

2023/2024

ANNUAL REPORT



Weaving Us Together



Children's
Cottage
Society

Core Funders

Thank you to our core funders and community at large who ensure we are able to help vulnerable families transform adversity into possibility.



Community at Large



Our Vision

Resilient children blossom in healthy families.

Our Mission

Building strong children and safe nurturing families through prevention programs and support services.

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Message from the Board President



Brad Hayden
President & Chair

The Children's Cottage Society had a transformative year, marked by the completion and opening of our new Crisis Nursery & Family Support Centre in Montgomery, the launch of our safe infant surrender site, Hope's Cradle, in partnership with Gems for Gems, and significant progress with our Capital Campaign where we are celebrating having reached 75% of our goal and are forging ahead. After so many years of planning, and the tireless efforts of many, our dreams are finally coming to fruition. The foundation of our success is truly our employees and volunteers, our generous donors and funders, and our community partners – a special thank you to all of them. We are grateful for all their hard work, their generosity of time and resources, and their shared commitment to helping our organization grow. Without them, the Cottage would not be able to help the children and families in Calgary who need us most. We are all stronger by working together. Although the needs are no less, the future is bright, and the Children's Cottage is embarking on new and exciting chapters ahead.

Message from the CEO



Danielle Ladouceur
Chief Executive Officer

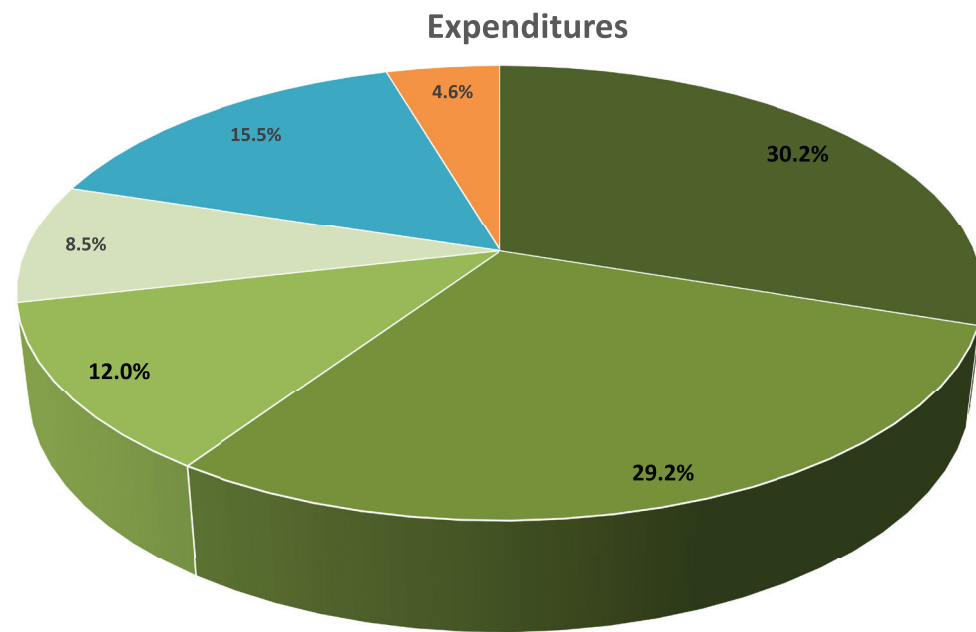
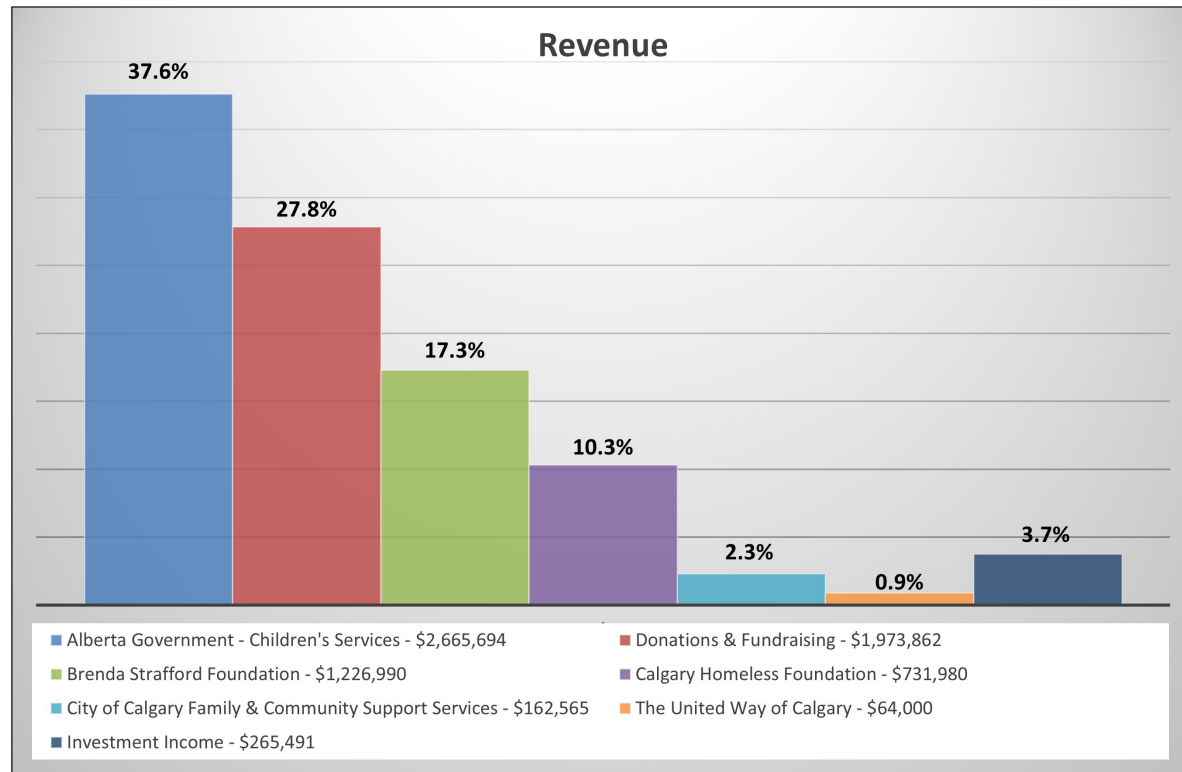
It has been a very exciting year for the Children's Cottage Society with the completion of our construction and preparing for the launch of our new Child & Family Centre. It is heartwarming to see a 10-year labour of love – which has involved so many dedicated staff, members, volunteers, community partners, consultants and contractors to bring it to life – become a reality. We look forward to bringing even more support to children and their families through our Centre and helping them thrive for decades to come. Our family shelter, Brenda's House, and our Family Housing program housing staff have been working diligently in a very challenging housing market over the past year to rehouse families as quickly as possible.

