy still has a coffee cup with his name on it at the office and I certainly appreciate his regular visits and advice. Taking on this role has been exciting and the Board has been nothing but supportive, but it does come with a whole new set of challenges so Randy's mentorship and guidance has been such a blessing! Now he just needs to get out on the golf course!

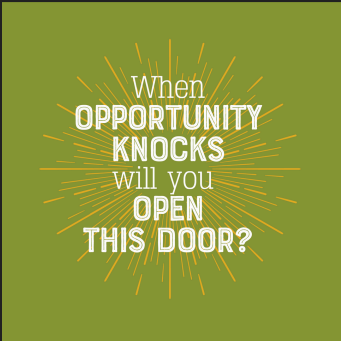
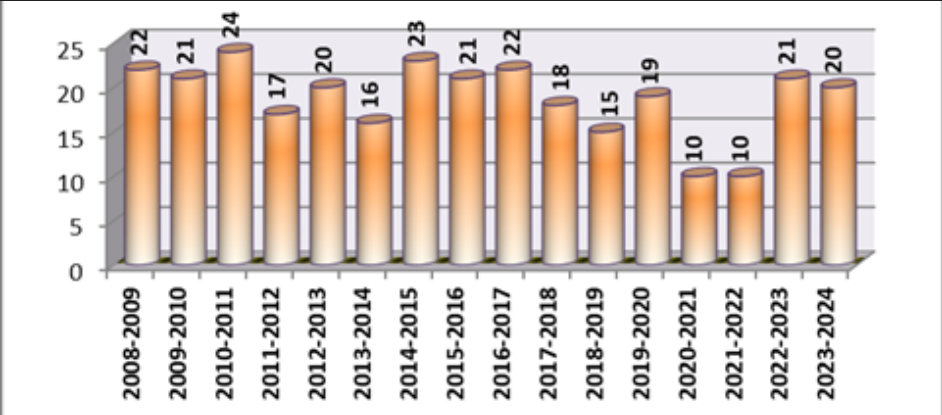
We continued to deliver the informative and uplifting Women in the North Conference in five communities including Peace River, Fairview, Valleyview, Manning and Spirit River. Monthly business training for our communities were offered in the Lunch & Learn hybrid virtual/in person format, and we took on the Lemonade Day project which resulted in over 100 kids registering for the program and 16 stands in Peace River and Berwyn. Staff visited businesses in Valleyview & Nampa for the 10th Annual Hug an Entrepreneur Day during Small Business Week. We partnered with ATB to deliver the PowerUp Conference in October in Peace River and hosted a networking social in partnership with the Peace River & District Chamber of Commerce. New this year saw the beginning planning stages of the SongRise Music Conference in partnership with Long Story Records in Fairview that will take place in the fall of 2024. We also partnered with CF Central Alberta on an Online Learning System portal and with CF West Yellowhead on a Business Disaster Recovery Initiative which are in progress.

I look forward to a great 2024-2025 year ahead, it will go by fast! One thing I have learned in life is that you are certainly not going to make everyone happy, but if you continue to do the best you can do with what you know, be humble, grateful, honest, and continue to learn, you will create success. With the exceptional Board and staff at CFPC, that is what we strive to do everyday.

