



centre FOR
autism
services
ALBERTA

impact

report

2022 - 2023



The Centre for Autism Services Alberta is on a mission to provide *comprehensive* and *innovative* support and services to those affected by autism *across their lifespan*.

Our purpose is to empower
Autistic individuals and their families to
thrive.

To achieve that, we're doing what we believe we do best: delivering impactful programs and services for our participants, families, communities and partners to inspire and accelerate positive change and create an inclusive future. We are also people-focused as we seek to understand each person's specific context, dreams, and goals to promote their achievement. We believe in Autistic Voice and Choice: Our services reflect what is important to Autistic people. All while focusing on continuous improvement - if better is possible, we do it.

This report presents our journey throughout 2023 on our path to realizing this vision.

OUR FIVE

Pillars of Service



**CHANGING
OUTCOMES**

**EMPOWERING
FAMILIES**

**ENRICHING
LIVES**

**FOSTERING
INDEPENDENCE**

**TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITY**



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A NOTE
FROM OUR

Executive Director & Board Chair

We had an incredible year of growth and success at the Centre for Autism Services Alberta.

2022-2023 saw the expansion of our scope and services as we reached a major milestone: opening up our new space in Calgary. In doing so, we are giving meaning to an integral part of our name, which is to say that our reach is truly becoming felt throughout *Alberta*.

In our home base in Edmonton, programs and services are thriving. The school is running smoothly. The feedback received on programming was glowing. This is in large part due to the passion, commitment and expertise of our staff, to whom we are grateful.

Over the past year, we've worked hard to increase and strengthen connections in our community. We're proud to say we've formed seven new employer partnerships, widening the pathways for Autistic teens and adults to find more jobs and training opportunities. Our engagement with additional organizations, such as the City of Edmonton, the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, and Alberta Education, enables us to extend our reach further through leadership, educational programs, and supports.

We're excited to announce that 2024 will have an even greater focus on services for adults. Plus, we're committed to increasing and amplifying the voices and ideas of the Autistic community to continue to shape our programs and services. This means a bright future where our work has an *even bigger impact*.

None of this important work would have been possible without you. You belong to a community of Autistic self-advocates, families, partners, and supporters, all dedicated to a common cause to empower Autistic people and their families to thrive.

As you will read in this Impact Report, all of these accomplishments could not have happened without the tremendous support we've been honoured to receive from our donors, partners, volunteers, families, children, teens and adults and the broader community who hold us to our vision that Autistic people will lead meaningful, engaged lives.

Thank you!



Samantha Labahn, Board Chair



Deborah Allard Usunier, Executive Director





DOING MORE TO *Make an Impact*

In partnership with caring supporters like you, the Centre impacted **2,639** lives across Alberta.

2022-2023 *Highlights*

Sports & recreation programs are BACK!

Emerging post-pandemic, we successfully relaunched our community and recreation programs for children, teens and adults. We lowered registration fees to reduce barriers and create greater inclusivity, leading to a significant increase in registrants. This was made possible by grants from the Alberta Parks & Recreation Association and the Canadian Parks & Recreation Association. We also reignited our partnership with the YMCA for our Active for Life programming, welcoming and integrating participants into the community.

New on-site early childhood programs in Calgary!

In 2022-2023, we worked hard to launch a new on-site PUF preschool & kindergarten programs in Calgary beginning September 2023, which will expand our offerings to 24 more children and their families.

2022-2023 Highlights

Welcoming new community partners, major funders, sponsors.

We expanded our reach to seven new community partners for workforce development, bringing our total to eleven. We also acquired six new major funders and sponsors, allowing us to increase capacity and grow our services to reach even more individuals and their families.

Completion of the outdoor recreation area.

Installing the outdoor basketball zone was the final piece to our outdoor space, further enriching our Edmonton location for all participants and creating an interactive outdoor space in which to belong and thrive. The outdoor space was made possible by funding from the Stollery Charitable Foundation.


Making strides in **language accessibility.**

We translated five key intake communication forms into three different languages (Punjabi, Urdu, & Arabic), to ensure families have a full understanding of services and supports to support inclusivity through language accessibility.

We created an environment for volunteers to assist with translation services in family homes to help remove barriers and facilitate communication.

DOING MORE TO *Change Outcomes*

Changing outcomes means we take a holistic approach that considers each individual's unique strengths, needs, and aspirations, aiming to remove barriers and enhance their overall well-being. In 2022-2023, we expanded our services and reached more people, extending our impact further across the province, continuing to shift to a brighter future for every Autistic individual.



296 unique
families
supported -
an increase of **13%** over
last year.

