



CALGARY RUGBY UNION

Box 5888, Station "A", Calgary, Alberta T2H 1Y4

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MEMBER
Canadian Rugby Union
Alberta Rugby Union
Sports Alberta

CRU Presidents Report 2021

2021 was a season to remember and one that nearly did not get off. In January of 2021 the Calgary Rugby Union (CRU) had no idea how or what a possible season may look like in the spring of 2021. COVID was still in its second wave, and we were not allowed to do any training. The CRU board and its employees worked hard to devise plans A – D to make sure that our members would have some sort of season. As spring came closer it seemed that there may not be a season at all. It was not until late May that things started to take a turn for the positive. COVID cases were dropping, and the number of people vaccinated increase daily. The Alberta government was determined to be 'Open for Summer' and the CRU planned around that.

In early June teams began their club training which for many was the first time on the pitch in 20 months. To make this a safe return to play the CRU clubs followed Rugby Alberta's guidance on slowly returning to full contact practice and play. The programing laid out by Rugby Alberta had the teams building up to full contact over a 6-week period. On June 26th the rugby season began again for the CRU with a combined event of try rugby with Rugby Alberta, a ball hand out for players U13 and below, and a bottle drive fundraiser. This was a huge success and began a great working relationship between the CRU and Rugby Alberta for the 2021 season. Rugby Alberta led the try rugby event and the CRU provided volunteers and the space. The junior and mini players came out in large numbers, and all left with a smile on their faces ready to play rugby.

As we headed into July the first weekend of rugby back at the CRU for minis, juniors, and seniors saw yet another combined venture between the CRU and Rugby Alberta. The first ever 'Rush Rugby' 5 v 5 event took place. It was great to see all the players take the pitch again and the level of intensity was great for a touch rugby event. As we rolled into the last two rugby weekends in July the CRU hosted two 10's tournaments for all levels of rugby. This was only made possible by the clubs in which they had been preparing so diligently to have a safe return to contact. This was the first contact rugby in over 21 months and the competition was tough and fierce. We had over 20 teams participate across the men's and women's divisions and brought rugby back in style. The tournament style allowed for shorter game lengths and breaks in between games to give both the players and the referees a chance to return to contact safely and responsibly. The players, coaches, referees and spectators were delighted to have the return to the game they all love so much!

As we headed into August the CRU hired a program assistant, volunteered program developer and four YDO's added to help run a successful season. To help with flexibility and maintain high levels of participation both the minis and juniors ran festival style competition. Each team needed to submit player numbers weekly by Wednesday evening to the CRU. The CRU program assistant then would have a weekend schedule turned around by Thursday evening. This style of planning maximized the play time for all players involved and got us to put on as many meaningful games as possible. The rules of 'Game On' were implemented across all levels of play and were a huge success. So much so that the CRU is looking to adopt these rules for the 2022 season as well.

For the senior sides, each club declared teams either in Competitive, Developmental, or Recreational levels of play. The CRU programing staff worked hard to devise a modified 6 – week schedule for each level of play. The men had 4 teams in each of the divisions with a modified Recreational league for the outlying teams in Okotoks, Bow Valley, and Red Deer. The



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women were a little different due to numbers and a late start in the season. They basically ran one division of play after the first two weeks and used 'Game On' rules to keep the competition going strong. To help with numbers, teams that were struggling to field a team would submit player numbers weekly to the CRU and we would develop combined sides to be able to put on 15's a side game. The increase of teams working together was a huge success this year.

The season was able to be played and there was even a City Championship final for the men's competitive league which saw the Calgary Saints and Calgary Canucks put on a great show for a home crowd. The Calgary Canucks walked away with a great victory and a symbol of the perseverance of rugby in the Calgary community. That day also saw final games for the both the developmental sides for men's and women's. The season was not without bumps, but the flexibility of the clubs, teams, players and CRU allowed for a lot of rugby to come back and be played successfully.

There were setbacks as one can guess especially with the constant reminder of COVID. The cases did increase as the summer continued and with every positive case returned at a club level it did return with games being postponed or even cancelled. But with the perseverance of the club volunteers and the CRU's program assistant, games were all made up or altered to get games off. These even meant last minute combining of teams of clubs from two different divisions playing each other. The last thing to fall through due to COVID was the first annual CRU Oktoberfest. With numbers rising and the new implementation of double-vaccinated rules in September, the CRU decided to postpone this event until 2022. The flexibility and the ability to work with each other led though to a hugely successful 2021 season.

During this time the CRU clubhouse was also reopened and after 20 months of being shut down, the rugby community showed its support. Each weekend there was rugby at the CRU the bar and kitchen rang out in some record numbers helping to kick start us back into the regular workings of the rugby facility. It was very important for us to get the support from the community to start our rebuilding. As it has been no secret that the CRU has been in some financial hardships these last few years.

To help with the financial situation the administrator for the CRU worked very closely with the city to make sure we took advantage of any and all grants that were available to not-for-profit organizations. As well we were able to access wage subsidies for all employees. The CRU also took on the Bingos that used to be farmed out to the clubs to help with the financial situation. Due to COVID restrictions the casino that the CRU was to have back in early 2021 was pushed into the 3rd quarter of 2021 and we were able to get enough volunteers to run a very successful one. The money from this will definitely help the CRU work towards getting back into the black on the accounting side.

To help with the organization of our day to day finances the CRU hired the accounting firm Affirm to work on our annual financials and to do a full audit. In the previous 20 years there has never been a full audit done and the newly adopted bylaws calls for one yearly. Through a granting opportunity with the city this first audit will be covered completely by them. To help with our daily workings the CRU also moved to using QuickBooks to help organize our finances and to streamline many processes. With the departure of our VP of Finance this is something I was able to assist with but with support from the CRU administrator. The CRU also added in a new point of sale system and debit/credit machines. This has helped us move into the 21st century, organize our payments, and maximize dollars into our facilities. This has been a welcome change that the CRU rugby community has wanted for a while.



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The CRU also worked closely with the City of Calgary to secure the land lease for another 15 years and to secure funds to help provide the CRU board of directors help via a consultant. The CRU is looking to be financially viable come the 2023 season and some longer-term planning needs to be developed to help develop the park into a world class facility. Due to wear and tear the life of the main grandstand on field one of the park needed to be removed and the stairway on the main deck needed to be repaired. Both projects have been completed and the CRU is now on the hunt for a new set stands for the main pitch.

During the 2022 season the CRU will add the help of a consultant agency to help maximize the use of the facility, the fields, and our human resources. The CRU has just finished working with the Federation of Calgary Communities to help overlook at all the workings of the CRU and its facility to help to prioritize a list of needs and how to get them accomplished. Some of these will be done in house with the board of directors or the staff and others outsourced via a consultant or accounting firm. This was a great process to work with a professional group to get this help and as well to look at our organization via a bird's eye view. The board feels it has been empowered and we foresee great things in the future years.

This being my first year as the CRU president I would like to thank each of the board members, the presidents of the clubs, the members, and the CRU employees. It takes a small army of workers and volunteers to make this all work and to provide almost 2000 players access to such a great game.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Rowe".

Peter Rowe
President
Calgary Rugby Union

