

COMING BACK 2022/3 STRONGER ANNUAL REPORT



REFLECTING ON 2022/3

A Message From Our Leaders

2023 marked a year of hard work and collaboration on and off our field of play, with the goal to come back stronger.

Following a period of instability due to the pandemic and staffing transitions, this year we focussed on shoring up our foundations; taking time to review and refine processes and procedures and build new relationships to work towards fiscal sustainability.

Since joining the organization in 2021 as Director of Philanthropy, Shelley Milstein has ensured continuity of service this last year, acting as interim Executive Director following the transition of Chelsey Walker to Director of Whistler Operations for the 2025 Invictus Games.

Chelsey contributed an incredible amount over her 17 years with WAS, building it into a much-loved community organization and acting as a strong voice for access and inclusion. Shelley has built upon that legacy and strengthened not only the charities financial position but its operational infrastructure too.

The search for a new Executive Director is in process, with the expectation of a start date by the year's end. This addition will enable Shelley to return to her preferred role as our Director of Philanthropy and will provide focused leadership for the organization.



2023 was a year of major transition for the Whistler Adaptive team, but we're excited and ready to come back even stronger for 2024. I would like to personally thank our incredible community partners, staff, volunteers and athletes who support us every step of the way.

SHELLEY MILSTEIN
Executive Director

This year has also presented opportunity, with more demand than ever for adaptive sports coaching across the Sea to Sky corridor. With a full and experienced team now in place, WAS is well set to maximize the increased visibility of adaptive sport that the next two years promises to bring and to help us cement WAS' reputation as a leader in the adaptive sports world.

As I transition from the role of Board President, it is with a sense of optimism, knowing that the organization is exceptionally well-positioned to continue advancing our mission in the years to come. As we look to the future, let us remain resolute in our commitment to inclusive, life-changing experiences through the transformative power of adaptive sports and recreation.

We would like to thank our staff, volunteers, athletes and donors for their support over this past year and throughout this transition. We look forward to an exciting winter season.

See you on the slopes!



ALAN KENNEY
Board Chair
Whistler Adaptive Sports

Alan and his family skiing in Whistler.



ABOUT WAS

For over 20 years, the Whistler Adaptive Sports Program Society has been removing barriers to physical recreation and sport for people with disabilities and neurodiversity, offering a full range of adaptive sports programs and a dynamic learning centre in Whistler, BC.

Whistler Adaptive empowers individuals and their families through access to one of the world's best mountain resorts. WAS programs are accessible to both children and adults with cognitive, sensory and physical disabilities.

By providing an unmatched environment, support and opportunities, WAS enables people with disabilities to become physically active and focus on their abilities.

WAS currently serves locals in the Whistler, Squamish, Pemberton and Mount Currie communities, as well as visitors from the Lower Mainland, across Canada, and around the globe.





WHISTLER ADAPTIVE

BY THE NUMBERS

HERE'S HOW WE MEASURED UP IN 2022/23!

468

ATHLETES

108

VOLUNTEERS

3K+

LESSONS

ENDLESS

Demand for Whistler Adaptive services has never been higher and our move to deliver programs in Squamish and Pemberton has echoed this further.

High participation numbers alone, however, do not convey the full impact of our service. The needs of our community demand that we take a more bespoke approach to our programs, tailoring lessons that match the unique needs of our athletes.

HOURS OF FUN!



2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

2022/23 saw our program return full throttle, with weekly group and private lessons operating in Whistler, Pemberton and Squamish across 18 unique sports. We continued to work in partnership to extend the reach of our services, co-hosting dedicated events with Canuck Place, Spinal Cord Injury BC, Crankworx and the Nordic Racers, as well as our regular seasonal collaborations with Whistler Sport Legacies and Can-Skate that widens access through our buddy program.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

From weekly group lessons to summer kids camps and special events, we connected communities throughout the Sea to Sky.

SKI & SNOWBOARD

In collaboration with Whistler Blackcomb Adaptive Ski and Snowboard program we provided 1315 lessons to visitors of the resort.



PRIVATE LESSONS

One to one lessons, tailored to match the unique needs of our athletes.

ADVOCACY & INCLUSION

We represent the interests of our community.





ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

We believe that finding a passion for sport leads to a more active and healthy lifestyle. Here is how one of our athlete's found his chosen sport....