CHANGING OUTCOMES - CHILDREN'S SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS

SPECIALIZED SERVICES - **151** families supported in Edmonton, Calgary, and surrounding areas.

BEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORTS - **76** families supported in Edmonton, Calgary, and surrounding areas..

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES (PUF) – **49** families enrolled in Edmonton & Calgary.

THERAPEUTIC GROUPS: Facing Your Fears, PEERS for Teens, and START Program – **20** families supported in Edmonton, Calgary, and surrounding areas.

HALLOWEEN PRACTICE EVENT - **31** families, **103** individual family members.



A young child with wet hair, wearing a blue wetsuit, is playing with a blue and yellow water gun outdoors. The child is looking down at the water gun with a focused expression. The background is a chain-link fence and some greenery. A large red circular graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

BIG impact

While we celebrate the major milestone of opening Calgary Early Childhood Services, we are also reaching big, transitional milestones in Edmonton. In 2022-2023, our onsite Edmonton classroom celebrated its first graduates, saying farewell to the five graduates who completed our 3-year onsite program.

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

“Family Nights have made it easier to do things like trick-or-treating or going to the zoo in a safe environment for both of my children. Those events also help us meet other families with kids similar to Deacon; everyone is so genuinely nice and understanding. We don’t feel judged, and Deacon is so comfortable being himself around the centre and at the family nights! Family Nights with the Centre mean so much!

We have a sense of belonging to the community, which is big for us.”

– JENNY, CENTRE PARENT



FAMILY NIGHTS ARE PROUDLY FUNDED BY ALTALAND FOUNDATION.

DOING MORE TO

Empower Families

The Centre empowers families by providing comprehensive support, resources, and educational programs tailored to the unique needs of Autistic people. We offer parent workshops, access to specialized therapies, and inclusive environments, fostering an understanding and supportive community, ultimately equipping families to better navigate and advocate for their loved ones with autism. This year, the Centre continued to support family empowerment with a variety of consistent supports, services, and program offerings.

355 unique families totaling **1,014** individual family members

provided with activities and support intended to help build community and foster a sense of belonging.

An increase of 143 individuals over the past year.

EMPOWERING FAMILIES BY THE NUMBERS

RESPIRE - **239** opportunities accessed by **27** families.

MORE FAMILY EVENTS - **175** families accessed **5** Centre events in Calgary & Edmonton, with **550** family members in attendance.

PARENT WORKSHOPS - **8** different workshops attended by **122** family members.



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

“Our family has had the pleasure of working with the Centre for the past two years. During that time, we’ve seen incredible growth and progress with our (nearly) 5-year-old autistic son. We moved from Ontario for his medical and clinical treatment and will never look back with regret. Whether in crisis, responding to developmental hurdles, areas of concern, or building upon strengths, our Centre team remains responsive and knowledgeable. Our needs as a family are high and ever-changing; the Centre has never wavered in its commitment to provide evidence-based care to support and celebrate our son as he finds his own version of peace and success. We have also had the opportunity to meet other families with Autistic children and partake in events that we would have typically passed up.

The Centre’s family events provide a safe space wherein our child can be himself in the company of those who have shared in similar experiences.”

- ALANA, CENTRE PARENT



DOING MORE TO

Enrich Lives

Enrichment means

we strive to add value and enhance the overall well-being and quality of life of Autistic people. By providing opportunities for positive experiences, skill development, and fostering a sense of belonging, we provide enrichment that empowers individuals with autism and their families to lead fulfilling lives.



MORE ACCESSIBILITY

With the help of grant funding, we reduced fees for **51 children, teens, and adults** in recreation programs, increasing accessibility, enhancing connectedness, and fostering inclusion.

ENRICHING LIVES BY THE NUMBERS

ART - **38** participants
accessed **75** opportunities.

SPORTS & RECREATION - **51** participants
accessed **71** opportunities.

SUMMER CAMP - **131** campers
accessed **232** opportunities.

220 children,
teens, and adults
participated in **376**
opportunities across
our enrichment
programs.



MEET MATHIESON

Mathieson is a talented artist who has been participating in our art programs for many years, developing his skills. Mathieson decided to share his passion and what he had learned, and now volunteers with our teen group in the Exploring Art program at the Nina Haggerty Centre. Recently, he asked to do more and signed up to volunteer with our Fun with Art program to learn new skills working with 6-12 year olds.

Not only does Mathieson inspire participants with new artistic perspectives, but he thrives when creating communication opportunities and making connections. Staff reports that Mathieson is kind, patient, polite, punctual, reliable, and always willing to help anywhere. He arrives at every shift with a positive attitude and takes the initiative to help the team prep and clean before and after sessions.