We have seen a recent upsurge in community members becoming volunteers with our programs, and we are very thankful to the wonderful people who come in to help cuddle babies, cook meals, sort donations, and help support the children and families we serve in so many important ways. We are also very grateful for the many generous community members who are supporting us with donations of funds and items we need to complete our Centre Campaign and deliver our programs.

Organizational Commitment to Reconcili-Action

As we continue our journey on the path of truth and reconciliation, we are working actively on ways to extend our partnership work with and alongside the Indigenous Nations in our community and to show up more effectively for the Indigenous children and families we serve. Ceremony has been woven throughout the construction and opening of our new Child & Family Centre, and we have benefitted from the wisdom and guidance of Elders and Knowledge Keepers as we create a new space to benefit all families.

Annual Financial Review - Operating Fund



- Program Delivery - \$5,639,707 (79.9%)
- Housing and Homelessness - \$2,130,219 (30.2%)
- Administration - \$1,096,655 (15.5%)
- Crisis Nursery - \$2,062,588 (29.2%)
- Fundraising - \$321,812 (4.6%)
- Family Resource Network - \$844,158 (12.0%)
- Community Programs - \$602,742 (8.5%)

Our current and complete audited financial statements are available on our website.

What Families are Telling Us



Crisis Nursery

"I needed to take a step back as I was very much reacting negatively with my children's outbursts. I needed to have time for myself do some inner healing and relax."

"I was able to take time to focus on health and getting through this treatment."



Brenda's House

"I appreciated that I was safe and felt valued and understood."

"Thanks. You gave us shelter, halal food and treat equally. I like your kindness and lovely behavior."



Home Visitation

"I learned so much from my home visitor and her support care and resources have helped me to grow as a parent, build confidence, and get through my postpartum depression and anxiety. thank you so much for this support."

