

ANNUAL REPORT

to the community

2025



**Alberta
Emerald
Foundation**

Accelerating Environmental Excellence

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OUR MISSION

We accelerate environmental excellence by identifying and celebrating Alberta’s visionary leaders and sharing best practices through the power of compelling educational narratives.

OUR VISION

A future where all Albertans advance environmental excellence where they live, work, and play.

STAFF

- Marisa Orfei**
Executive Director
- Sabrina Huot-Boer**
Communications & Engagement Specialist

OUR 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Trina Innes**
Board Chair
- Steve McIssac**
Vice Chair & Resource Development Chair
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To our friends and supporters

On behalf of The Alberta Emerald Foundation’s (AEF) Board of Directors, I am pleased to present our 2025 Annual Report to the community. As we approach AEF’s 35th anniversary in 2026, this report reflects not only the impact of the past year, but the enduring commitment of the Foundation to recognizing and advancing environmental excellence across Alberta. It is a testament to the passion and dedication of not just the AEF staff, but the diverse environmental leaders working in every corner of our province.



This year, we set a record for the most Emerald Award nominations since 2014, receiving 72 nominations from 21 communities across Alberta. 40 of these nominations were recognized through our shortlist, having their achievements showcased at the 34th Annual Emerald Awards at the Timms Centre for the Arts in Edmonton. We welcomed 14 recipients and 26 finalists to our impressive list of nearly 1,300 Emerald Award alumni, highlighting their dedication to environmental excellence.

Throughout the year, we shared the stories of Emerald Award recipients and beyond through our Emerald Documentary Series and What On EARTH Can We Do? podcast, creating awareness of our province’s home-grown solutions and inspiring pride and action amongst Albertans.

We didn’t just stop at uplifting our province’s environmental leaders; we invested in our young leaders through the Emerald Youth Grant program, offering \$15,000 in grants to support youth-led projects that foster environmental stewardship.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of our funding partners, whose commitment ensures that Alberta’s environmental leadership does not remain behind the scenes, but is made visible, celebrated, and shared across the province and beyond. As we look ahead to our 35th year, we do so with gratitude for the collaboration that has carried AEF forward—and with confidence in the role we continue to play in building a more resilient and sustainable future for Alberta.

Trina Innes

Chair of the Board
Alberta Emerald Foundation

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

2025 marked another successful year of accelerating environmental excellence across Alberta. Here's our impact at a glance...

72

NOMINATIONS
received

40

**ENVIRONMENTAL
LEADERS**
recognized

14

COMMUNITIES
represented

We brought Alberta's environmental leaders into the spotlight through our year-round programming and marketing efforts, reaching

258,633

PEOPLE

inspiring awareness, pride, and action across the province and beyond

6,393

YOUTH

empowered to take environmental action through their own youth-led projects, supported by \$15,000 in Emerald Youth Grant funding



34TH ANNUAL EMERALD AWARDS



On June 5, 2025, we hosted the 34th Annual Emerald Awards at the Timms Centre for the Arts in Edmonton to celebrate and recognize the achievements of environmental leaders across Alberta.

We were joined by numerous special guests including her Honour, the honourable Salma Lakhani, co-hosts Julian Faid and Sarah Matiello, and musical guests, Jed and the Valentine.

213 people attended the awards in person and 316 people tuned in online through our live-stream video.

40

Shortlisted groups

14

Communities represented

14

Recipients

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

The Emerald Awards are synonymous with inspiration and hope. It is a critically important event that spotlights the critical, passionate work being done by people across Alberta to preserve nature while living a happier, healthier, more connected life.

“It's a point of pride for me to point to these awards as evidence that Albertans care about the environment and its future.”



