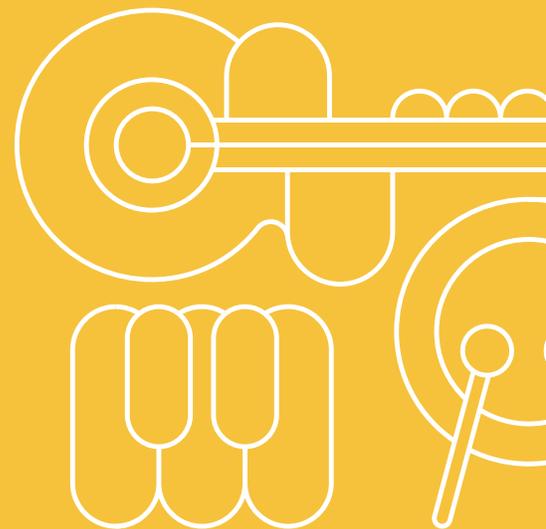


# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



**Building on a  
Strong  
Foundation**



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



This note is written during a memorable Christmas 2021 deep freeze in Alberta with the full weight of COVID's relentless presence and unwelcome stay in our lives. I sincerely hope you have all managed. We must be supremely grateful for the steady, joyful, connected presence of CKUA. Our community comes together when we provide music, arts, and culture for Albertans and the world. The radio hosts and dedicated staff at CKUA have reached deep to continue to bring you outstanding programming, and through it, comfort and hope. This is an inspired reason to celebrate and sustain CKUA.

CKUA lives on with renewed vigour. Thanks to Foundation members and our steadfast, engaged listeners, CKUA marked record-breaking fundraising campaign totals of beyond \$1 Million for both the Spring and Fall campaigns – what an accomplishment. **We need these funds and even more annually to sustain CKUA.** This message cannot be stressed sufficiently. CKUA has been underfunded for years. Our transmitters, new streaming services, facilities and de-centralized broadcasting are costly. With your financial support CKUA must attract new listeners and a new demographic passionate about CKUA's role in Alberta and eager to share the wonder of CKUA through an inspired and expanded web presence. There is no radio service in Canada, and spare few in North America, broadcasting to our CKUA vision – “A better world connected through Music, Arts & Culture”.

**CKUA IS A TRULY UNIQUE INSTITUTION DESERVING OF BROAD SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION. WE MUST ALL CONTRIBUTE IF WE ARE TO PRESERVE AND GROW CKUA IN THESE TIMES OF MEDIA TRANSITION.**

Your Board of Directors worked closely and effectively with Management this year. I thank the Board for their significant financial support and tireless volunteer time. CKUA completed a new strategic plan in 2021 which, successfully implemented, can guide us to our Centenary in 2027 and beyond. New hosts, new programming and succession planning are underway. The current Board will continue

to exert a steady hand as we bring new Board members along in their knowledge of the workings of CKUA.

In 2022, we begin planning for our 100th Anniversary in 2027, and to do so we will draw upon Foundation members and listeners. We need you.

Thank you to our donors, sustainers and sponsor partners for your financial support in 2021. I am deeply grateful for our resilient, dedicated and resourceful Management team and staff, my fellow Board Members and of course our amazing on-air announcers with whom we connect and share a special listening bond.

Sincerely,

J. Lindsay Hood

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



If you're like me, the past 18 months have been a special kind of blur. Whether it is a result of constant change and upheaval, or the monotony of the days blending over weeks and months, we have all endured a truly unique time in history. And we've done it together.

The year 2020/21 saw CKUA grow closer with our audience. Analytics showed that listeners were spending more time with CKUA. And perhaps most importantly, we heard from thousands of you, about the importance of music, arts and culture in your lives.

**YOUR MESSAGES OF POSITIVITY AND SUPPORT ARE THE FUEL THAT GIVES PASSION AND PURPOSE TO WHAT WE DO EVERY DAY.**

I am pleased to announce a surplus for the year. This success was the result mainly of two factors:

**1.** To prepare for the unknown impacts of a prolonged pandemic, CKUA opted into the federal Workshare program which resulted in significant personnel cost savings for the year. This decision ensured that we could keep everyone employed and continue to serve the CKUA community without significant disruption. It required creativity and hard work to reimagine how we work together from a distance, how we assemble programs, and how we maintain round-the-clock service for you. CKUA staff and hosts and IBEW 2228 demonstrated incredible commitment and resolve over the past year, and I can't thank them enough.

