

AFWA's 2023: A year in review!

From hosting the International Federation of Agriculture Journalists Congress to launching a new website and logo, the Alberta Farm Writers' Association has had a busy 2023!

Perhaps the best news of all is the steady increase AFWA has seen in its membership, growing from 68 members in 2021, to 105 members in 2023. Of that number, 12 are our [honourary life members](#). Thanks to that increase, Alberta boasts the largest membership guild in the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation (CFWF) network. By having over 80 members, it allows us to hold two seats on the CFWF board.

Olds College stepped up to be one of the greatest membership supporters this year. While we had a couple of members from the educational institute prior, this year saw their support increase to 11 members.

One of our members, if not our oldest, and biggest supporter of that new educational program is Ron McCullough. At 91, Ron is still passionate about ensuring the sustainability of agriculture communications and journalism in this province, and as such, made a sizeable financial donation to Olds College this year.

These synergies tie in nicely with AFWA's Legacy Project launched in April, 2022. The program is aimed at increasing awareness of careers in agriculture journalism and communications, which will involve post-secondary schools across the province and other youth programs. Craig Lester continues to spearhead this project. Remember, we need our members to advocate on behalf of our profession. If you're interested in delivering a presentation (that is ready to go!) in 2024, please reach out to Craig. AFWA's goal is to continue to influence Alberta's students to consider a career in agriculture journalism and communications.

Another project the AFWA board has been discussing is the possibility of launching a student membership. This makes the connection back to the Legacy Project, and affords those students interested in this career path to make connections with our AFWA network, and attend upcoming tours and webinars. It would be a pilot project, and while the students would not be a full member of CFWF or IFAJ, it would be a great introduction to AFWA.

In addition to the above projects, the AFWA board is committed to delivering more professional development sessions to its members. Some will be stand-alone sessions delivered by AFWA, and others will be held in conjunction with CFWF. If you have some suggestions of webinars or PD sessions you'd like to see, let us know.

The IFAJ Congress was a monumental event for AFWA. It is unlikely that we will see the magnitude of this event back in our province in our lifetime. At a September board meeting, there was a great discussion on how we can continue the Indigenous conversation that was sparked at the IFAJ event. Ian Doig is developing a project for AFWA to connect back with a local

nation to open discussion on what we as an association could be doing to promote agriculture journalism and communications to Indigenous students going forward.

Alberta will also benefit from hosting IFAJ. Once the federal government grant documents are completed next spring, the financials of the event will be made available. We will share that information with our members once its available.

And finally, the board is doing some heavy lifting that will ensure the sustainability of our organization going forward. You will be seeing a member survey coming to you at the beginning of December. Please fill it out to let us know how we can improve. We also have a draft mission, vision and values, along with a set of bylaws that are now at the board level for review. Once they are ready, we will be sharing those with our membership.

We thank you all for your continued support of our 68-year-old organization. It is because of you, our members, we hope to reach many more milestones in the future!

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Past-president Craig Lester passes the official AFWA spike to incoming president Michelle Chunyua, September 2023.