

*Amazing people work with RHPAP throughout the province. In this feature, Alicia Fox, a community consultant with the Community Development and Engagement (CD&E) Team, chats with RHPAP freelance writer Lorena Franchuk.*

LF: How long have you lived in rural Alberta?

AF: I've lived rural almost my entire life. I was born in Winnipeg, lived in Morris (south of Winnipeg), and then moved to Holden (southeast of Edmonton). I moved to Didsbury in Grade 5, where I graduated from high school. I have lived in Claresholm, Smoky Lake, Vilna, and now Innisfail. I spent time in Calgary for university, and then hopped right back out to rural Alberta.

LF: How long have you been an RHPAP community consultant?

AF: Since 2019. Prior to that, I was a freelancer with RHPAP's marketing and communications. Then this role came up, and I was originally placed in Smoky Lake, covering the Northeast Zone.

When the opportunity came to move south, I moved to Innisfail. Central Alberta is my old stomping ground, and I wanted an opportunity to be closer to family. We went through some zone changes, and I'm now supporting the West Central Zone. I also currently support the South Zone, covering for a maternity leave.

LF: Why did you decide to become a community consultant?

AF: I've done some program development and event co-ordination and worked in various roles that have allowed me to do community engagement. When this position came about, I thought, 'well, this seems like a great way to make use of a lot of my skills.'

It's been good to be able to connect with so many communities. I've been as far north as Smoky River and as far south as Milk River. To go and meet these people all over the province is pretty phenomenal.



Community consultant, Alicia Fox, right, stops for a group selfie at Willey West Campground just outside Drayton Valley with members of the Sundre Health Professionals Attraction and Retention Committee. The event was part of the community showcase during the 2022 RHPAP Conference in Drayton Valley.  
— Photo by Alicia Fox, RHPAP

LF: What does a rural consultant do?

AF: The bread-and-butter of our world are attraction and retention committees and communities within rural Alberta that are looking to do attraction, integration, and retention initiatives.

That might mean sitting at the table with them and supporting a brand-new committee. It might mean attending committee meetings that are already happening or have for quite some time and doing some goal setting. It also includes working with communities that don't have a committee.

We also attend and support high school or post-secondary events. We often attend and present at various stakeholder meetings, including at post-secondary institutions, often in front of municipal councils, or showcasing at different conferences to represent RHPAP. We also connect and support community members who are interested in welcoming and attracting students who are coming to the area.

LF: How do your rural connections help you with your RHPAP role?

AF: It's understanding the community itself and how each rural community has a different culture. You really get to know what rural is all about, and it is a completely different culture than urban.

The fact that I grew up rural, I live here, volunteer here, am starting a business here, people connect a little more thinking, 'Oh yeah, you're from rural. You get me.'

LF: What is your favourite part of your job?

AF: I thrive where I can build relationships. That's my favourite part by far. The kilometres get a little long, but I really like the fact that we can go meet people, see them in person to build those relationships, and enjoy our beautiful province along the way.

LF: What is your biggest accomplishment?

AF: One of my key strengths is helping establish new committees and partnerships. When I begin working in a new area, I focus on building relationships and identifying ways for RhPAP to connect with and support the community. I'm grateful for the strong work that's already been done by others, and I see my role as contributing to that foundation by helping coordinate efforts and move initiatives forward.



Alicia and Jacob Fox and their children enjoy camping and the outdoors. Here, the family including their three children (left to right) Kaleb, Kendra, and Deklan, hike the Crimson Lake Loop near Rocky Mountain House.

— Photo by Alicia Fox, RHPAP

LF: What goals do you want to accomplish?

AF: I really enjoy the new road mapping (strategic planning) sessions. My goal is to collaborate with communities who are new to A&R work. It is exciting for me to see these plans come to life.

LF: Why is rural healthcare important to you?

AF: I grew up with a medically complex brother. He was in and out of hospital essentially for almost the first two years of his life and continues to spend significant time with various healthcare providers due to ongoing needs.

While I didn't go into a medical profession, I understand the deep appreciation that people have for the medical professionals who support them where they are, and that healthcare is so vital to keep close to home. Those rural practitioners are gold. They make all the difference.



Alicia and her husband, Jacob Fox, attend a murder mystery party. The family loves to spend time with the people in their lives.

— Photo by Alicia Fox, RHPAP

LF: Tell me about your family and your interests outside of your consultant role?

AF: I'm married and I have three kids who are 14, 12, and nine. We also have a bunch of animals: a dog, a hedgehog, a bearded dragon, and fish.

We do a lot of adventuring. Our biggest thing lately is this family adventure challenge, a book full of little adventures. Recently, this book challenged our family to marshmallow wars.

Volunteering is also an important part of my life, including at my church and elsewhere in the community. I'm the general leader of Innisfail 4-H Multi-Club. We have no animal projects; we are a multi-club with projects such as performing arts, sewing, outdoor living, and small engines.