



Alpine Club of Canada
Edmonton Section

STRATEGIC PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Introduction

The Edmonton Section of the Alpine Club of Canada is made up of people who share a love for the outdoors, and specifically, the mountains. Organized around this common interest, our club facilitates trips for our members across a variety of mountain sports such as climbing, skiing and mountaineering. Additionally we organize and deliver courses to help members develop their mountain skills, and provide a variety of in-town activities.

We are one of the largest Alpine Club sections in Canada, and one of the most active as well. Every season, our trip schedule features dozens of trips at all skill levels across a wide variety of activities.

However, like any organization, we must plan for our future in order to ensure we continue to maintain relevance to and generate value for our members.

Ultimately, we strive to be a club that is accessible for people who are just beginning to discover mountain activities. We value the promotion and awareness of mountain life, and the importance of being good stewards of the mountain environment. We aim to facilitate safe, fun and fulfilling activities for our members on both trips to the mountains and with related urban activities.

This Strategic Plan lays out a clear path for the Edmonton Section to expand its role as a leader in the Capital Region's outdoor enthusiast community. It is meant to provide clear steps that we will take to expand our program offerings, and provide even greater value for our members.

Mission and Vision

Regardless of their level of experience, or chosen activity, we are here to serve our members and are guided in all our work by this mission:

The Edmonton Section will provide our community of mountain enthusiasts with safe, responsible access to the mountain environment through activities, training and environmental stewardship, guided by the principles of responsible governance.

Through this, we can achieve our ultimate vision, which is:

To be the leading organization for Edmonton and area residents interested and engaged in mountain life.

What We Do

To realize our vision, we believe there are three key areas we must focus on (in no particular order):

1. Building Our Community
2. Environmental Access and Stewardship, and
3. Club Trips, Courses and Activities.

Building Our Community

Part of achieving our vision will require the section to offer current and prospective members a community of like-minded mountain enthusiasts. While the section does have a large membership, we do experience a high rate of turnover – about 30 percent annually - and our active community is much smaller than our total membership. Focussing on improving the sense of community within the section will go a long way to attracting new members and retaining those we already have. To build our community of mountain enthusiasts, we will:

Conduct new member outreach and orientation

New members face barriers to becoming involved in the section. Once a new member joins the club, there is very little in the way of outreach made to them. While any of our club events are open to our members, new people may be reticent to attend on their own. To help these new members feel welcome, and help them understand how to get involved in the club, the section should develop a set of orientation materials for new members. This includes a welcome email from the section, received upon purchase of an Edmonton Section membership, as well as hosting quarterly new-member orientation events, that combine a social component with information about the club and the opportunities it offers.

Develop a roadmap for skills development

Ostensibly, most people join our section because they wish to participate in mountain activities. Some of these activities, particularly climbing, mountaineering and backcountry skiing require technical skills that not all new members will be proficient in. The club should develop a roadmap that shows how novices can build the skills needed to participate in different types of objectives. These roadmaps will be a useful addition to the section courses to show participants “what’s next.”

Acknowledge the achievements and involvement of section members

A key aspect of retaining active members is to acknowledge and reward their contributions to the club. While we already provide incentives for trip leaders in the form of access to club pro-deals and course subsidies, public acknowledgement of significant achievements or contributions provides another way to recognize contributions to our section. It will also provide others with a sense of pride in their fellow members.

Be inclusive

Opinions of the Section range in perceptions from “people who can’t climb” to “a group of adrenaline-fueled extreme sports enthusiasts”. This range of perception, combined with a general feeling that the club is unwelcoming to new members causes people to opt out, and leads to a significant turnover rate of our membership. We need to focus on building a club that is inclusive of all people interested in outdoor activities, and that enables them to participate at whatever level they feel comfortable – regardless of whether they are novices or experts.