EMERALD AWARD RECIPIENTS



Air

Innovations in Air Quality
Public Education
Alberta Capital Airshed

Business

Ecco Recycling & Energy

Community Group or Non-Profit

Oldman Watershed Council

Education

Future Energy Systems

Energy

Salay Prayzaan Solar
Project
*Otipemisiwak Métis
Government*

Infrastructure

High Efficiency Homes for
Indigenous Communities
Trade Winds to Success

Land

135 Years of Stewardship
and Regenerative Ranching
Burke Creek Ranch

Lifetime Achievement

Dr. Brad Stelfox: A Legacy
of Changing the Way We
Think About the Landscape

Public Engagement & Outreach

Water Wednesday
The City of Lethbridge

Shared Footprints

Four Winds & Associates

Waste Management

Echo Food Rescue

Water

Glass of the Sask
EPCOR

Wildlife & Biodiversity

Native Seed and Plant Ex-
change
Friends of Fish Creek

Youth

Aaron and Justin Tan
*Inspiring the Next Genera-
tion Through Microbial Fuel
Cell Games*

UPDATES TO THE EMERALD AWARDS

For 35 years, the Emerald Awards have celebrated Albertans who are tackling environmental challenges and creating meaningful change in their communities.

To mark this milestone, we refreshed our Emerald Award categories, which included the introduction of six brand new categories that reflect the diverse and evolving landscape of environmental work across the province. These updates were developed in collaboration with an advisory committee made up of leaders from a range of sectors and industries, all of whom play a vital role in addressing Alberta's environmental challenges and opportunities.

In addition to these updates, we launched a simplified nomination form and publicly available judging criteria, making the nomination process more accessible and transparent than ever before.

Discover the new categories

Climate Adaptation & Resilience

Recognizing initiatives that help communities, ecosystems, or industries adapt to climate impacts or build resilience by strengthening their ability to withstand, recover from, and thrive amid environmental change.

Emerging Solutions

Celebrating research, pilot projects, or organizations that show strong potential for adaptability and real-world impact, even before implementation.

Emissions Reduction

Recognizing initiatives that improve air quality, reduce pollutants, and/or reduce emissions.

Green Building

Honouring initiatives that rethink how we design, build, and renovate spaces to minimize environmental impact and support healthier, low-carbon communities.

Land Use, Agriculture, or Forestry

Recognizing initiatives in land use, agriculture or forestry that demonstrate environmental leadership or innovation.

Schools

Recognizing K-12 schools, classrooms, students or teachers that demonstrate environmental leadership, inspiring action, fostering stewardship, or creating positive change within the school community.

THE EMERALD DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Through compelling micro-documentaries, the Emerald Documentary Series brings Alberta's environmental solutions to a wider stage. Each episode dives into the stories behind Emerald Award recipients—their ideas, their impact, and the passion driving their work. By making these leaders and their solutions more visible, we help amplify their influence and inspire Albertans with real, hopeful examples of environmental progress.

Season 6

Released in January 2025, season six of the Emerald Documentary Series dives into the stories of the 33rd Annual Emerald Award recipients.

This season received **over 55,000 views**, an **increase of 114% compared to season five!**



Here's a glimpse into the stories we shared this season



Caribou Habitat Restoration Project
Cenovus



Repair for Good Program
Goodwill Industries of Alberta



Transforming Alberta's Orphan Wells into Small-Scale Solar Sites
RenuWell Energy Solutions

[Discover more Emerald Doc Series videos!](#)

WHAT ON EARTH CAN WE DO? PODCAST



This seasonal podcast, hosted by our Communications & Engagement Specialist, Bri, shines a light on the people and organizations driving environmental change in Alberta. Each season focuses on a different topic, from food waste to low-carbon solutions, exploring the challenge, solutions, and inspiring stories behind them. Through conversational interviews and real-world examples, we share how Albertans are creating a brighter, more sustainable future for our province and beyond!

1,775
DOWNLOADS

41
COUNTRIES TUNED IN

Season 7

Over the past six seasons of the podcast, we explored everything from orphan wells to coexisting with urban wildlife. This year, we focused our entire season on one pressing topic — food waste.

Across seven episodes, we dove deep into food waste: what it is, how it happens, its massive impact, and the Alberta-based initiatives that are doing something about it.



WOECWD S7 E6
How One Alberta Community Rescued Nearly a Million Pounds of Food

[Listen to the podcast](#)

EMERALD YOUTH GRANTS

After a year-long pause, we were thrilled to bring back the Emerald Youth Grant program, thanks to the generous support of Pathways Alliance!

The Emerald Youth Grant program empowers youth aged 5-25 across Alberta to take on environmental projects that inspire change and foster environmental stewardship. Each grant provides up to \$1,000 in funding to support meaningful initiatives.