This year, WAS supported 468 athletes of all ages to participate in sport. Our program provides introductions to a variety of different sports, helping our athletes to find enjoyment in physical activity and make it a part of their everyday lives.

Often, it's about helping people find a passion for sport that is the key to creating a more active life. After trying many different activities, 9-year-old Squamish resident Methab found his love of swimming through WAS and is excited to practice his chosen sport every week. He has come a long way since joining us in 2020, learning critical life skills including how to float, tread water, duck dive and swim safely in open water.

WAS TEAM MEMBERS



SHELLEY MILSTEIN

Executive Director

A fundraiser by trade, Shelley has worked in the charitable sector for over 25 years. She is motivated by helping people develop their love of the outdoors. When not at her desk, Shelley can be found in the garden, paddling, or on the cross country ski trails.



ADRIÀ FLOR

**Lead Coach & Equipment/
Facilities Coordinator**

Originally from Spain, Adria started as a snowboard volunteer in 2016. Ever since he has been a beloved WAS coach, sharing his passion for the outdoors and his many talents (and languages) with our athletes.



ELISKA BEZSTAROSTI

Coach & Volunteer Coordinator

Eli comes to WAS from Czech, where she worked as a sports therapist in the Spinal Cord Injury Center. She holds a Masters in Adaptive Sports and specializes in putting smiles on faces.



JENNY BROWN

**Communications Lead
& Squamish Coach**

Combining her experience as a communications and athlete management professional with her certifications in swimming, adaptive skiing and mountain biking, Jen is passionate about getting everyone active outdoors.



ELLIE TAYLOR

Athlete Coordinator

Originally from the UK, Ellie came to Whistler in 2018 as a ski instructor and sports coach. After returning to UK for a few years to work as a fundraising manager in the charitable sector, she now calls the Sea to Sky her home again. Ellie is passionate about the future of adaptive sports in Whistler and is excited to share her love for outdoor adventure with our athletes and families.



NATALIE O'CONNOR

Administrator & Coach

Nat has called The Sea to Sky home for the last 5 years. She has joined WAS this summer with a degree in Sport Education and Coaching and previous experience working for non-profits. She brings support to both the office and coaching team and enjoys outdoor activities getting everyone involved



JO-ANNE MCKINNEY

Bookkeeper

Jo-Anne is originally from Montreal. She moved to British Columbia in 2000 to be closer to her siblings. She has been a bookkeeper for 23 years. Her pride and joy is her daughter Savannah who is a 3rd year student at Queen's University.



WAS TEAM MEMBERS

THREE CHEERS FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers are vital to the success of WAS programs. This past year, we were supported by 108 volunteers who dedicated over 3836 hours of their time.

We spoke to long-term volunteer Penny Forrest about her involvement in the program and what keeps her returning year after year!

What first attracted you to volunteer for Whistler Adaptive?

I was walking along the Valley Trail and I saw a group of people kayaking wearing Whistler Adaptive t-shirts. I used to volunteer teaching children with disabilities how to swim in

Toronto, so I immediately went home and looked it up... I couldn't wait to get started!

What attracted me to the program is my love of sports and nature – and to be able to help people in those two environments is the perfect combo.

How long have you been part of the volunteer team?

I've volunteered over the last five summers, as well as cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter.

How was your first experience?

It was immediately fun. There's no seriousness, and it's important to keep the atmosphere light. I just loved it from the get go. My happiest days are my adaptive days.

Can you describe what a typical volunteer session looks like?

With kayaking, it's just getting the kids gear on and making sure that they are safe on the water. One key thing is having a tow line because the wind at Alta Lake pushes you down one end of the lake and you need to get back. I've gotten more muscular from lugging the kayaks out of the water and paddling when it gets really windy. You have to paddle hard if you've got someone in your kayak!

Did you have any hesitations or expectations going into it?

You just show up and you're good to go, which I loved! I'm not shy so I just started talking to people right away. They are a talkative group, some of these kids, so I just immediately loved it!

DID YOU KNOW?

Every WAS volunteer benefits from access to training, delivered in person by our expert coaching teams and online via the Coaching Association of Canada.

What are your memorable highlights of this past year?

There have been so many! For example, one of the athletes I was working with could say things that were not so polite so I taught him some new expressions like 'see you later alligator', 'in a while crocodile', 'see you soon you big baboon.' And when I came back in the summer, he remembered them all! I was absolutely thrilled.



