



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-24

John Ferguson - President

John Ferguson is a 35-year veteran of the RCMP, having recently retired as the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Criminal Operations for the Province of Alberta. John has an extensive policing background having worked in numerous detachments and specialized units throughout Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Alberta. His policing experiences are very broad as he has worked in small isolated communities with significant geographical areas of responsibility, to managing investigations that were national and international in scope. In his recent role as the Criminal Operations Officer, John was responsible and accountable for the overall strategic direction, leadership, and operational oversight of the Core Policing functions of the RCMP in Alberta. He was dedicated to building trust and confidence with the communities served by the RCMP, and he focused his efforts on community engagement and collaborative partnerships with community groups, stakeholders and other law enforcement, particularly in the areas of rural crime and race relations. As the Criminal Operations Officer, John also established a dedicated Sexual Assault Review Unit to provide oversight and support to RCMP investigators, and to develop and implement initiatives that led to better quality police investigations and more compassionate and respectful care for victims.

John holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario and he is a member of the Police Order of Merit. John has also been awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond and Platinum Jubilee Medals, and the RCMP Long Service medal. John and his wife Debra have three children and four grandchildren.

Dr. Gabrielle Betts - Vice President

Dr. Gabrielle Betts has a PhD in Political Science from Carleton University, an MA and BA in Political Science from the University of Alberta, and holds a Project Management Professional designation. She has dedicated her career and community involvement to contributing to positive social change.

Gabrielle brings over 15 years of experience developing and leading teams with diverse portfolios and expansive accountabilities in the ministries of Health, Community Services, Education, and Status of Women with the Government of Alberta and the departments of Employee Services and City Operations at the City of Edmonton. Currently, she is the Executive Director of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for the Alberta Recycling Management Authority (ARMA). In this role, Gabrielle is responsible for shaping and leading the implementation of EPR oversight in Alberta. This important recycling framework shifts the physical and financial burden of collecting, sorting, processing, and recycling waste to the producer and away from local governments and taxpayers.

One of the highlights of Gabrielle's career was her role with Alberta Status of Women as Director of the Violence Prevention Against Women and Girls where she led a team to plan and implement the Government of Alberta's Commitment to Preventing and Addressing Sexual Violence (the Commitment) which included a Premier's Proclamation of May as Sexual Violence Awareness Month. The Commitment brought together community-based organizations and ten government ministries for the first time to deliver a coordinated, province-wide response to sexual violence in Alberta to support survivors, improve the institutional response, and shift the culture of consent by advancing gender equality.

In the community, Gabrielle has been incredibly proud of her role on the Board of Directors for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, and has previously served on the Board of Directors for Sage Seniors Association and REACH Edmonton.

Kurt Marko - Treasurer

Kurt Marko is a dedicated Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) with over a decade of experience in public practice, specializing in tax, assurance, and financial reporting. Born and raised in Edmonton, Kurt has deep-rooted ties to the community and a strong commitment to public service. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from MacEwan University and currently serves as a Strategic Business Program Officer with the City of Edmonton's Transit sector.

In his role, Kurt brings a strategic approach to financial management and program development, demonstrating his capability in overseeing complex financial operations and contributing to organizational growth. His extensive background in accounting and finance, coupled with his experience in municipal transit, equips him with a unique perspective on fiscal responsibility and strategic planning.

Kurt's professional journey has been marked by a commitment to excellence and a passion for supporting community-focused initiatives. Kurt looks forward to leveraging his skills and experience to support AASAS's mission of providing leadership, coordination, collaboration and a unified voice on issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Kimberly Armstrong - Secretary

Kim Armstrong currently works as the Chief People Officer at the Calgary Police Service where a primary area of focus and attention is ensuring a respectful and inclusive workplace that is psychologically and physically safe for their members. Kim is also a lawyer and previously served as the Deputy Attorney General for the Province of Alberta.

Kim has been involved in advancing gender equity for many years and was specifically connected to the development of the provincial strategy to end sexual violence in her role as Deputy Minister, Status of Women, for the Government of Alberta in 2015-2016.

Kim has served on several not for profit and Advisory Boards over her career and thus has significant governance experience. Kim has also reported to Commissions and Councils and therefore have lived experience on both sides of the governance table in the public sector.

Brad Cunningham

Brad Cunningham is from Peavine Metis Settlement. Brad is married has 5 children and 4 grandchildren. Brad, his brother and a few cousins spoke up about Sexual Violence in 2009. Brad and the guys started a men's healing group with the help and assistance from the High Prairie RCMP and Sexual Assault Center based out of Grande Prairie. (PACE).

Brad became a board member with the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) in 2012. Brad has travelled across Alberta to share his past as a victim and how he has learned to speak up, educate and build awareness about Sexual Violence. With the love and support from his wife and children Brad hopes to empower victims to seek the supports and services that are offered throughout Alberta.

"This is all about the babies, what are we doing today, tomorrow to know that all our babies will live free from harm and violence."

Gabrielle Comtois

Gabrielle Comtois is a legalist with a passion for social justice. Gabrielle has a master's degree in Law from the University Laval and a Bachelor's degree in International relations and International law from the University of Quebec in Montreal. During her career, Gabrielle worked as co-executive director for Quebec's regroupment of sexual assault centers (RQCALACS) and developed several advocacy strategies, based on an intersectional vision of gender-based violence. Gabrielle undertook actions that included prevention, collective mobilization, working in partnership with various community resources, research and promotion of the expertise developed in the field to guide government action.

Gabrielle recently moved from Quebec to take on the new and exciting role of Strategist for the Home is (her)e project, at the Women's Centre of Calgary. Gabrielle has two cats and, in her free time, she likes to do yoga and read.

Kellie Cummings

Kellie Cummings is a dedicated advocate and leader within the field of trauma support and intervention, with over 25 years of experience working with vulnerable populations. Her journey began as a babysitter for a foster family in Northern Alberta, where her passion for helping people impacted by sexual violence, family violence, intergenerational trauma and child maltreatment was ignited. Kellie earned her education as a young adult student, first in Early Childhood Development and then she obtained a Rehabilitation Practitioner Diploma which led her into the field of helping women and children fleeing intimate partner violence. Kellie is entering her 17th year of experience sitting on multidisciplinary teams dedicated to addressing and mitigating the effects of violence and trauma on individuals, families, and communities. Working directly with humans of all ages affected by sexual violence, violence and complex trauma within rural, remote and isolated communities has helped build a strong foundation for her innovated work, and the ability to develop programs that bridge large gaps of Euro Western frameworks within the safety of land-based approaches (and teachings) to help restore harmony and wellness within families and community. Kellie is currently one of the directors for a nonprofit organization located in Red Deer rooted in protection, prevention and integrated responses to child abuse and maltreatment.

Kellie's commitment to her work remains as strong as ever. As a respected systemic advocate, her contributions have been instrumental in shaping approaches to trauma support and intervention, ensuring humans who have been hurt are receiving the care, attention and advocacy they rightfully deserve.