



Community Futures Lac La Biche Organization History

For 40 years, Community Futures Lac La Biche has played a central role in supporting entrepreneurs, strengthening partnerships, and advancing community-based economic development in the region. Guided by local volunteers and rooted in the belief that communities know best, the organization has adapted to changing economic conditions while remaining committed to sustainable local growth. The following history outlines the key milestones that shaped its evolution and continue to influence its work today.

Foundations in Regional Economic Development (1974)

The origins of Community Futures Lac La Biche trace back to 1974 with the formation of the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC). The REDC was established in response to economic pressures created by the rapid growth of Fort McMurray, which was drawing labour and economic activity away from the Lac La Biche region.

The Council's objective was to promote and encourage local industries and businesses as a means of strengthening the regional economy. Several individuals who later became founding contributors to Community Futures Lac La Biche were actively involved in the REDC, helping to shape its early economic development vision and commitment to locally driven growth.



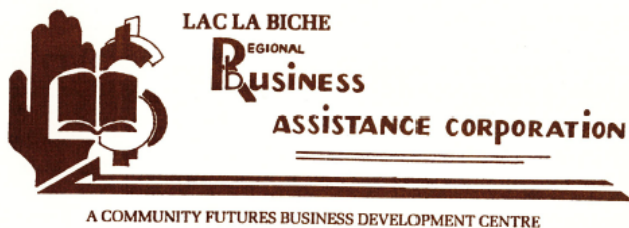
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The LEAD Program and the Establishment of RBAC (1983–1986)

In 1983, the federal government introduced Local Employment Assistance and Development (LEAD) corporations across Canada. These organizations were designed to operate independently in regions facing high unemployment, supporting locally driven business activity as a means of strengthening community economies and expanding private sector employment.

Recognizing the value of this approach, the REDC began planning the establishment of a LEAD corporation in Lac La Biche as a complement to its existing economic development efforts.

In 1986, following federal approval of the Regional Economic Development Council's proposal, a LEAD corporation was formally established in Lac La Biche under the name Regional Business Assistance Corporation (RBAC).



The RBAC was mandated to:

- Provide business counselling and consulting services to local entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Offer financial support to businesses that did not meet the criteria of traditional lenders

Transition to the Community Futures Program (Mid-1980s)

By 1985, the federal government identified a limitation in the LEAD model: while effective at generating private sector employment, it placed insufficient emphasis on long-term, comprehensive regional economic development.

In response, the Community Futures Program (CFP) was introduced to succeed the LEAD corporations. The CFP was designed to empower rural communities to take a broader approach to economic development—supporting new and expanding businesses, delivering training and mentorship to entrepreneurs, and advancing community-based economic development initiatives.

The Community Futures Program model initially consisted of two complementary organizations, each governed by its own community-based volunteer board:

- A Business Development Centre, which inherited the LEAD mandate of business financing and counselling
- A Community Futures Committee, focused on identifying economic potential and strategic opportunities for job creation and business development

These two entities were expected to work closely together to support both individual businesses and the broader regional economy.

In Lac La Biche, the Regional Business Assistance Corporation transitioned into the Business Development Centre under the Community Futures Program in 1987, retaining its name and operational focus.

Shortly thereafter, the Blueprint for the Future Society was established to serve as Lac La Biche's Community Futures Committee. The Society was charged with overseeing tourism-related activities and advancing broader economic development initiatives within the region.

**BLUEPRINT
FOR THE FUTURE**
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

Lac La Biche Regional Business Assistance Corporation
2nd Floor, Town Hall Building
P.O. Box 2188
Lac La Biche, Alberta
T0A 2C0... Telephone 823-2662

RBAC BUSINESS FINANCING
We offer flexible financing* for both business start ups and expansions.
We analyze your project (viability, risks, jobs created, equity and collateral). If it looks favorable, we can provide you with term loans designed to meet your needs.
Term loans are granted for up to 5 years at fixed interest rates with repayments set monthly or seasonally.
Other services:
Loan guarantees
Equity financing
Business counselling/business planning
All inquiries are kept in strict confidence.
*We are a lender of last resort.

Given Lac La Biche's remote location and higher operating costs, many local businesses faced challenges accessing financial and advisory services. The RBAC addressed this gap by bringing support services and alternative financing directly into the community.