Respectfully,

Sherry Crawford
General Manager

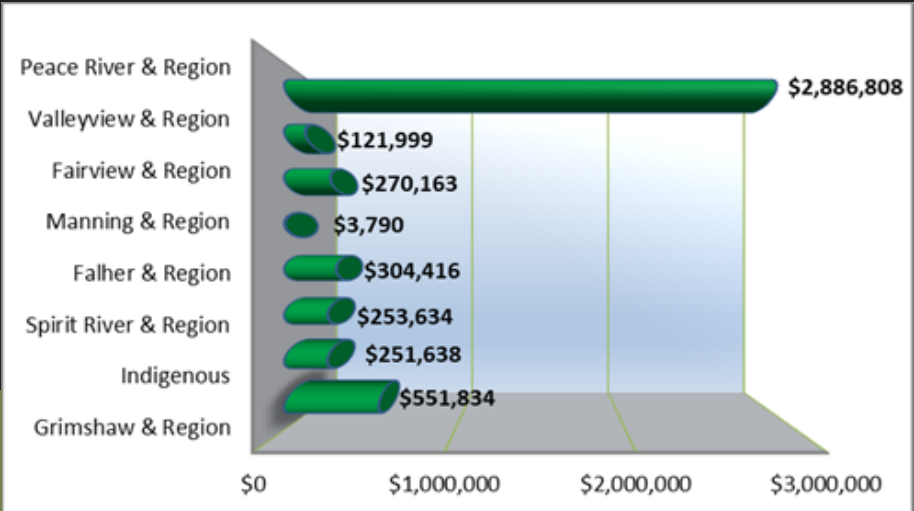
ALL THE STATS!



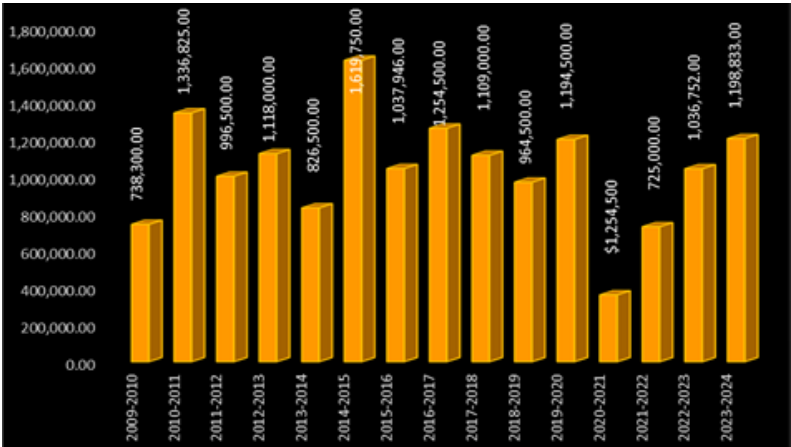
NUMBER OF LOANS BY YEAR



VALUE OF LOANS BY REGION



DOLLAR VALUE OF LOANS BY YEAR



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Women in the North Conference 2023

The 15th Annual Women in the North event was held in five communities for the second consecutive year. We hosted in Fairview, Spirit River, Valleyview, Manning, and Peace River. The event was launched with the high energy of our emcee, Dr. Emily Marshall who guided guests to create their own “elevator pitch” statements. Next on the agenda was our main keynote, Bridging Generational Gaps in the Workplace, presented by Kristen Cumming of Cantos Performance Management. Kristen’s presentation provided participants with information on the attributes of different generations in the workplace. The second keynote was Rylee Armstrong, owner and founder of Conveys Marketing, where guests learned the process of how to create mission and vision statements while simultaneously creating their own statements. Attendees practiced their elevator speech and then joined the “Ask the Expert Café” where local community experts in various fields of business answered questions in various areas such as Social Media, Bookkeeping, Taxes, Branding, Banking, Financing, Workplace Wellness, Scams & Fraud, Chamber of Commerce’s and Human Resources. The popular “Live Talk Show” featured inspiring local women who discuss their challenges and successes. Having the conference in multiple locations allowed CFPC to highlight many women from several communities. A total of 252 people attended the Women in the North 2023 events, an increase of 72 guests in comparison to the 2022 event. Attendees ranged in ages and ethnic groups, including business owners and their staff, CAOs, mayors, administrative professionals, banking professionals, women in agriculture, council, and board members. The target audience for the event was women in business, women in leadership positions, and working women in general.

Lunch & Learns / Small Business Week

Monthly business training for our communities were offered in the Lunch & Learn hybrid virtual/in person format. Topics included Exit Strategies, Artificial Intelligence, Hiring Youth, Canada Alberta Job Grant, Canva Workshop and Business Fraud Prevention. Staff visited businesses in Valleyview & Nampa for the 10th Annual Hug an Entrepreneur Day during Small Business Week. We partnered with ATB to deliver the PowerUp Conference in October in Peace River and hosted a networking social in partnership with the Peace River & District Chamber of Commerce.

