

Manager of Volunteers Report for 2025 Edmonton Folk Music Festival AGM

April 26, 2026

The volunteer office began the 2025 festival season with me in the role of Manager of Volunteers and Elisa Zenari stepping into the role of Assistant Manager of Volunteers in March. Our summer position evolved last year to a Volunteer Office Assistant position, which involved more engagement with the volunteers and increased support with volunteer-related tasks. In the past, this role has been occupied by post-secondary students; however, we found that having an individual with festival experience and knowledge of the EFMF volunteer program created a cohesive and efficient dynamic in our day-to-day operations.

We have been delighted to see that the number of returning volunteers has continually increased since the festival resumed on the hill in 2022. The 2025 festival had an incredible group of 2870 volunteers, which included just over 400 new volunteers.

The EFMF was the grateful recipient of the 2026 Clearwater Award from Folk Alliance International. This award is presented to a festival that prioritizes environmental stewardship and demonstrates public leadership in sustainable event production. Our festival has worked hard over the years to minimize our impact on Gallagher Park and the Cloverdale community. It is ongoing work, and we are continually looking at ways to further reduce the environmental footprint our festival has on our community. I'd like to extend a special shout-out to our crews who are directly involved in our green initiatives: Enviropower, Green Team, Kitchen, Plates, and Site Environment. Thank you for all you do!

With the Ski Club planned to begin construction in 2025, Gilbert da Silva, our Site Manager and his team adapted the site layout to accommodate the build. Although construction was inevitably delayed to 2026, this became an opportunity to test proof of concept when there was still room to maneuver. The focus was exclusively on the festival kitchen tent and how it would work when the new building is in place. This led to changes in kitchen operations, site build and operations, and impacted many crews before any meals were served. Overall, it was a success and provided great insight for how the Site Team will adapt to working with an active construction site this year, and when the Ski Club building is complete.

Another area of change last year involved our volunteer parking. With the continued success of the Riverhawks, the Volunteer Parking Re/Max field has been significantly impacted over the last two years with access restrictions due to playoffs. The Edmonton Transit System has stepped up and offered our volunteers free access to buses and trains city-wide for all four days of the festival, plus the day before and the day after. This, along with an expansion of the Bike Lock-Up area, were well received alternatives by our volunteers.

The Spring and Fall Coordinator meetings have successfully transitioned to fully online. We have found that this increases attendance and allows us to send a recording out post-meeting for review by those unable to attend. We invited our Coordinators to a wrap-up event at the Capilano Hall on November 21. For the first time, we had a themed event, and there were many who embraced the challenge to "Wear What Makes You Feel Good!" We had a great meal and trivia along with a photo booth, providing a wonderful way to reconnect with everyone after the summer. The Member's Services Committee

planned the Winter Appreciation at the Yardbird Suite with entertainment by Benjamin Williams. The event was enjoyed by all who attended!

Elisa Zenari stepped down from her role as the Assistant Manager of Volunteers to pursue an MBA full-time. I'd like to thank her for all her hard work throughout the year and wish her well in her studies.

We are well into planning this year's festival with Fional Clarke joining us as our Assistant Manager of Volunteers, and Daniel Greenways joining us as our Volunteer Office assistant through the summer months. Both have long-time experience with the festival and a passion for what we do. I am very excited to have them as part of our Volunteer Office team.

Many heartfelt thanks to our leadership teams and volunteers for making the festival a success and for helping to cultivate a safe, welcoming environment for all new volunteers who joined this year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dana Fontaine
Manager of Volunteers