**2.** The renewed commitment of our board to support fundraising efforts and work collaboratively with CKUA management generated stronger fundraising campaign results. In doing so, the board contributed significantly in terms of dollars and advocacy to help share the story of CKUA and inspire others to give. However, I will echo Lindsay Hood's message that even though we were successful during the campaigns, they are one success metric in a highly complex business. Like any responsible business, we must raise funds the other ten months of the year as well.

Partnering with NAIT, SAIT and MacEwan University, we welcomed six interns to CKUA over the year. I am proud to say that four of them have found homes with us professionally since completing their training.

Reading through the coming pages, I'm sure you will be as impressed as I am at the variety and depth of accomplishments CKUA staff and hosts achieved during the strangest of times. These are

accomplishments made possible thanks to our donors, volunteers, advertisers, sponsors, funders and partners. The dedication of CKUA employees, the board, and community over the past year leaves me grateful and confident that transformation is possible as we start to plan for our 100th anniversary in 2027.

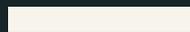
Marc Carnes  
CEO, CKUA Radio Foundation





The variety of music and perspectives that CKUA shares is such a wonderful and uplifting force for the local community and globally. Please keep up the great work.

— Wildor, Calgary



# Programming

## Teamwork makes the CKUA dream work



THE PERIOD COVERED BY THIS ANNUAL REPORT PROVED TO BE A VIBRANT TIME OF DEVISING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO NEW PROBLEMS.

By the time the new fiscal year began in September, CKUA had gained five months' experience adapting to the restrictions brought about by the pandemic.

The primary task we faced was to meet and exceed listener expectations by producing the same rich array of weekly radio programs with significantly fewer resources.

As the adage goes, pressure makes diamonds, and the entire program and production team rose to the challenge.

Working within the confines of the Workshare program, the department worked out a sequence of rebroadcasts for each of CKUA's pre-recorded programs. This required the program hosts to adjust their pre-pandemic workflow and produce evergreen episodes designed to be heard a second time.

Despite the cutbacks, the program department remained committed to special programming throughout the year celebrating significant milestones and commemorating special occasions.

Classical music fans were treated to a four-hour long celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth in December and, closer to home, we celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of one of the country's foremost chamber choirs - Edmonton's Pro Coro Canada.

The musical legacies of Bob Dylan and Neil Young were celebrated by day-long programming arcs that covered their music careers and demonstrated the influence they have over younger generations of artists.

CKUA's acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples' artistic achievements was evidenced by our weekly program *Full Circle* hosted by Juno Award winner Celeigh Cardinal as well as unique programming on National Indigenous Peoples Day and the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We also expanded the story telling capacity of *Indigenous Pathways* through digital channels, long supported by Syncrude.

Black History Month was marked by a full range of daily arts & culture stories

throughout February showcasing black authors, poets, visual artists, and the *Hidden Track* podcast episode that month featured country music pioneer Charley Pride and the Black Roots of Country Music.

**DRUMHELLER DAY MARKED THE LAUNCH OF CKUA'S NEW TRANSMITTER IN THE DRUMHELLER REGION, CELEBRATED WITH A DAY-LONG SERIES OF STORIES AND INTERVIEWS WITH AREA RESIDENTS AND LEADERS IN THE LOCAL ARTS & CULTURE SCENE.**

The second season of *Hidden Track* shared long-form discussions and fascinating insights into a wide range of musical figures including Neil Young, Buffy Sainte-Marie, k.d. lang, and Ellen McIlwaine.

In the midst of the restrictions, CKUA managed to work with various Alberta post-secondary institutions in both Edmonton and Calgary by welcoming four students to the programing department, to complete their internships working with and being mentored by a group of our experienced radio producers.

On the personnel side, we bid farewell and happy retirement to veteran host Cathy Ennis, as well as making adjustments to the next stage of Baba's semi-retirement. With an ear to the future, were thrilled to welcome award-winning musician Kate Stevens to *Magnetic North* on Saturday nights, and acclaimed musician Dawn Pemberton to the Saturday afternoon program schedule with her show, *Get on the Good Foot*.

Having successfully weathered these COVID-induced challenges, CKUA's programming team has turned a corner and is working together in new ways to grow audiences and tell stories through music, arts and culture.

