



THE FAMILY  
CENTRE



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022/2023

# Message from CEO Pauline Smale & Chair of the Board of Directors Page Stuart

Working our way into 2022, it became clear that the year was going to present many challenges. Poverty and mental health compounded by the pandemic, increased cost of living, and the workforce crisis. The need for support continued to grow, and the resources to apply to the challenge continued to shrink.

In spite of the current challenges, we have responded passionately, providing a phenomenal amount of mental health and social service support to over 20,000 community members. You will read and hear within the pages of this report some moving stories of healing and hope. We also are celebrating several employees with significant years of service. Elaine Neher, Roots and Wings Worker, celebrating 25 years; Michael Hansen, Growth and Development Supervisor, celebrating 20 years; Brendon Pratt, Therapy Supervisor; and Terry Sharp, Director of Operations, both celebrating 15 years.



Our priorities this year were Indigenous practice, equity and inclusion, data governance, and trauma-informed care. These four areas kept us focused during a time of much change and instability. Much work was completed in all four realms, which speaks to the determination and commitment of our work community.

Our vision, Healthy families in healthy communities, has and will continue to drive all the work that we have the honour and privilege to do. We define family from the broadest perspective possible, and as we continue to walk along the path of truth and reconciliation, the definition of family continues to expand to include all living things.

In *Nehiyaw, Wahkotowin* is defined as the state of being related, to each other and to the earth and all things on it, such as grass, trees, and rocks. Identity comes from these connections and is a component of all people's wellbeing (*Ohpikinawasowin, Growing A Child, 2021*). As part of our journey this year, we have begun developing an Indigenous Wellbeing Framework to guide and evaluate our work. Elder Leona Makokis has helped us to do this in a good way through ceremony, engaging Elders, the helping community, and those that have received our services.

This year we spent considerable time attentive to short-term strategies to ensure we remained focused with clear intention. Part of this work included revisiting our critical success factors.

Quality Service | Impact Expansion | Partner of Choice | Organizational Health

We adjusted them slightly to heighten the importance of impact and organizational health, recognizing that we as helpers need to be well to support the community we serve.

We want to thank everyone for the determination we see every day to ensure the children, youth, and families get the best we can offer. We are proud and feel privileged to participate in an agency that has the opportunity to focus on the health and wellbeing of those we serve and the community as a whole. We also see how we care for one another, the kindness, and the intention to be inclusive and create a place for everyone to grow and develop in their work. It is inspiring to be a part of this agency.

The board of directors continues to guide our ship, providing their time and expertise to ensure our strategies reflect the priorities of the people we serve. We are grateful for their time. We also want to thank our funders and partners, allowing us to do what we do best everyday.

You will see within the body of this report the many voices of the children, families and colleagues we work with. We hope this will provide you with a small window into the TFC experience this past year.

Pauline Smale, CEO  
Page Stuart, Board Chair

# Our Year in Numbers

## Families, Youth, & Children



Children and youth lived in our reunification homes



We brought families together **42** times in circles, ceremonies, and family group conferences to plan for the children they care about

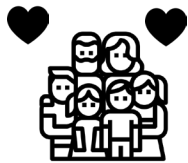
The Family Support Services team supported **369** families and **797** children and youth



We were able to keep **218** children in family care through our Kinship program



## Community Initiatives



**957** families and **2,172** children received customized support from roots and wings workers to address issues impacting overall family functioning. Roots and wings workers facilitated **86** school presentations and events for families and school staff.



**437** youth were engaged by cultural coaches through one-to-one support and group programming focusing on inclusion, equity, and intersectionality. Cultural coaches delivered **155** capacity-building presentations to **3,882** unique youth related to diversity, identity, and culture.



**4,538** students were supported by success coaches boost their resilience, develop coping strategies, and enable them to see a positive future for themselves. Success coaches facilitated **344** presentations and events related to healthy relationships, emotions, and effects of trauma.



**10,394** people were engaged by youth community safety liaisons through community events, presentations, and resource mobilization. Youth community safety liaisons identified issues, trends, and gaps in the community negatively impacting youth, and developed and led **22** responsive projects aimed at improving youth safety and increasing positive interactions in the community.