"My home visitor was a huge help in coming up with parenting ideas! We will miss the conversation and troubleshooting ideas. Thanks!"



Early Years Family Support

"I found it valuable as there are always things that a parent can learn - info is always evolving. I learned how to support my baby's development and to prioritize his well-being."

"Family life coach was understanding of my circumstances and was a major support during a very difficult time."



Nurturing Newborns

"I am so glad that a program of this kind exists and that I was able to start using the program very soon after calling."

"I appreciate the support, while it was available to me, and my worker did a great job and will be missed."

Our Donors Weave in their Generosity

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Circle of Hope

The Children's Cottage Circle of Hope are a group of extraordinary donors contributing \$10,000 or more annually to build strong children and safe nurturing families through prevention and early intervention programs and support services.

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**Thank you,
 donors, for
 threading your
 care into the
 work we do!**



**Please scan for
 a full list of our
 amazing donors.**

No Place Like Home Road

The Children's Cottage Society has officially moved into our brand-new Child and Family Centre after embarking on construction in April 2022. We are fulfilling our goal to provide space for 40% more children in our new Crisis Nursery and accommodate hundreds of additional families in the learning and support programs offered through our Family Resource Network and Child Development Centre.



Back in 2013, the Children's Cottage Society was given a donation that enabled us to purchase land on Home Road NW for our new centre. Over the next decade, research was done, architectural designs rendered, collaborations formed, and campaigns created, with the goal of expanding our capacity to support every family who reaches out to us and help their children be safe and thrive. Ten years later and we're finally here!



Caring Together Campaign Donors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every donor who has generously supported our Caring Together Campaign and made impactful contributions to the construction of our Child & Family Centre. Your generosity has transformed our vision into a reality, providing a nurturing and supportive environment for children and families in need. Thank you for your invaluable support and for being a crucial part of our journey towards creating a better tomorrow.

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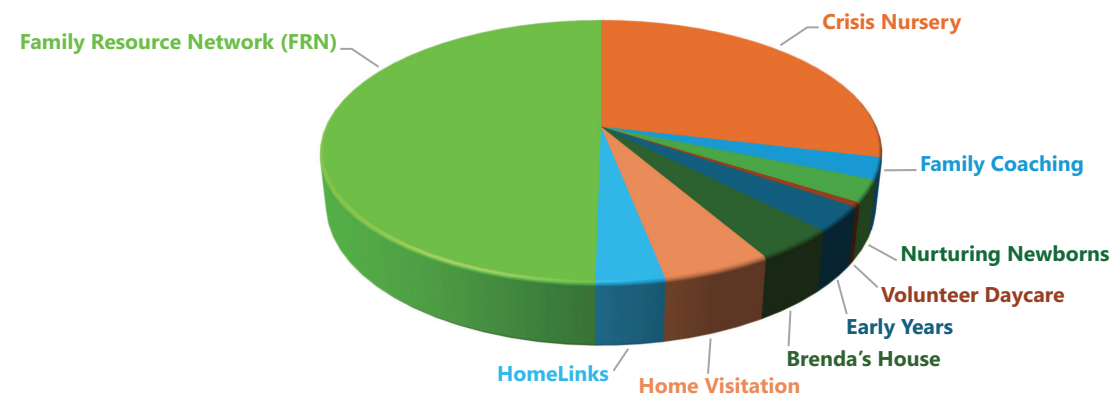
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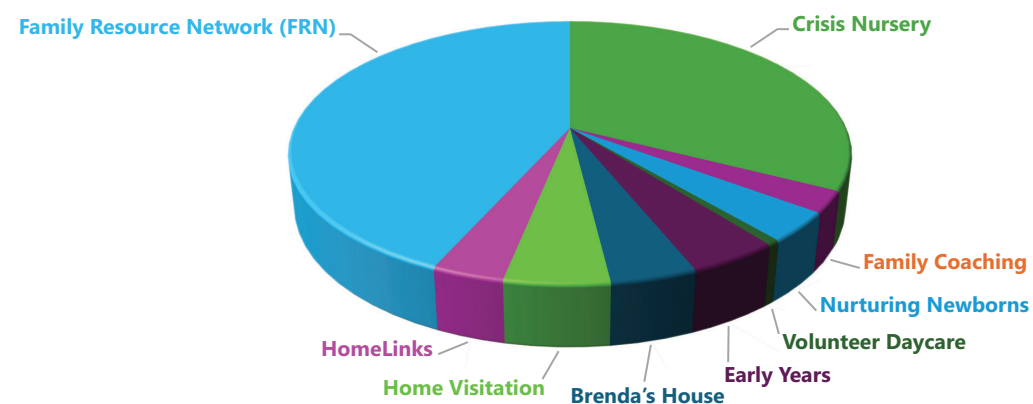
Children and Families Supported in 2023-24