630

DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN
PROJECTS

8

COMMUNITIES
SUPPORTED

5,763

YOUTH IMPACTED

Project Highlights



Not the End of the World! media campaign

Together, seven high school students challenged climate-anxiety by producing hopeful, solutions-focused radio and social media content. Through research, expert interviews, and community storytelling, they fostered environmental stewardship by shifting the narrative—empowering peers to feel informed, inspired, and motivated to protect their local environment.



Mini MFC Olympics

Led by two high school students, Justin and Aaron Tan, grade six students across Calgary explored renewable energy by building microbial fuel cells powered by backyard soil. Through hands-on science, peer learning, and friendly competition, youth were empowered to tackle eco-anxiety with action—developing environmental literacy, teamwork, and a belief in their power to make change.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

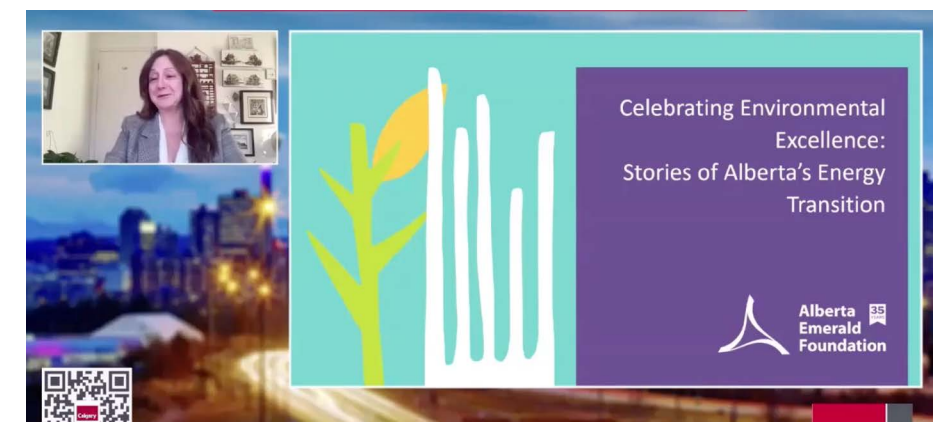
Environmental Gathering

In May, we had the opportunity to attend and present at the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation's environmental gathering, which brings together people from across sectors who are passionate about sustainability in Alberta. Our Communications & Engagement Specialist, Sabrina, participated in the "The Power of Collaboration: Multi-Interest Holder Success Stories" session, where she spoke about the critical role collaboration plays in the environmental excellence recognized through the Emerald Awards each year.



Calgary Climate Symposium

As a part of the City of Calgary's Seventh Annual Climate Symposium, our Executive Director, Marisa, presented alongside the Calgary Region Hydrogen Hub and Calgary Transit for the "Powering Alberta's Future: Clean Energy Innovations in Southern Alberta" webinar. She not only highlighted Emerald Award Alumni making strides in clean energy innovations, but how telling their stories helps accelerate environmental excellence in our province.



OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

We wouldn't be able to accelerate environmental excellence across Alberta without the support of our funding partners. We're incredibly grateful for their support and for their own commitment to reaching their climate and environmental goals.

