



## **Alberta Provincial Report**

### **WBC AGM 2014**

WSA has completed another successful year in all areas related to wheelchair sports. All of our hard laid plans and efforts with development continue to show signs of success. Our club base continues to thrive and we are very fortunate to have a wide variety of membership representation from across the province with an astounding array of talent on every level. All regions within the province are represented including: Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Red Deer and Lloydminster.

2013 – 14 was the year of continued forward motion along with consistent continuity in all aspects of the WSA operation. The board of directors worked together in a collaborative cohesive manner which made for a smooth flowing machine. We had three new members join the Board in 2013. The WSA Strategic Plan along with a solid business plan continues to provide concise direction to the organizations visions and goals. Financially WSA is in a stable position. The year was not without its financial challenges and going forward there will remain fiscal challenges due to significant changes in government funding, grant reductions and limited financial opportunities. Grants are becoming more and more oversubscribed and there is healthy competition amongst the non-profit organizations in Alberta all vying for the same pots of money.

Barb Armbrust completed her sixth year as WSA President once again bringing her in-depth sport knowledge and professional skill set to the table for all of our benefit. I have appreciated the Boards conscientious and thoughtful approach to all of their roles and have enjoyed working with everyone involved immensely.

WSA launched the new Bridging the Gap program in 2008 and momentum was consistent through the 5<sup>th</sup> year of delivery. BJ continues to bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to his position of BTG Program Coordinator and has made a great contribution to the role and the overall program. Throughout 2013 – 14 efforts towards initiating further ongoing programming, networking and collaborative opportunities with many other provider organizations was emphasized. Regional have-a-go days and weekly sessions have continued in both Edmonton and Calgary and efforts to bring the program into the communities of Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and Lloydminster were undertaken. More details on the BTG program can be found within BJ's AGM report included in this package.

### **Wheelchair Basketball**

The 2013 season could best be termed as one of continued transition as there was significant change to the domestic program from Wheelchair Basketball Canada. This change is for the betterment of the sport and forward momentum in the ongoing development of all things basketball. The CWBL – Finals concept that brings all club teams together for a final playoff from across the country in both the open division and women's division saw Edmonton take Silver and Calgary 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Women's Division and Edmonton 6<sup>th</sup> place in the open division. Other significant changes included the introduction of the 3 on 3 concepts to our junior players. This was introduced as part of the Canada Games Cycle with the intent of giving more developmental playing time to participants. The first National level tournament to feature this concept was the Jr. West Regionals that were held in Prince George in March. A very successful 2014 Junior Nationals was hosted in Edmonton at the Saville Centre. Alberta earned the Bronze medal and secured a top spot leading into CWG 2015.

Provincial Basketball Coordinators Darrell Nordell and Lorna Shannon continued to build off of the successes of their initial efforts. Having the two part-time roles that service the North and south portions of the province has worked well reducing both work load and geographical area of coverage to a more manageable size.

Alberta players named to the National Team for 2013 include Tara Feser and Alarissa Haak for the Women and Chad Jassman for the Men. Darrell Nordell has also been named to the assistant coaching staff of the Men's program.

Junior participation both in Edmonton and Calgary has increased dramatically from fewer than 5 active participants a few years ago, to 29 different juniors involved during this season. Many of these juniors will be part of our Canada Games Team for 2015 and all are committed to working with their club teams and the Junior Provincial Program leading up to the games in February of 2015.

*Current initiatives and moving forward* – Our main focus will continue to be to strengthen our existing programs and grow the game in our current communities as well as in new areas of the province. This will only happen with continued focus on developing our established institutions (coaching, referees, CWBL, junior programs) and continuing to work on a consistent reliable structure for all of our programs to fit into. We are however making strides in a few newer exciting ventures

1. **School Program** – Alberta is already a national leader in its school based program, and we have now made the progressive step through WBC of developing a complete curriculum to go with it (the first in Canada). This is still in the works and we should be seeing an introductory model sometime in later part of 2014.
2. **Long Term Athlete Development Model** – It is Alberta's intention to be national leaders in implementing the new LTAD model that is being promoted nationally from both the sport and governmental level. We were the best represented province at the planning summits that took place over the last couple of years, and we feel that many of our current initiatives put us well on our way to championing a model that promotes holistic development, sport for life and a focused approach on developing both grass root and national caliber athletes
3. **Non sport specific wheelchair fitness, skills and programs** – It is our belief that with the size and diversity of the wheelchair sporting community in Alberta, we are not properly serving many of our members by trying to draw them exclusively into particular team sports in this province. We are looking to take leadership through BTG and by working with various groups, including Alberta Sport Development Council and specific sporting organizations, on providing more general wheelchair programs where participants can become involved at their own level, participate with a goal of fun and fitness, learn chair skills that will apply across various sports and experience more of what the different sporting groups have to offer.
4. **CWBL changes** – We have made significant changes to our league structure over the past 2 years and continue to modify it to make it as friendly as possible to all levels of play. This past year we hosted 9 tournaments along with some great developmental learning opportunities for all ages and abilities.