## Engineering Update



Without technology, there is no CKUA. Utilities alone are CKUA's third-biggest expense item each year. They operationalize two studios, sixteen transmitter sites and a growing digital infrastructure to reach a global audience **24 hours a day, 365 days a year.**

Throughout 2020-2021, CKUA made considerable investments to address the increasing threats of cyberattacks common in all industries. These investments included upgrading broadcast IT infrastructure and office hardware, software and security to support a work-from-home workforce.

While CKUA's operations are increasingly digital, the most significant portion of our listening audience still tunes in via a network of 16 FM transmitters across the province of Alberta. Like all technology, transmitters and related equipment have a lifespan that requires continual investments in repairs and eventual replacement. With the generous support of the Government of Alberta, we were able to relocate and replace our Drumheller region transmitter after the tower owner decommissioned our previous location.

The frequency with which we must upgrade and replace broadcast technology and infrastructure will continue to accelerate through planned obsolescence, adding increased costs to CKUA's operating budget each year.

# Communications & Marketing

## Telling Our Stories



**AS AN OVERALL DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY, OUR TEAM CONTINUES TO STRIVE FOR INTERACTIVITY BETWEEN OUR ORGANIZATION, OUR HOSTS, AND OUR FOLLOWERS AND LISTENERS.**

This includes soliciting and sharing listener-generated content, such as essays or short stories for our newsletter and website that they and we circulate to other current and potential listeners.

We also use platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram and tag artists, announcers, guests, and other partners, to enhance the circulation of our content.

We are also rather diligent about sharing relevant posts by our various followers, when they are engaging with CKUA and its on-air and digital content.

All of the above actions convey that CKUA is a shared, inclusive enterprise—that the work we do is only possible thanks to musicians, announcers, artists, their fans, and our fans. Our approach is one that fosters open and engaged conversation, which our metrics have borne out. When we can hone that synchronicity between an announcer, an

artist, a listener, a partnering organization, and even a sponsor or brand, everyone benefits from the connection and receives attention.

We have been tracking our metrics and analytics for each project and experimenting and tweaking our processes to optimize best outcomes.

**WE ARE LEARNING NEW THINGS EACH WEEK AND ADAPTING ACCORDINGLY TO PROVIDE EACH THING WE MAKE—WHETHER ON-AIR OR DIGITALLY—WITH A BETTER THAN FIGHTING CHANCE TO BE SEEN AND HEARD.**

In 2021, we learned from the success of our digital marketing efforts for our annual Top 100 Albums Chart broadcast. For the 2020 year-end edition, we revealed the chart standings in 10 album increments over our social media platforms, which built suspense and anticipation

for how “the story” of the chart might end (i.e. which album would ultimately be named #1 that year). This segmented approach allowed us to share album art and tag almost every artist with an account (some social media platforms have a 10-person tagging limit per post), thus engaging virtually every

artist on our chart. We followed up on this experiment by applying it to our weekly Top 30 Chart, and found similar success, engaging more artists and their fans with CKUA throughout all of 2021. We have no doubt that we helped introduce these artists to our listeners, just as they introduced us to theirs.

Though we're proud of our efforts and the ideas and workflow we've implemented, we also recognize that an ever-evolving media landscape requires requisite responses by CKUA. So, we're mindful of trends and digital media discourse and always ensure that we apply our knowledge and instincts so that our communications strategy is as dynamic, thoughtful, and current as possible.