Our club does provide the opportunity for instruction and recreational trips at lower price points than other outlets, such as guided trips, but accessibility of this could be further improved. Our organization and community members are motivated to support the involvement of underserved community members in the pursuit of outdoor activities. Historically, access to the outdoors has been reserved for citizens with the time and resources to recreate. Through partnerships with community programs, we will aim to

continue providing accessible outdoor experiences for those who do not have the option without our support.

Environmental Stewardship and Access

Hikers, climbers and skiers have a complicated relationship with environmental sustainability. On one hand, we want to conduct our chosen activities in pristine mountain environments. On the other, our presence in the environment can have significant impacts. In order to maintain (and expand) our access to the mountains, we must be committed to being environmental stewards. To reinforce the section's commitment to the environment, we will:

Clearly communicate environmental stewardship expectations to members

We will take a more proactive approach to communicating our environmental stewardship expectations to our members. This includes developing a document of leading environmental practices that will be given to volunteers and trip leaders, and reinforcing environmental messages through our communications to members, such as environmental stewardship notices in the Breeze and on social media.

The club also has the opportunity to provide many new members with an awareness of environmental stewardship practices by including it into the curriculum of our introductory courses.

Area clean-ups

Much like the hut clean up trips the section organizes, we will explore organizing area clean ups for areas that are heavily used by the club. This could include removing old tat and litter from popular climbing areas, or, where more rehabilitation is required, working with Government to conduct trail maintenance, and even advocating for new infrastructure where appropriate (such as an outhouse at popular climbing areas like Morro Slabs)

Take a clear position on environmental issues that impact mountain areas

While we are not, and do not intend to become an environmental advocacy organization, our large membership makes us an important voice in debates about environmental issues that impact mountain areas. The club will, where appropriate, take clear positions on environmental issues that have the potential to negatively impact the environment or significantly reduce existing sustainable practices.

Trips, Courses, and Activities

Our section's trips, courses and urban activities are the core part of the Edmonton section's mandate to its members. Moreover, offering a broadly-appealing selection of trips, courses and activities is an important part of engaging our membership and providing value to them. While the section has a strong offering of courses and trips on its schedule, there is a significant demand for numerous types of trips, courses and activities and at a greater frequency. To expand on our offerings of trips, courses and activities, we will:

Create clear pathways for skill development

Skill development is critical to our members and to our section. Members need to be able to understand what skills they need in order to participate in different trips, and understand how they can acquire those skills. More broadly, the section needs to help potential trip leaders understand the skills they require in order to begin leading trips

either as co-leaders, or on their own. The section should develop clear pathways for skill development in each of the club's common mountain activities including rock climbing, ice climbing, ski-touring, mountaineering, scrambling, hiking and backpacking.

Expand the types of trips and courses offered

The club and its courses put a lot of focus on rock and ice climbing, backcountry skiing, and mountaineering, and the trip schedule reflects this focus. In order to broaden our appeal to potential members, the section should work to expand the types of trips and courses it offers. As well, it should attempt to expand the number of summer and winter camps offered, branching out into activities like scrambling, rock and ice climbing and summer mountaineering.

Offer courses in Edmonton

Courses instructed in mountain terrain are not always easily accessible to all our members. While there are many skills that require instruction take place in a mountain environment, there are a number of different types of training that could take place in Edmonton. For example, our recent partnership with Rock Jungle Fitness gives us the ability to run training on various types of technical rope work, like crevasse rescue and rock rescue refreshers. Where possible, the club should attempt to offer urban courses to increase the accessibility of training to our members.

Offer more urban activities

Urban activities offer an easy, accessible way for members to be involved with the section and meet potential trip partners. Offering more urban based activities – from fitness and training opportunities, to activities like snowshoeing, climbing and skiing, to more social events like pub night – will help build our members' connection with the section. The executive should support any member who would like to spearhead activities in the city.

Next Steps

The specific goals and strategies contained in this document set out the roadmap that will help us navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for our section, and will allow us to be nimble enough to adapt and react as circumstances dictate.

Keeping our overall Vision and Mission front and centre, it is now the role of the Section Executive to animate the strategies with detailed actions that ensure that will allow us to achieve what has been laid out herein.