## **Wheelchair Athletics/Racing** – Submitted by Steve Ellefson

As last year was a Canada Games year, there was a greater focus on WC track. We are allowed 5 spots for the CSG Team, unfortunately we were only able to fill 3 of them because of the age restrictions. Our track athletes showed marked improvement with several PB's but still have work to do to attain elite national status. Dana Halvorson completed the level 3 coaching requirements and attended the Sherbrook - Canada Games with our Alberta Team. Dana now runs our WC track racing program.

The WC racing road program has diminished as new athletes gravitate to handcycling.

Glen Scott, a veteran of our WC road-racing program will attend the Boston Marathon this month looking to set a new PB. We coach 2 athletes pursuing para-triathlon, requiring training in 3 disciplines – WC road racing, handcycling and swimming.

We continue to support athletes outside of Calgary and encourage their participation in our training camps and competitive events.

Alberta may have the largest group of elite quad women handcyclists in the country, 4 of the 5 training in Calgary. We have great expectations for these gals; anticipate seeing some in the National Team Program in the future.

Our integrated HC program with the adaptive cycling program at the U of C continues to expand and provide opportunities for HC athletes. The program is coached by Stephen Burke, an experienced coach and coordinator for Paralympic supported adaptive programs. As a full time employee of the U of C; he has access to all the facilities at the U of C, including the track, equipment and human performance lab. He has a degree in Kinesiology and is a certified level III coach. These resources provide a great advantage, especially to athletes with elite competitive aspirations.

Cycle racing is embracing integration, it is now common practice to have Para events in cycle racing. We attended several events each season that adopt this philosophy.

We look forward to the 2014 season, our mission remains - to provide multi-sport recreation and competitive opportunities for individuals with a disability by facilitating, advocating, and developing programs, providing resources and education to foster and encourage the development of adaptive athletes from grass roots to elite level in a spirit of friendship, unity and sportsmanship.

We are working on a junior para-program and look to partner with the Children's Hospital to facilitate introduction of sport to children.

We continue to recruit new athletes for our programs and have established a strong working relationship with The Foothills Hospital Nero Rehab Team.

## **Wheelchair Rugby**

WSA was pleased to have hosted the 2013 Coloplast Wheelchair Rugby National Championships in Calgary at MRU. The event took place May 17 to 19 bringing together 10 teams from across Canada. The event was a resounding success and a great showcase for Wheelchair Rugby.

Alberta had some great rugby development throughout 2013 with the streamlining of the teams in both Edmonton and Calgary. 2012 - 13 season saw the expansion of the Prairie league. Alberta hosted two tournaments one in Edmonton in January and the other in Calgary at the beginning of April. The Prairie League concept will continue in 2013 – 14 season with each province hosting a tournament throughout the fall and winter. Both Edmonton and Calgary will once again be making efforts to host a tournament as part of league. The Alberta league is still in the stages of developmental programming with efforts being targeted to grassroots initiatives and player recruitment.

A number of Provincial Development Camps are in the works for the 2013 - 14 season. The camps will be held in Red Deer at Lindsey Thurber High School. December 7 will kick off the provincial team selection process. This process will lead into a series of developmental camps. From all of these camps

Alberta has selected a Provincial A and B Team that will compete at the upcoming National Championships in London Ontario.

<b>Alberta A</b>	<b>Alberta B</b>
Zak Madell 3.5	Evan Shaw 3.5
Dale Nording 3.0	Andrea Wojcik 3.5
Richard Tooley 2.0	Skyler Janssen 3.0
Allan Chartrand 2.0	Denholm Stephens 3.0
Dave Guiry 1.5	Cody Fournie 2.0
BJ Engerdahl 0.5	Ken Hicks 2.0
Coach – Bruce Crosby	Ian Heerensperger 1.0
	Mike Audette 0.5
	Coach – Cliff Wooden

### **Sled Hockey** – Submitted by Dean Krawec

This is the 16th year that Wheelchair Sports Alberta has been involved with the sport of sledge/sled hockey. Even though the organization has not taken as an active of a role with the sport this year, there are always willing to help when approached and give guidance in any area. This is caused mostly by the fact there is no National tournament for Wheelchair Sports Alberta to take part in and dress a provincial team. So the clubs have to do whatever function they can within their area to keep the interest of the sport going as the best they can and keeping it in the public's eye.