*It's My Way: Buffy Sainte-Marie at 80*  
**February 2021**

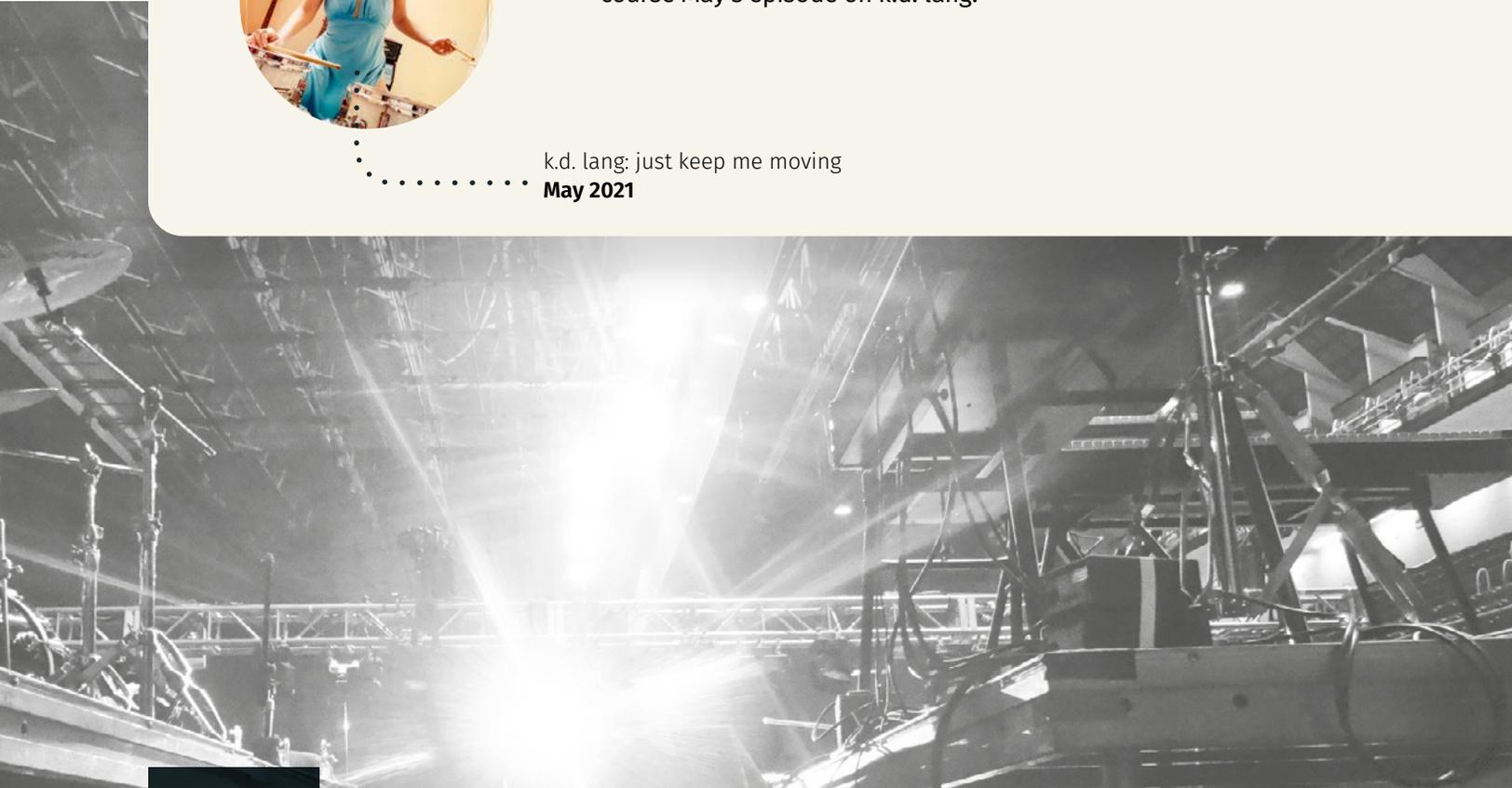


## Hidden Track Podcast

Two of the most popular stories on our digital channels from 2021, overall, are two episodes from the ever insightful and interesting *Hidden Track* podcast: February's feature celebrating Buffy Sainte-Marie, and of course May's episode on k.d. lang.



*k.d. lang: just keep me moving*  
**May 2021**



## Backstage

In Spring 2021 we launched Backstage on **ckua.com** featuring deals, contests and other cool content for members of The Crew. Backstage was visited over **11,000** times since it launched.

# Fund Development

## Building for a Sustainable Future



**CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM INFORMED OUR APPROACH THIS FISCAL YEAR, AS WE SAW IMPROVEMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS ACROSS THE FUND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT.**

COVID restrictions continued to affect Arts and Culture organizations this past year, resulting in the continued loss of advertising revenue from that stream.

To their credit, our magnificent CKUA sales team redoubled their efforts to build revenue during the difficult environment in both the corporate and not-for-profit sectors.

The pandemic will likely continue to impact Arts and Culture organizations in the short to medium term, but we are nimble in our approach to support them.

We added two new positions, a fund development expert and a new manager to lead the development team. These additions will help build our donor base and giving rate in the year ahead, whilst identifying growth areas, particularly with a younger generation of donors.

The fundraisers were again conducted entirely online in Spring and Fall. Thanks to the hard work not only of the fund development team,

but staff across the entire organization, we increased our donor base and reached our \$1M target each campaign.