Scoring my first kayaking polo goal was also great. We have these big wet stinky sponges and Taylor, one of the athletes, was determined to block every goal. But I finally scored and I let him know it!

And of course, using the trail rider with Chris in it. The two of us were joking the whole time and laughing a lot at the bumper sticker on my butt: "How's my driving?" There's always an opportunity to find humour.

Another highlight was last summer. We had a visiting doctor who was newly-paralyzed. His wife, also a doctor, wanted to get him out of the hospital for their anniversary because he had been in there for about three or four months post accident. She brought him kayaking and to see him paddle on his own for the first time was really quite exciting. You could just see him sort of go, oh there's hope! We were all trying to hold back tears.

What have you learned from your experience of volunteering with Whistler Adaptive?

Patience. You just don't know what is going to happen that day so it's important to be adaptable. Also to find humour in everything. It keeps the mood light and keeps things fun, so everybody has a good time.

Become a WAS volunteer! Head to whistleradaptive.com/volunteer



WHISTLER BLACKCOMB

WAS works in collaboration with Whistler Blackcomb to extend the reach of our service and increase the visibility of adaptive snowsports worldwide.

We couldn't achieve what we do without the long-term support of Whistler Blackcomb and Vail Resorts. This collaboration allows us to scale up our operation each winter through the Whistler Blackcomb Adaptive Ski and Snowboard program, expanding our team of certified instructors to deliver

over 1,300 lessons to visitors of North America's largest ski resort.

Through their support, WAS is able to train hundreds of adaptive ski and snowboard instructors from around the world each year, increasing access to adaptive snow sports for people with disabilities and neurodiversity and increasing the visibility of adaptive sports worldwide. Locally, support through Vail Resorts' EpicPromise Foundation helps us provide year-round programming for our athletes here at home.



INVICTUS GAMES

The Invictus Games are coming to Whistler and Vancouver in February 2025!

The announcement was made in April 2022 after close collaboration between Whistler Adaptive, Whistler Sport Legacies and the True Patriot Love Foundation, who were instrumental in BC on building the bid and securing the Games.

The Invictus Games were founded by Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, to benefit wounded, injured and sick servicemen.

The 2025 Games will bring 500 competitors from 20 nations to compete in core Invictus Games sports like sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby. And, for the first time ever, the Games will feature winter adaptive sports like Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, and Skeleton.

Want to know more or get involved? Contact Chelsey Walker, Director of Operations, 2025 Invictus Games at cwalker@InvictusGames2025.ca

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Since 2007, WAS has been a strong voice on the Whistler Accessibility and Inclusion Committee, working in collaboration with other local representatives to improve community accessibility and inclusion. The Committee's most recent accomplishment, the completion of the Accessibility Action Plan, which will help guide accessibility improvements throughout the Municipality.



FUNDERS

Thank you to all the funders that make our programs possible!

GRANTS

BC Gaming Commission
BC Rehab Foundation
Blueshore Financial
Canadian Tire Jumpstart
Federal Government of Canada
Lululemon Athletica Inc.
RBC Foundation
Resort Municipality of Whistler
Squamish Community Foundation
TELUS Charitable Giving
Vancouver Coastal Health
Village of Pemberton
Whistler Blackcomb Foundation

FRIENDS OF WHISTLER ADAPTIVE

American Friends of Whistler
Cross Canada Cycling Tour Society
Downhill Derelicts
Pemberton Legion

SPONSORS

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GFL Environmental Ltd.
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Whistler Platinum

BEQUESTS / ESTATES

Estate of James Cook

A WAS Athlete holds a co-branded water bottle celebrating GFL's Full Circle Project donation..



DONATIONS

FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATE DONORS

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Sushi Village
Thomas Downie Holdings Ltd.
Toyota Canada
Vail Resorts
Winnipeg Foundation

Whistler Adaptive Sports Program was awarded a brand new Toyota Tacoma as part of Toyota Canada's "Cars For Good" Program.





Whistler Adaptive Sports Program is a charitable society that provides year-round, sports and recreational programs for people of all ages with disabilities or neurodiversity.

Thank you to all who have continued to support in our efforts to make sport an inclusive experience.

GET IN TOUCH

Whistler Adaptive Sports Program Society | Box 708
Whistler, BC V0N 1B0

whistleradaptive.com 

info@whistleradaptive.com 

@whistleradaptive 

@whistleradaptive 

Charitable Registration No.
829110949RRO001