Lemonade Day 2023

Lemonade Day is an initiative that is provincially spearheaded by Community Futures Tawatinaw and 2023 was the first year that Community Futures Peace Country decided to participate. The mission of the initiative is to help today’s youth become the business leaders, social advocates, community volunteers, and forward-thinking citizens of tomorrow...one lemonade stand at a time! 108 kids were registered for the program and we partnered with Northern Sunrise County, who sponsored the program to provide the workbooks, prizes and supporting materials. We also partnered with the Peace River & District Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Peace River who provided training support, business administration and judging volunteers. The Village of Berwyn also took part in the program; we provided the training and they provided the sponsorship dollars, judges and prize money. The training took place in three classrooms at Good Shepherd school, the CF Board Room, and one session in Berwyn over the course of a week. The training covered topics such as profit, income & expenses, budgeting, customer service and more so the youth could start, own and operate their own business. They had to obtain a Business License from the Town and agree to the Food & Safety rules. The training resulted in a total of 14 stands in Peace River and 2 stands in Berwyn. We had six judges touring the stands to decide on Best Tasting, Best Stand and Best Entrepreneur. It was a tough competition as the kids put a lot of thought and effort into their mini businesses. Thank you goes out to all our partners & judges in this program, it was a very successful and fun day!



CLIENT HIGHLIGHT



Gracie's Pantry - Falher, Ab. *Owner / Operator Lexi Labrecque*

Gracie's Pantry began as a home-based business in 2018 and in March of 2019, thanks in part from the support of CFPC, Lexi Labrecque proudly opened the doors to her main street shop in Falher, Alberta. She had originally decided to open her business as she saw there was a need for a place for celiac and people with food allergies to go. Unfortunately, when we were all hit with the pandemic, she had to change her original plans and offer all food types. Gracie's still offer gluten-free, friendly, and vegan-friendly options on certain days so that they can be as careful as possible with celiac concerns. Gracie's offer a variety of drinks, from specialty coffee to smoothies to refreshers to bubble teas. Lunches are always made fresh and in house. The most popular items are the flatbread pizzas—Dill pickle or Buffalo chicken varieties. The Caramel macchiato is the number one must have. Lexi's advice to business owners is to "...always have an open mind in life. You need to be able to bend and change as you need. Had I not had an open mind and been willing to change and bend with the times, I would never have made it through the pandemic." You can visit Gracie's Pantry at 115A Main Street in Falher.