We are continually working with clients to provide benefits that align with our audience and create interesting and educational content.

Investments in technology and platforms to improve our donor database means improved efficiencies and stewardship opportunities, enabling CKUA to better connect with our Crew.

# Community Support

## Investment Partners



CKUA IS  
GRATEFUL TO THE  
GOVERNMENT  
AND COMMUNITY  
GRANTING  
ORGANIZATIONS  
THAT PROVIDE  
OPERATIONAL  
FUNDING AND  
GRANT FUNDING  
FOR PROJECTS.

Through the generous support of the Alberta government, several projects have been possible. The relocation and replacement of our Drumheller-area transmitter site was completed after year end, and we are grateful that the Alberta Government allowed the remainder of the grant to be used to replace our Edmonton transmitter and upgrade the transmitter site in 2022.

CKUA received two project grants that will be used to fund ongoing projects in the upcoming year:

**Alberta CIP (Community Initiatives Program)** which will be used to increase access to multi-channel promotion for artists and arts and cultural organizations including those experiencing financial hardship or representing diverse & BIPOC cultural voices.

**Alberta MIIG (Multiculturalism, Indigenous, and Inclusion)** for expansion of Indigenous programming across online platforms.

CKUA receives yearly operational grants from Edmonton Arts Council and Alberta Cultural Industries through the Government of Alberta. A special thank you to Cultural Industries for returning CKUA to our historical funding levels after two years of declines.



# Community Relations

## Engagement and Connection



“CKUA IS A BEACON OF HOPE, LOVE AND MUSICAL INSPIRATION DURING THESE CHALLENGING TIMES. KEEP ON DOING WHAT YOU’RE DOING!”

This lovely message of gratitude from an anonymous donor reminds us that any hope, love, and musical inspiration we share is reflected back to us – with interest - by our community of donors and listeners.

We saw **hope** at work in the way the arts community continued to respond to profoundly difficult and rapidly changing circumstances. Brave plans had to be changed or cancelled last minute. Optimism and collaboration were key to finding new ways to be. We weren’t able to open up our event space, but we are of course hopeful that we will once again invite artists and audiences into our building.

Thousands of listeners showed their love for CKUA, and for each other. Emails, social media posts, Open Mic submissions, even hand-written letters encouraged us and buoyed our spirits. Many musical requests and donated hours were dedicated to

friends and family, and to those who had passed away: long-time listeners, donors, and in some cases staff members who had worked at CKUA years ago. And of course, **musical inspiration** flowed both ways. Hosts frequently commented about new music they discovered thanks to a listener’s suggestion.

In the summer, the Community Engagement department changed its name to Community Relations, to signal an even more intentional shift toward two-way communication. In July 2021 we sent out donor surveys and 23% of recipients responded, with thoughtful feedback, gratitude, and suggestions for improvement.

The volunteer program remained on hold, accommodating only a handful of roles. Instead of a bustling phone room, a tiny core of dedicated data entry volunteers kept the fundraiser numbers current.

**WE WANTED TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE WHO CONTACTS US FEELS HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD, AND TO HEAR AND SEE THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN WHAT WE DO.**

Of note this year was Karen Titanich's retirement, after twenty-five years as a CKUA volunteer. Karen exemplifies the professionalism and dedication that our volunteers bring to CKUA.



Our monthly on-air themes included asking listeners 'What's your Jam', sharing **Transmitter Tales**, and inviting CKUA fans behind the scenes with our '**Day in the Life**' profiles of CKUA staff members.

We offered 30-second **Moments of Zen** – a brief pause in a busy day. We asked people to share **One Good Thing**, and they responded with a wide variety of uplifting stories.

We continued to tell our community's stories in our newsletter and on our website, stories of resolve and determination, of sorrow and solace, and of optimism and courage. These stories reminded us that despite our travails, or indeed because of them, we can keep the balance on good. We can look toward the kindness and creativity and potential for goodness each of us possesses. We are grateful always to the artists that create content that celebrates the best of us.

We are a resilient community. And we're ready for tomorrow.

# Financial Highlights

» THIS PAGE SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOUND ON OUR [WEBSITE](#)

» There was an overall 17% increase in donations.

» Sales continued at a reduced level due to the cancellation of events in the arts and culture sector and suppressed demand in the commercial sector.