## Education Services

**144** subsidies were provided to remove financial barriers



**1,192** people participated in **186** classes designed to enhance skills in parenting, relationships, communication, and self-regulation

**97%** of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they learned something new that can improve their life.



“When I was told to go to anger management, I thought of the stigma that goes with it. Knowing what I know now, it will help me grow as an individual and hopefully allow me to become a better positive version of myself.”  
- Women & Anger participant

## Counselling



**4,812** people accessed **28,167 hours** of counselling

# ohpikîhakan: a new approach to foster care

## Watch the video

In winter 2023, The Family Centre launched a new program, ohpikîhakan. ohpikîhakan aims to meet the holistic needs (mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional) of youth ages 13 - 17 in the care of Children's Services. This program is part of a province-wide initiative called "Therapeutic Foster Care." It is embedded with culturally responsive services and Indigenous worldviews.

**"ohpikîhakan is an incredibly unique and exciting opportunity to make a substantial difference in the lives of our youth. I truly believe that we can offer a nurturing and healing environment for our youth, as caregivers, when we are equipped with the knowledge, culture and therapeutic support to be able to do so; ohpikîhakan encompasses all of this."**

**- Laurie Escott, a Therapeutic Supervisor with ohpikîhakan.**

Chantelle Painter, a caregiver recruiter for ohpikîhakan, continues, "The very first call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to reduce the number of children in government care. This program seeks to do just that through reunification. We are living our commitment to using our privilege to advance the process of Canadian reconciliation."

The ohpikîhakan team wanted to begin the work in a 'good way' by listening to the wisdom of Treaty 6 elders. Before working with clients, the program began in a pipe ceremony. The team presented protocol; a grandmother print and tobacco, to seek wisdom from the elders and the ancestors. Elder Dr. Leona Makokis prayed for the program and later provided us with a name for the program: "ohpikîhakan." This Cree word translates into a child that is being raised. This name was a gift, highlighting the relationship and connection to a child's culture and family. The grandmother print hangs at our office for continued guidance from the ancestors.

ohpikîhakan is founded on the belief that youth need to experience belonging, healing, connection, and reunification. We believe this occurs with regular contact with family members, culture, and community. We specialize in family engagement and therapeutic support to respond to these needs. Caregivers are ambassadors, allies, and advocates for youth wellness and healing.

The program emphasizes trauma-informed care, cultural connection, wraparound support, and youth reunification. Our team actively supports each caregiver with tailored training, individualized support, and peer engagement.

Some of our caregivers want to "right the wrongs" they have experienced in their own life. Others see it as their responsibility as part of their reconciliation journey. Above all, every one of them has indicated they feel 'called' to this role.



**"One of the greatest gifts I get from seeking caregivers are the stories that are exchanged. Every person drawn to this program is giving a piece of themselves and the opportunity for their stories to enable the success of the youth they will guide."**

**- Chantelle Painter, ohpikîhakan Recruiter**

# Rapid Access Counselling (RAC) provides province-wide access to therapy

In the summer of 2022, we kicked off Rapid Access Counselling (RAC) in collaboration with Kindred in Calgary.

RAC aims to address the ever-growing demand for mental health support in the province. Through RAC, individuals, couples, and families anywhere in Alberta can access virtual counselling services at no cost. The program supports Alberta Family Resource Networks (FRNs) throughout the province and is funded by the Government of Alberta.



“RAC helps many individuals and families throughout Alberta. RAC therapists are able to provide timely assistance in times of crisis for Albertan families and where appropriate, refer families to local supports or specialized services. Albertans can get support in a matter of days without needing to travel to a major centre.”

- Brendon Pratt, Clinical Supervisor.

This program comes as a much-needed solution for many who have been struggling to access the support they need.