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In 1995, following a federal directive to streamline governance structures, the Regional Business Assistance Corporation and the Blueprint for the Future Society were formally merged. This consolidation created what is now known as the Lac La Biche Regional Community Development Corporation, bringing business support and community economic development under a single governance and operational structure



Adoption of the Community Futures Common Brand (2006)

In 2006, the Lac La Biche Regional Community Development Corporation—alongside Community Futures organizations across Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—officially adopted the Community Futures common brand, including the recognizable olive green colour palette and leaf symbol.



From that point forward, the organization began operating publicly under the trade name Community Futures Lac La Biche, aligning its local work with a unified regional and national identity while maintaining its locally governed, community-driven structure.

www.cflb.com

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The Lac La Biche – Lakeland County Economic Development Partnership

During its years as the Lac La Biche Regional Community Development Corporation, the organization entered into the formal Lac La Biche – Lakeland County Economic Development Partnership, delivering municipal economic development services under contract.

While the Town of Lac La Biche and Lakeland County operated as separate municipalities, the organization coordinated tourism promotion, regional marketing, investment attraction initiatives, and broader economic development activities on their behalf. Following municipal amalgamation, it continued delivering services for the newly formed Lac La Biche County.

In addition to marketing and investment attraction responsibilities, the organization participated in broader regional planning initiatives. In 2002, in partnership with Lac La Biche Family & Community Support Services and the municipal governments, the organization participated in commissioning the Lac La Biche – Lakeland County Municipal Shelter Plan, which was significant in the development of the Hope Haven Women's Shelter and its subsequent expansion. This work reflected recognition that sustainable economic development is closely linked to community well-being and social infrastructure.

After nearly two decades of service delivery, responsibility for municipal economic development was assumed directly by Lac La Biche County, and the organization concluded its role as the contracted provider while continuing its core Community Futures mandate.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
www.laclabicheregion.ab.ca 1-877-623-9696

Regional Branding & Investment Promotion – The Lac La Biche Region

A central component of the partnership era was the advancement of the Lac La Biche Region brand.

At a time when municipal governance structures remained separate, the brand provided a unified regional identity for tourism promotion and investment marketing. Through implementation of an annual Community

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Marketing Plan—funded in partnership with Lac La Biche County, Travel Alberta, and local businesses—the organization coordinated a wide range of promotional initiatives designed to position the region in external markets.

These activities included:

- Participation in major tourism and industry trade shows across Alberta
- Production and distribution of tens of thousands of regional maps and promotional materials
- Coordinated print, radio, and television advertising campaigns
- Development and maintenance of online business directories and community profiles
- Representation through regional economic development alliances and Alberta HUB initiatives
- Preparation and distribution of developer and investor information packages
- Hosting out-of-town business delegations and prospective investors

Investment attraction efforts were integrated into the broader regional branding strategy, presenting Lac La Biche as a viable and competitive location for commercial, industrial, and tourism development.

During this period, the organization also participated in major institutional development initiatives.

Community Futures served on Portage College's working committee responding to the provincial



Request for Proposal for the proposed Alberta Police and Peace Officers Training Centre. While the proposal was not ultimately approved, the effort reflected coordinated regional collaboration among municipal leaders and institutional partners in pursuit of long-term economic diversification opportunities.

The continued use of the Lac La Biche Region name today reflects the lasting institutional influence of the coordinated branding and promotional efforts undertaken during this era.



Industry Consultation & Regional Planning – LLBRICC

In November 2006, the Lac La Biche Region Industry Consultation Committee (LLBRICC) was formally established as a subcommittee of the organization.

LLBRICC was created to strengthen communication and coordination between industry operators, municipal representatives, and community stakeholders during a period of significant energy sector expansion in northeastern Alberta.

The committee's objectives included:

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- Promoting long-term community economic development aligned with projected industrial growth
- Identifying infrastructure, housing, workforce, and service capacity considerations associated with regional expansion
- Facilitating dialogue between industry representatives and local decision-makers
- Supporting evidence-based planning and intergovernmental communication

LLBRICC coordinated and published the “Social Baseline and Potential Cumulative Development Scenario” study for Lac La Biche County, which was distributed to multiple provincial ministries. The study contributed to informed discussion regarding cumulative growth impacts and helped initiate further engagement between municipal and provincial leadership.