» CKUA participated for the full year in the Federal Workshare program. The savings for 2020-21 were \$251,213 in labour costs and allowed CKUA to continue with its entire workforce. That program ended on December 4, 2021.

» Grant revenue was reduced due to fewer projects for which grant dollars could be recognized.

» The Drumheller-area transmitter was successfully replaced and relocated. The grant money from the Government of Alberta supporting this capital expenditure will be recognized over time as it is amortized in accordance with GAAP.

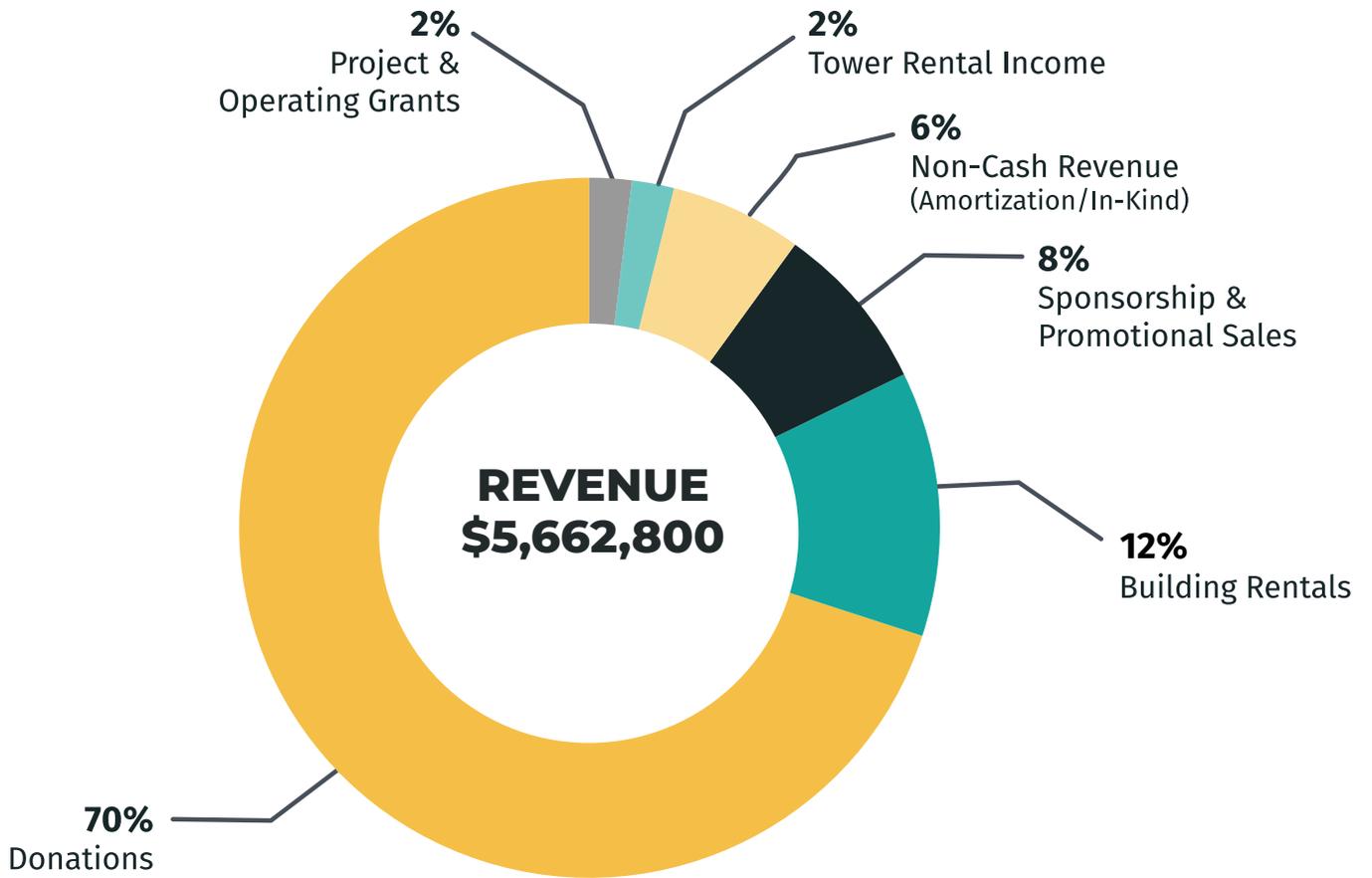
» CKUA at Alberta Hotel - CKUA was able to maintain 80% occupancy with only the restaurant space remaining unrented.