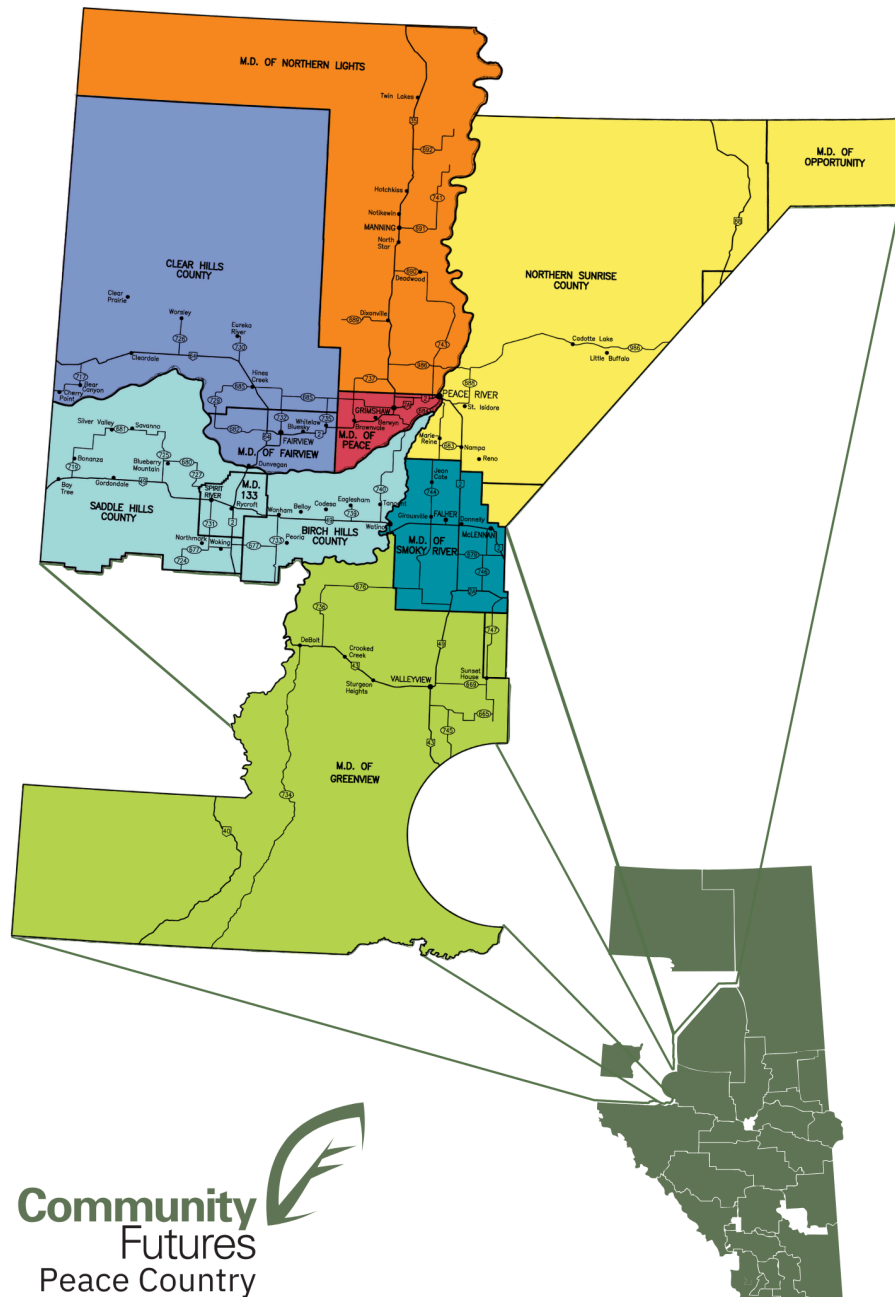
Better Living Centre - Peace River, Ab.

Owner / Operator Christine Findlay



Christine was raised in an entrepreneurial family and opened a fully equipped Pilates studio in 2008, called Pilates 360. Over the years, she earned diplomas in Applied Nutrition and Osteopathic Therapy and added these services to her practice. She offers natural health products in conjunction with Pilates, Osteopathic Therapy, and Holistic Nutrition consulting practice. In 2018, she added lululemon athletic wear and accessories, but after these additions, the 900-square-foot space she had became too small. The new 4000-square-foot location on main street Peace River allows more space to optimize all the different aspects of the business. Christine strives to have products and services to help people optimize their health for better living, and she is always open to new ideas and suggestions and will often bring in new product lines for her customers' needs. At Better Living they use a holistic, multi-faceted approach to health through hands-on therapy, mind-body movement, and nutrition. Christine believes that your ability to adapt and change is what creates longevity and that nothing is guaranteed. "Be ready for sleepless nights. Overnight successes don't exist unless you're a YouTube sensation. Carve out your niche, and keep developing it. Take your financial projections and divide them in half. Love what you do, and do work you can be proud of."

A collage of 20 Polaroid-style photographs arranged in a circular pattern on a dark background. The photos depict various community events and group photos. Some photos include text overlays such as "Community Futures", "WOMEN IN NORTH", "WIN", "FURNITURE DIN HOME DECOR", and "JASON LABS". The photos show people of various ages and backgrounds participating in activities, holding awards, and posing for group photos. The overall theme is community engagement and support.



Community
Futures
Peace Country

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Population: 50,000
50 Communities
26 Municipalities
4 First Nations
122,000 square kms