**“I consider RAC to be a revolutionary resource for Albertans.**

**It’s breaking financial and geographical barriers to mental health for clients.**

**Clients are accessing our solution-focused services when they don’t have access to insurance or out-of-pocket supports. RAC has been helpful in reaching rural communities to get connected to mental health services that they would otherwise not be able to access. We are helping Albertans to feel less alone and equipped with other supports they might not be aware of. I believe that as we navigate the current wildfires, our services will continue to be beneficial in addressing the mental health implications of the unease that might result from the wildfires.”**

- Irene Kakai, Therapist



# Success Stories

## Caitlyn's Story

### [Watch Caitlyn's Video](#)

Caitlyn struggled to combat her social anxiety and navigate her slight autism, to the point that it was affecting her grades. She would sometimes miss school because of the anxiety it brought her.

Her emotions and mindset started to improve when she began working with The Family Centre's Success Coach, Erin, and Mental Health Therapist, Brittany.

"I started working with my Success Coach in Highlands School in grade 7 up until now in grade 12, where I am now working with my therapist, Brittany. It has been a long ride, but I've definitely grown from the person I was when Erin met me in grade 7 until today," Caitlyn explains.

During her time with Erin, they focused on managing big feelings like anxiety and worry. Erin also helped Caitlyn set healthy boundaries with friends.

"Erin always made me feel like I was worth something, and that's very special because sometimes I did not feel like I was a good person. She brings me back," Caitlyn adds.

Brittany supported Caitlyn to regulate her negative thinking patterns by reminding her to envision a red stop sign when she sees herself contemplating unhelpful thoughts. Caitlyn can now manage her thoughts better— "I stop thinking of those thoughts that are probably not even true."

The most significant change Caitlyn noticed was her openness to her parents and other people. "I feel like I am more open with [my parents] now. Even with other people, I am honest with them when I feel hurt." .

Caitlyn encourages people who are going through a similar situation as her not to give up. "It might feel like the worst thing at the moment. Believe me, I've been there many times where I've just felt like I'm not worthy of living. But you are worthy. You are here for a reason. Your reason might not show its presence right now, but it will eventually. Just know that whoever you are, I am proud of you for trying because trying is progress."

Caitlyn's dreams are to be at ease with herself, travel the world, advocate for autism awareness, and help as many people as possible.



## Little Turtle's Story

### [Watch Little Turtle's Video](#)

"In the story of Little Turtle, a little turtle goes in and out of their shell. All my life, I've always been in my shell. Little Turtle is a name gifted to me by an Elder," she explains the significance of her alias for this story. She believes this name represents her traumas, challenges, and recovery.

Little Turtle has short-term memory loss and has struggled with addiction for 19 years. She also had difficulty in keeping a job while raising her twins by herself. Besides these obstacles, Little Turtle also experienced abuse. She has also been dealing with toxicity in her family.

"My family members have alcohol-misuse tendencies," says Little Turtle. "I have fought all my life for my independence. I am trying to break free from all that, get my independence back, and stand up for my rights," she adds.

Little Turtle has now been keeping her ground and starting to feel more confident. These are all results of her attending counselling sessions with The Family Centre's mental health therapist, Lorian.

"Lorian has always been by my side," shares Little Turtle. "She communicates with me to give me strength and to deal with the daily challenges I'm going through with certain people in my life," she explains.

Lorian is Registered Canadian Art Therapist. She created therapy sessions that involves lots of art activities for Little Turtle. Little Turtle shares that making art helps her handle her short-term memory loss. They draw pictures, play with sand, and colour during their counselling times to express Little Turtle's feelings in a healthier way.

"My story and my life have changed for the better. I'm not the turtle that was in the shell for 35 years. I'm coming out, and I'm not afraid. I am stronger and more confident," she says proudly. She would love people to reach out for support so they could overcome their addiction and other life struggles. "Do not be afraid. Reach out for support. Don't let anybody hold you back."

# Long Serving Employees

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At The Family Centre, we work hard to create an agency that engages and motivates employees. We believe that by providing employees with an opportunity to grow professionally and aspire to their passion, we can offer better services to the Edmonton community.

We take great pride in celebrating the anniversaries of our long-serving employees. It's a special occasion to recognize and honour the commitment of those who have dedicated their time and skills to serving our community.