» Cash and cash equivalents and short-term investment were allowed to rise as investment vehicles remained less attractive.

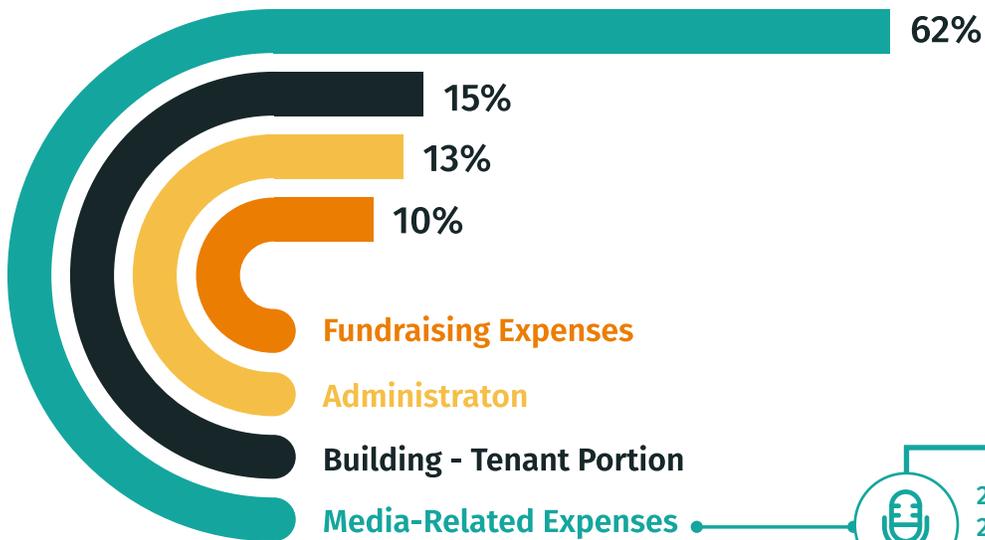
» The Board moved to restrict an additional \$300,000 to ensure the fundraising of 2021 is available in future years.



**The exceptional bottom line is due to strong fundraising and significant support from a small group of leadership donors who ignited our fundraising through one-time non-recurring donations.**



**EXPENSES**  
**\$5,595,000**



22% = Sales & Marketing  
21% = Programming  
19% = Transmitters & Studios



# Mission-Related Data



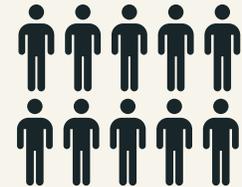
## CKUA IS ON-AIR AND ONLINE 8,760 HOURS PER YEAR



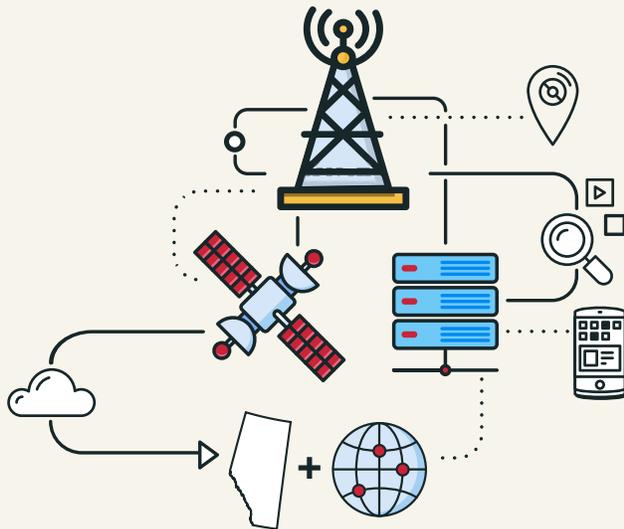
**126** hours of curated content is produced and presented each week



CKUA regularly reports and is accountable to **13** professional and regulatory bodies to maintain operations



Every hour of programming assembled involves the direct input of 10 people from different specialty areas



It takes a team of 5 to keep a provincial and world-wide technical infrastructure operating at a **99.7%** uptime per year



A thank you to all of the Crew. My radio is on all day, either at home or in the car. I love the variety of music and there is always a song that is played that perfectly matches and elevates my mood. CKUA is the musical accompaniment to my day-to-day life. It always fits like a glove.

— Helen, Whitecourt



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

## Contact

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Edmonton, AB T5J 0C5