Mathieson will give participants verbal praise for their artwork and clear step-by-step instructions and explanations. Because of his years of experience, he is a great tour guide for new staff members and volunteers and knows where every art material is located.

“My experience with the Art programs has helped me to not only grow as an artist, but also to work with a team much bigger than I had imagined I could.”

– MATHIESON, ART PARTICIPANT & SELF-ADVOCATE





BIG impact

The annual Art Show & Sale presented by Booster Juice was a major highlight, as participants sold over **80** paintings. Media coverage was on site, and an estimated **120** individuals came through the door.

DOING MORE TO

Foster Independence

We work alongside Autistic adults, their families and the community to collaboratively foster independence and to help develop skills for life as they transition into adulthood and beyond.

109 teens & adults accessed **157** opportunities across programming related to increasing independence, learning employment skills, and enhancing practical living and social skills.

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE - TEEN & ADULT SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS

QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE – **20** participants gained skills of independence for living and integrating into the community.

SHOP COOK LEARN – **7** participants gained new skills in the kitchen, created shopping lists and budgets, and learned how to navigate the grocery store.

TEEN SOCIAL NIGHT – **33** participants were able to hang out together and make and maintain friendships.

ADULT SOCIAL NIGHT – **153** participants socialized in an accepting environment where they are appreciated for their individuality.

VIRTUAL SOCIAL NIGHT – **9** participants gathered online weekly to stay socially connected.





Quest for Independence

structures its programming around factors that influence and contribute to one's quality of life, including well-being, independence and social participation. All Quest participants have the opportunity to engage in community volunteer opportunities during programming as a means of building vocational skills and giving back to our community.

MEET STEPHEN

“I LIKE COMING HERE WITH FRIENDS. I LIKE THE NEW APARTMENT. IT’S MORE COMFORTABLE AND HAS MORE ROOM.

QUEST IS AWESOME.”

– STEPHEN, QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE PARTICIPANT



QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE



In 2022-2023, Quest's commitment to community engagement shone bright.

Quest actively participated in community clean-up initiatives in and around their program locations throughout the city. This effort contributed to cleaner surroundings and reinforced Quest's strong connection to their community.

Quest's **spirit of community involvement** extended even further as they expanded their participation with Roots for Trees, an organization dedicated to planting trees around the city. This collaboration provided Questers with three new opportunities to engage in tree-planting initiatives, helping make their city more environmentally sustainable and creating meaningful experiences for participants.



Questers collaborated with the City of Edmonton

to provide valuable input for the new Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) testing initiative. Several participants eagerly volunteered their time to take part in a focus group, exploring a new LRV cabin mock-up. Their insights and feedback played a crucial role in shaping the final design of the train, and the City expressed gratitude for Quest's time to contribute their unique perspectives. This collaboration was featured in a video widely promoted through the City's social media channels during National AccessAbility Week.

Quest participants secured a community garden plot

at King's University, where participants and staff spent the spring months planning what to plant, the summer months tending to the garden, and harvesting the produce at summer's end. Plans for next year's garden are already underway.

EMPLOYMENTWORKS

EmploymentWorks is a proven program funded through the Government of Canada and the Sinneave Family Foundation that supports individuals on the spectrum in preparing for, getting, and keeping good jobs or pursuing further education.

In 2022-2023, the Centre actively engaged with **35** participants, focusing on pre-employment readiness, active labour market participation, and employment retention.

We offer dedicated job coaches to assist individuals in entering the labour market, and we continue to provide coaching to retain and maintain employment - creating more opportunities and changing the employment trajectory for Autistic individuals.

This year, the EmploymentWorks programming was extended to 12 months to include the “Keeping Work Phase” to boost job success.

In the summer, we provided an intensive summer program to equip high school students with the skills they need to enter the job market, giving them a head start on their career journey.

We worked hard to expand our connections with employers. We created **7** new employment partnerships, bringing our tally to **11**. By doing so, we can offer more work experiences that enhance participants' confidence and promote inclusive employment practices.

Government of Canada
Opportunities Fund
for Persons with Disabilities

Canada



Sinneave
FAMILY FOUNDATION

EWNP IS FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA OPPORTUNITIES FUND

BIG impact

59% of participants secured employment or returned to school within 12 months of program end.

EMPLOYMENTWORKS

EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS



electronic.recycling.association

DOING MORE TO

Transform Community

We are always working to build a community that understands, includes, and creates opportunities for Autistic individuals — but we can't do it on our own. Thousands of volunteers, partners, sponsors, funders, donors, partners, and self-advocates join our work to transform our communities as we all continue to advocate, educate, and amplify the voices of Autistic people.



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY BY THE NUMBERS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS – The Centre engaged **1,000** educators, community leaders, and employers in **30** workshops throughout the year on various important topics.