Visionaries



Champions

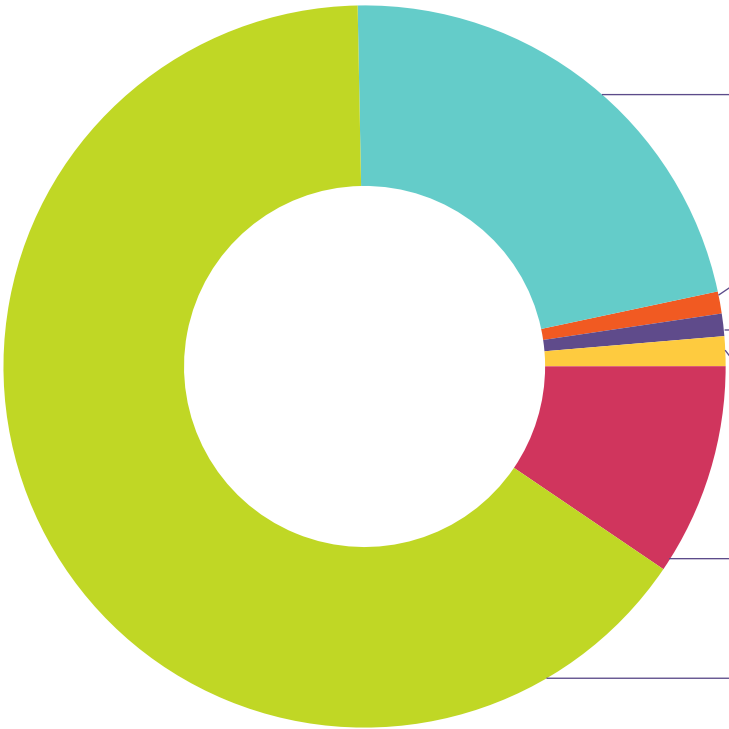


Leaders



Revenue

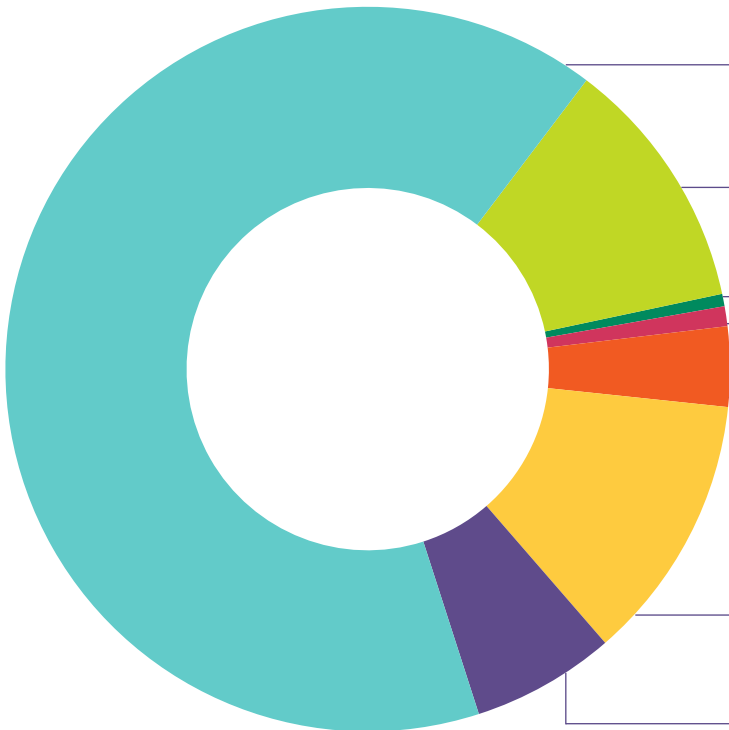
\$315,919



Investments	22%
Donations	1%
Other Grants	1%
Event Ticket Sales	1.30%
Endowment Grants	9.50%
Sponsorships	65.20%

Expenses

\$301,102



HR and Direct Program Delivery	65.28%
Communications	11.40%
Advertising	0.60%
Travel	0.90%
Administration	3.60%
Grants Distributed	12%
Non-HR Program Delivery	6.41%

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



As 2025 comes to a close, we reflect with pride on another year dedicated to making Alberta's environmental excellence more visible, celebrated, and connected. Through our programs and storytelling initiatives, the Alberta Emerald Foundation continued to shine a provincial spotlight on the people and projects strengthening our communities and shaping a more sustainable future, reminding Albertans that meaningful solutions are already at work across the province.

This impact is the result of collaboration. As a small staff of two, our work is only possible because of the passion and commitment of the environmental leaders we celebrate, the community members who engage with our programs, our dedicated volunteers and Board of Directors, as well as the funders who believe in the importance of accelerating environmental excellence in Alberta. We are deeply grateful for your trust and support.

Looking ahead to 2026 and the celebration of our 35th anniversary, we remain committed to building awareness, fostering collaboration across sectors, and amplifying Alberta-grown solutions—together.

Marisa Orfei, Executive Director (left)
Sabrina Huot-Boer, Communications and Engagement Specialist (right)



emeraldfoundation.ca
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The Alberta Emerald Foundation is a registered charity
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