In addition to local planning efforts, LLBRICC formally engaged with the Government of Alberta’s Oil Sands Multi-Stakeholder Committee. Written submissions were provided during both Phase I and Phase II of the provincial consultation process, positioning Lac La Biche and Lakeland County as strategically located service and growth centres within Alberta’s oil sands development landscape.

As a structured, board-governed subcommittee, LLBRICC demonstrated the organization’s capacity to convene industry, government, and community partners within a formal governance framework—strengthening regional coordination during a period of economic growth and transition.



Program Delivery and Regional Impact

Since its formation and subsequent rebranding, Community Futures Lac La Biche has delivered and supported a wide range of regional and federal initiatives, adapting to evolving economic conditions and community needs.

These include:

- The Self-Employment Assistance Program, delivered

in partnership with Human Resources Development Canada, which provided income support to first-time self-employed individuals during their initial year of business operation, helping reduce barriers to launching a new venture.

- The Community Access Program, an initiative of Industry Canada that improved internet accessibility across the Lac La Biche region, expanding digital inclusion and supporting community connectivity during a period of rapid technological change.
- The Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, administered during the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided critical financial assistance to small businesses experiencing economic hardship, helping stabilize the local economy during an unprecedented period of disruption.

Beyond formal program delivery, Community Futures Lac La Biche has also initiated and supported major regional projects and partnerships, including:

- Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program
- The Junior Achievement Program
- The Northern Alberta Youth Entrepreneurship Camp
- The Ventures Program
- Power Up North
- Lemonade Day
- Young Entrepreneurs Training Initiative

These initiatives reflect the organization’s broader commitment to entrepreneurship, regional collaboration, youth development, and community-led economic growth.



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40 Years of Impact

Since the establishment of business financing and community economic development services in the 1980s, Community Futures Lac La Biche has contributed to sustained economic activity and regional capacity building.

From 1986 through December 2025, the organization has:

Disbursed
\$62.7
million in loans

Contributed to over
1,280
jobs created and
maintained*

Supported over
600
community development
projects

**Job figures include full-time, part-time, seasonal, contract, and family employment positions based on cumulative client reporting and impact estimates.*

Together, these figures reflect long-term investment, collaboration, and four decades of commitment to strengthening the Lac La Biche region.

Continuing the Commitment

Over four decades, Community Futures Lac La Biche has evolved alongside the region it serves. Programs have changed. Partnerships have shifted. Economic conditions have risen and fallen. Yet the organization's core purpose has remained steady: to support sustainable economic growth through local leadership, community partnership, and belief in the potential of entrepreneurs.

From its origins in the Regional Economic Development Council to its role in business financing, regional branding, industry consultation, and youth entrepreneurship initiatives, Community Futures Lac La

Biche has adapted to meet the needs of each era.

As the organization marks 40 Years of Community-Driven Growth, it does so not only by reflecting on its history, but by reaffirming its commitment to the future — supporting businesses, strengthening communities, and contributing to the long-term resilience of the Lac La Biche region.

The next chapter will continue to be written locally, guided by the same principle that shaped its foundation: communities grow strongest when growth is driven from within.

Our Staff

Peter Mahowich - General Manager

Rahil Surani - Business Advisor

John Peloton - Economic Development Coordinator

Francine Cruz - Administrative Assistant

Our Board of Directors

Allan Robertson - Chair

Doug Stewart - Vice Chair

Nancy Broadbent - Secretary/Treasurer

John Mondal - Director, Appointed by Lac La Biche County

Ryan Manca - Director, Member at Large

Kal Polturak - Investment Review Committee Chair

Holt Finnestead - Director, Member at Large

Communities Served

Atmore, Avenir, Barnegat, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Behan, Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement, Brierville, Caslan, Craigen, Fork Lake, St. Lina, Grassland, Heart Lake First Nation, Helina, Hylo, Imperial Mills, Kikino Metis Settlement, Lac La Biche, Margie, Normandeau, Noral, Owl River, Pelican Portage, Philomena, Pitlochrie, Plamondon, Rich Lake, Tweedie, Venice, Wandering River.