Some workshop topics included:

- Introduction to Autism
- Supporting Communication in the Classroom
- Neurodiversity
- Intro to Behaviour
- Adapting the Classroom
- Accommodations and Modifications

BIG impact

In 2022-2023, we saw a whopping **30%** increase in volunteer hours over the previous year.

Our Volunteers

A huge thank you to our **155** amazing volunteers who gave their time, talents, and care to our programs, services, and summer camps. Our volunteers delivered an incredible **4,661 hours of service** on behalf of the Centre!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

MEET SYDNEY

Sydney works as a Lab Coordinator in language processing research. “Lots of our Autistic participants volunteer for research as a way to give back to their community, so when I had the opportunity to volunteer for Centre, I knew I wanted to give back too.”

Sydney began volunteering in our Active for Life program this past year. In the Active for Life program, Sydney got to know many participants but made a close connection with Liam. Sydney increased Liam’s interest in fitness with ease by encouraging him to try a variety of cardio equipment. “We were really able to tailor the experience for Liam, and he loves the spin bikes and treadmills.”

Liam now asks to try different equipment at each session!

Sydney demonstrates a genuine interest in getting to know each participant. While assigned to one participant, she makes an effort to say hi and interact with everyone. Sydney explains that volunteering makes her feel fulfilled. She adds that she always has good experiences, and the participants are all great to work with. “I absolutely love volunteering in Active for Life!”

When asked what she would tell others considering volunteering, “I’d tell them to look for a volunteer position that you can enjoy and are passionate about.”

“When you put your all in, you really can make a difference in someone’s life.”



STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

We continue our proud and longstanding partnerships with two post-secondary student associations from the University of Alberta and MacEwan University. These equity-driven advocacy groups actively work to remove barriers, raise awareness, and build authentic connections for Autistic individuals on and off campus.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA THE CENTRE FOR AUTISM STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

- Their Annual Discovering Conference was held in person for the first time in three years, welcoming **91** individuals to the event.
- The CFASA podcast saw **834** downloads!
- Other events included a bottle drive, pumpkin carving event, and bake sale.



MACEWAN UNIVERSITY MACEWAN AUTISM ACCEPTANCE

- The group held a **“Stimformation”** information session on stimming. They purchased some fidgets for participants and created an informative presentation to educate people about stimming.
- Other events included a bake sale, a Halloween event, a lunch hangout event, and a games night.



OUR Supporters

Partners, sponsors, funders, and donors like you enable us to bring **BIG** transformational change.



Thank You

TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS!

Community partners are integral to our mission, helping to provide a broader range of services, resources, and support while fostering inclusivity and community engagement.

**THE
CITADEL
THEATRE**

SKATING CLUB
**Extreme
Edge**

Qi Creative[®]
Success Coaching for All Abilities

**the
nina**
Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts

Thank You

TO OUR SPONSORS & FUNDERS!



Sinneave
FAMILY FOUNDATION



Thank You

TO OUR FUNDERS!



Thank You

TO OUR DONORS!

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- Ewa Burton
- The Keg Spirit Foundation

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- Monita Cheng
- Anonymous

\$25,000+

- Altaland Foundation
- Knifewear

LOOKING *Ahead*

GROWTH IN CALGARY

On November 1, 2023, we're set to expand our services in Calgary, reaching even more families with children under 18. In January 2024, we're excited to launch onsite respite services in Calgary, providing crucial support to families throughout the year. We're also focused on expanding services for adults under Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) funding, with more details to come.

BRIGHT NIGHT FOR AUTISM

Our highly anticipated "Bright Night" event in June 2024 promises to shine a light on the Centre's achievements and create a platform for self-advocates and autism awareness.

NEURODIVERSITY SPEAKERS BUREAU

We're proud to announce the creation of a Neurodiversity Speakers Bureau, amplifying diverse voices and experiences.

CITY OF EDMONTON PARTNERSHIP

The Centre's upcoming partnership with the City of Edmonton underscores our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive community which will expand our recreation programs for individuals on the spectrum.

**WITH THESE ENDEAVOURS, WE LOOK FORWARD TO A YEAR OF GROWTH,
EMPOWERMENT, AND POSITIVE IMPACT.
TOGETHER, WE'LL CONTINUE TO BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL.**

Board of Directors

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VOLUNTEER. DONATE. ADVOCATE. EDUCATE.

THANK YOU FOR READING OUR 2022-2023 IMPACT REPORT.

This report highlights all we have done over the last year and as a business, we will continue to consider the impact of every single decision we make on our participants and their families, staff, and the community. And we will strive to constantly improve and do more as our next impact report will be a testament to.