Regarding the club teams, there are 7 different organizations that are looking after sledge/sled hockey in Alberta. What was great about the 2013-14 season is that an Alberta Sledge Hockey League (ASHL) continued with 3 divisions; **a new junior level**, an Intermediate level and a senior level. This was put together with the help of the clubs in Alberta.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Age &amp; Skill Level</u>
Battle River Icehawks	Wetaskiwin & Ponoka	Intermediate
Calgary Sledge Hockey Association (Calgary Stingers, Scorpions & Venom)	Calgary	Junior/Intermediate/Senior
Edmonton Sled Hockey Club (Edmonton Impact)	Edmonton	Intermediate/Senior
Grande Prairie Wolverines Wheelchair Sports Association	Grande Prairie	Senior/Intermediate
Lethbridge Sledge Hockey	Lethbridge	Intermediate
Medicine Hat Sledge Hockey	Medicine Hat	Intermediate
Paralympic Sports Association (Edmonton Sledge Blades & Dogs)	Edmonton	Junior/Intermediate/Women's

Battle River is a club that finished their 7th season. They have been members of the WSA in the past. So I recommend they get more WSA funding to keep growing. The Icehawks did not play in the Alberta League because of uncertain commitment by players. They also played in the Intermediate division at the Western Canada Sledge Hockey Tournament which they won the Gold medal.

The Calgary Sledge Hockey Association has consistently maintained a good membership base in 3 age & skill levels and has been fortunate enough to continue being a division of Calgary Minor Hockey. The Scorpions, Stingers and Venom also played in the Alberta League in 3 divisions of Junior, Intermediate

and Senior levels. So the Senior level team of the Scorpions played Edmonton Impact 6 times but had a hard keeping a full roster so they did not enter the Western Canada Sledge Hockey Tournament. The Senior level is in jeopardy for next season. While the Intermediate team of the Stingers played the PSA Dogs and the Edmonton Impact. The Stingers finished the season 3<sup>rd</sup> in the ASHL. The Venom played the PSA Blades twice to kick start our Junior level in the ASHL. On a side note Chris Cederstrand from the Scorpions was also part of the Team Canada Developmental team this season.

The Edmonton Sled Hockey Club has had a very productive year with 31 members and ice times every Saturday over the season. The club and its members are all still a member of the WSA and had great support from the organization again this season. The Edmonton Impact Senior team played in the ASHL against the Calgary Scorpions. The Impact had players (Steve Arsenault, Ben Biermann, Kieran Block & Dustan Hamar) go to the Team Canada selection camp in the fall and two of the players, Steve and Kieran, made the team for 2013-14 season. However, in January Kieran was the last cut made by Canada to get the roster down to the 2014 Paralympics roster limits. Canada won a Bronze medal. Ben, Kieran and Dustan were chosen to be part of the Team Canada development team for the 2013-14 season. The Edmonton Impact also had a team in the Intermediate level in the Alberta League so they played the PSA Dogs and the Calgary Stingers in a total of 8 games including playoffs. The Impact Intermediate team also took part in the Western Canada Sledge Hockey Tournament. The Impact Intermediate team went the Pacific Sledge Tourney in Surrey, BC and won all 3 of their games in October. The Impact Senior team went to the London Blizzard tourney in Ontario and lost in the Bronze medal game in OT playing at the highest level there.

The Grande Prairie Wolverines have a small group of players that take part in the sport. They have a variety of players so they could not fill a team for the 2014 Western Canada Sledge Hockey Tournament or the ASHL but they joined up with Coaldale Cool Canucks to make an Intermediate team at the WCSHT in Leduc. However, they have ice time on Sundays in Grande Prairie to fill the needs for their members.

Lethbridge area has started to play sledge hockey on a regular basis there. I don't know exact numbers or ice times and if they have come up with a club name yet. But they did join forces with Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat and some Saskatchewan players to make up the Coaldale Cool Canucks this season to make a team in the Intermediate level at the WCSHT in Calgary. This was great news and hopefully they will keep growing.

Medicine Hat started up a sledge hockey club with the help of Tara Chisholm who was involved in PSA but moved there because of work so she wanted to stay part of the game. Tara is the one that put together the Coaldale Cool Canucks team with players from Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, PSA women's team and Saskatchewan teams to enter the Western Canada Sledge Hockey Tournament. I hope they keep growing and playing there.

The PSA are still a part of the Edmonton Minor Hockey Association (EMHA) as an associate member. They had weekly ice sessions with the PSA Dogs in the Intermediate division and the PSA Blades in the Junior division. They have a very good membership base in all levels. Over the course of the season the teams have played games against EMHC teams. PSA will take a mixture of the Dogs and Blades to the New England tournament in May to play in an under-18 Junior division. They also played in the Alberta League in the Intermediate level so the Dogs played games against the Edmonton Impact and the Calgary Stingers. The PSA Blades had 2 games against the Calgary Venom in the inaugural Junior ASHL division. The Blades won both games. The PSA women's team had ice times on Thursdays again this season and played a couple exhibition games. They averaged about a good number of players.