Elaine Neher, 25 years

Elaine is one of our longest-serving roots and wings workers, unwavering in her dedication to The Family Centre and the families she works with. Those who know her well know that she is warm, thoughtful, gentle, and kind. Elaine's ability to walk alongside people in kind and gentle ways radiates throughout her work. She shows her love and authentic passion for this work by building deep, meaningful connections with families. Throughout the years, Elaine has been a consistent beacon of sunshine for families that she has supported. Whether it's a school with students who stop by her desk for a high five or a hug, or it's a community partnership that knows Elaine is the best fit to work with vulnerable families, she continues to be held in the highest regard by every single colleague and partner who has been fortunate enough to work alongside her. Congratulations on your 25 years of luminary work.

written by Coral Johansson

Michael's unwavering passion for helping people has been evident since he first started at TFC in 2003 as a community youth worker and is still on display today in his current role as a Growth & Development Supervisor. He is steadfast in his belief that everyone deserves a kind, helping hand, whether they are a family needing support in the community or a new staff member learning the ins and outs of their position. Michael has a special ability for developing leaders, shown by the number of staff he supervised who have been supervisors and managers at the agency. I have learned so much from Michael over the years and am incredibly grateful and honoured to have him on my team.

written by Andrew Pahl



Michael Hansen, 20 years



Terry is a great example of a servant leader. Much of his work happens behind the scenes ensuring TFC is well presented to the community. How we engage through the media and how we present when stakeholders come to the agency reflect his understanding of the importance of this type of engagement. His national work with FSEAP is recognized by his colleagues throughout Canada and represents TFC honorably. Terry has an unselfish mindset behaving ethically, humbly, and ensuring decisions are made for the larger good of the agency. Congratulations on 15 years, Terry.

written by Pauline Smale



Terry Sharp, 15 years



Brendon Pratt, 15 years

Brendon began his journey with The Family Centre in 2008 as a Mental Health Therapist. In this role, he has supported children, youth, and families in many settings, including schools, with Family Support Services, EAP, and in therapy groups. Currently as a Clinical Supervisor, Brendon supports a team of therapists and oversees the therapy work in Family Support Services and the Rapid Accessing Counselling program. Throughout the years, Brendon has built many connections across our agency and in the community, and continues to make a positive difference in the lives of many people.

written by Elsie Lobo

### 10 Years

Hannah Weir  
Vanessa Cutler  
Amber Luu  
Natalie Cox  
Chad Collins  
Mary Tesfaselassie

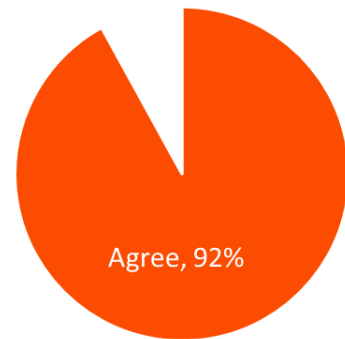
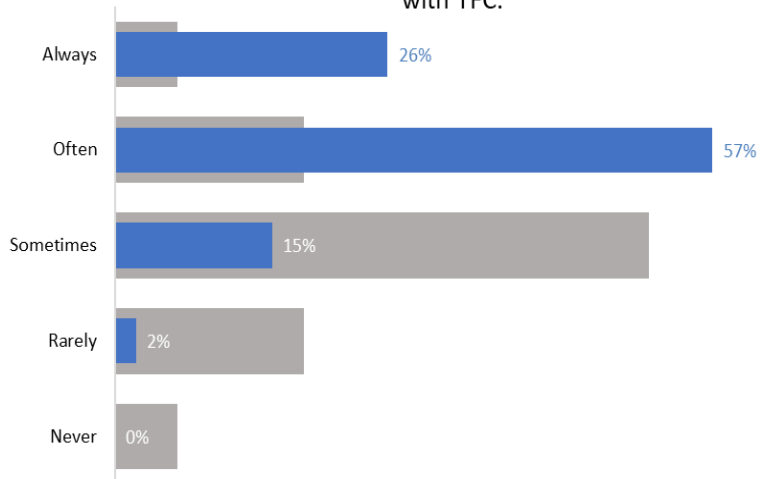
### 5 Years