Hockey Alberta and Alberta Sport, Recreation Parks & Wildlife Foundation are still taking an interest in sledge hockey. They contacted people involved in sledge hockey and put together a Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) that is still working on making sledge hockey bigger and better. They helped to grow and promote the sport with demo and exhibition games and a Western Canada Sledge Hockey Tournament (WCSHT) in April. The tournament took place in Leduc on April 4-6 at the Leduc Rec Centre for the 10th Annual tournament. There were 13 teams in 3 different divisions taking part. They were from Saskatchewan and Alberta. Here are the results from the tournament.

## Junior

1<sup>st</sup> - Calgary Venom

2<sup>nd</sup> – PSA Blades

3<sup>rd</sup> – Regina Avengers

4<sup>th</sup> – Kindersley Klippers

## Intermediate

1<sup>st</sup> - Battle River Ice Hawks

2<sup>nd</sup> – PSA Dogs

3<sup>rd</sup> – Calgary Stingers

4<sup>th</sup> – Edmonton Impact

5<sup>th</sup> – Bruno T-Birds

6<sup>th</sup> – Coaldale Cool Canucks

## Senior

Edmonton Impact

(Played 2 Showcase games with Kieran & Steve)

Here are the standings from the 2013-14 ASHL season:

Junior Division 1<sup>st</sup> PSA Blades (2-0) 2<sup>nd</sup> Calgary Venom (0-2)

Int. Division 1<sup>st</sup> PSA Blades (4-1-1), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edmonton Impact (2-3-1) & 3<sup>rd</sup> Calgary Stingers (2-4-0)

Senior Division 1<sup>st</sup> Edmonton Impact (5-1) 2<sup>nd</sup> Calgary Scorpions (1-5)

The Junior and Senior divisions did not have playoffs but the Intermediate division had it planned and the Edmonton Impact beat the Calgary Stingers in the semi-final to move on to play the PSA Dogs for the ASHL Intermediate title game on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

So the sledge hockey season was a very good year with teams growing and a birth of a new club. However, the highlight of the year was the continued success of the Alberta Sledge Hockey League (ASHL). So sledge hockey will continue to flourish with the Alberta clubs and Wheelchair Sports Alberta working together. So Wheelchair Sports Alberta will have to try to continue in their support of the local development of sledge hockey as much as they can.

## Wheelchair Tennis

Tennis Alberta and Tennis Canada continues to provide resource support to the WSA Tennis program. Efforts are in the works to run a more solidified program in both Edmonton and Calgary through BTG. Tennis Canada continues to be supportive of our efforts to offer wheelchair tennis in Alberta by providing resource support for equipment, technical knowledge, funding and hosting opportunities for tournaments. Developmental programs were established and run in Both Edmonton and Calgary.

Two WSA athletes attended the National Championships with support from WSA and Tennis Canada. This was a great learning opportunity for these athletes and something we hope to continue with in future years.

Efforts are being made to partner in a more meaningful way with Tennis Alberta in not only the delivery of developmental programs but with coaching initiatives as well.

2014 will see Alberta host a wheelchair Tennis competition that will be part of the newly initiated Prairie League concept. This tournament will be part of Tennis Alberta's Alberta Open. The tournament will combine both wheelchair and able bodied players.

## **Future Initiatives**

WSA will attempt to continue its coordination and organization of wheelchair sport programs for the provincial men's, women's and junior teams along with grass root initiatives for all of our core sports. WSA's focus for the upcoming years will be on developing partnerships in sport development, marketing and promotion along with recruitment from grassroots through to high performance.

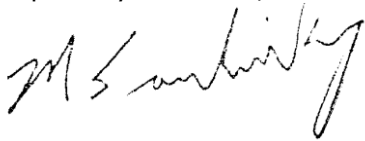
## **Conclusion**

I have now been with WSA in the capacity of Executive Director for 8 years. During this time I have had the opportunity to help steer the direction and development of the organization in many new and exciting directions. I feel that we have accomplished many of the goals that we set out to achieve all of which has been done with the support of all the dedicated hardworking individuals that make up the extended WSA family.

As the saying goes "All Good Things Must Come to an End" as I will be stepping down from the ED position within a projected 2 year period (May 2016). Opportunity for new enthusiasm and new people will pave the way for the future of WSA.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the WSA Board, the WSA sport community at large and all those who have provided me with guidance and/or assistance in carrying out my duties as Executive Director. The future continues to look bright for WSA and I look forward to being an integral part of its ongoing development and vision over the next 2 years leading up to my stepping aside as ED.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Sandomirsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Mike Sandomirsky  
Executive Director