Mark Frederick	Brooke Wilson
Lane Gagnon	Jenna Boonstra
Thomas Ngobe	Amy Cadieux
Alyssa Martin	Ebyan Firin
Eric Krepstekies	Sheila Ferreira
Kaitlyn Shinness	Monica Gariepy
Carol Turner	Yeze Lee
Megan Jivraj	Asia Broadbent
Coral Johansson	Mary-Ann Kelly
Jenny Bukovits	Lorian Gelink

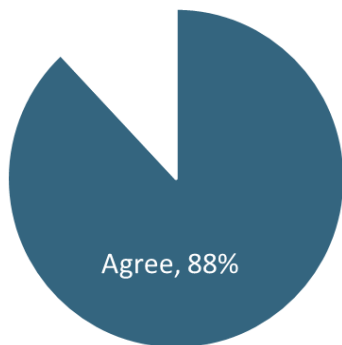
# Feedback From Our Clients

The Family Centre is committed to providing exceptional service and support to our clients. Their feedback is essential in helping us achieve this goal. We ask each client for feedback when their file is closed. This is what they had to say (250 responses).

"I make positive decisions for myself", before and after working with TFC.

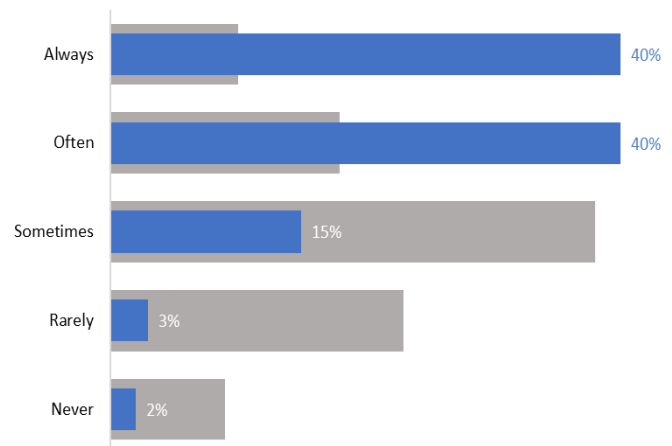


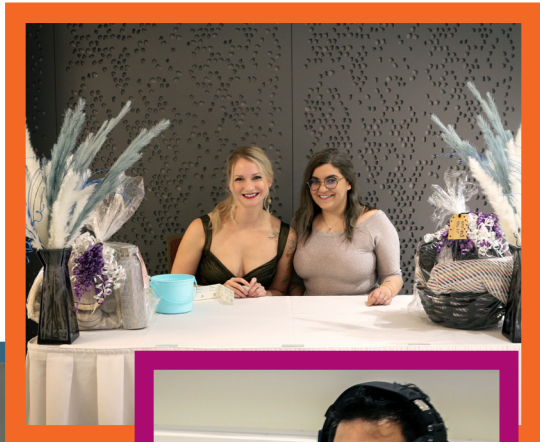
When decisions were made about my services, I felt like I was a partner with the staff and that they listened to me.



I feel stronger as a person because of the services I received from The Family Centre.

"I have hope for the future", before and after working with TFC.





# Board of Directors

Page Stuart	Chair
John Cotton	Vice Chair
Sophia Kasozi	Treasurer
Brian Andrais	Director
Irene Fraser	Director
Jade Gagnon	Director
Lenore Neudorf	Director
Gerard MacLellan	Director
Kathy Vasko	Director



# Financial Statements

## Income


United Way: Allocation	\$861,420
United Way: All In For Youth and Youth Capacity Grants	\$995,184
Provincial Contracts	\$3,558,651
Collaborative Service Delivery Contracts	\$15,799,788
City of Edmonton: FCSS	\$1,219,808
Fees for Service	\$2,866,507
Grants	\$68,059
Interest, Casino, and Other	\$194,523
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,563,940</b>

## Expenses


Salaries, Benefits, and Contracted Services	\$17,783,445
Occupancy and Office Costs	\$1,572,241
Program and Client Expenses	\$5,816,774
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,172,460</b>

This information is courtesy of The Family Centre of Northern Alberta



 780.423.2831

 [info@familycentre.org](mailto:info@familycentre.org)

 The Family Centre of Northern Alberta

 [thefamilycentre.na](https://www.instagram.com/thefamilycentre.na)