Program Name	Children Served	Families Served
Crisis Nursery	941	572
Family Coaching	87	46
Nurturing Newborns (previously In-Home Infant Respite)	88	64
Volunteer Daycare	17	11
Early Years	101	78
Brenda's House	130	74
Home Visitation	174	90
HomeLinks	109	62
Family Resource Network (FRN)	1630	761
TOTAL	3277	1758

CHILDREN SERVED BY PROGRAM



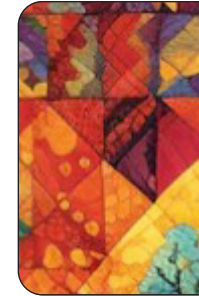
FAMILIES SERVED BY PROGRAM



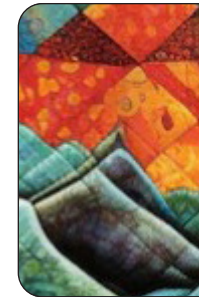
Outcomes from our Work



92% of parents from the Early Years program increased their knowledge about the healthy growth and development of their children.



Positive parenting skills are regularly taught by our Home Visitation Program. 91% of parents in the program improved their parenting skills.



The Nurturing Newborn program's assessment of parents showed that 100% of parents were feeling more prepared to care for their children because of this program.



99% of parents report that, after receiving crisis care, they felt better able to meet their children's needs as a parent.



Satisfaction with support provided by staff at Brenda's House is paramount. 85% of families described their experience as "feeling truly cared for" at the shelter.



CRISIS NURSERY

The Crisis Nursery, located on the second floor of our Child & Family Centre in Montgomery, provides up to three days of 24/7 care in a safe, playful, and nurturing setting. Our Crisis Nursery accepts children from newborn to age 9 and has the capacity to care for up to 20 children per day. Care is available for parents or legal guardians, providing them with time to take care of whatever crisis the family is going through, shielding the children from being exposed to toxic stresses.



Sarah's Story:

Sarah and Mike are parents to a 3-year-old little girl named Madison. Sarah struggled with parenting and was afraid that she might hurt her child. When she realized she needed help, she reached out to the Crisis Nursery.

"I experienced a lot of serious trauma as a child caused by my parents. Unfortunately, a lot of what you know about parenting comes from your parents, so when my daughter was born, I was worried I would be like them but the Crisis Nursery and my Family Coach helped me replace what I learned from my parents with really good, nurturing parenting skills. I still have bad days, but I know I can always refer back to what my coaches taught me. I've come so far and I'm really proud of that."

We taught Sarah:

- To be nurturing.
- To incorporate positive parenting strategies.
- To use coping strategies to decrease her stress so that it did not affect her daughter.
- To use the Crisis Nursery when she had bad days to make sure that her daughter would be safe.

FAMILY WELLBEING

Family Coaching, through an in-home visitation model of service, is available to families who have accessed the Crisis Nursery. Our Family Coaches support the setting of personalized goals, provide education regarding parenting and child development, as well as build connections to other community resources they may need.

A Family Coach started working with the Adebayo family because their son had recently been diagnosed with autism, which they were unfamiliar with. The coach helped them understand what this diagnosis meant for them and their family, and helped them apply for Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) funding. Once that was secured, the Family Coach helped their son get into a specialized school, and connected them with a team of therapists, a behavioural aide, and respite services.

The Children's Cottage has continued to support the family over the years and have watched Adebayo continue to flourish. Recently, the parents passed their citizenship test and became Canadian Citizens. Their Family Coach was honoured to be invited to the swearing in ceremony. The day was filled with happy tears, laughter and hugs.

"It's a blessing to have a group around us who are rooting for us and trying their best to help no matter the circumstances. It's definitely been a relief in many ways, and I look forward to my future, thanks to the Children's Cottage Society!"





CALGARY WEST FAMILY RESOURCE NETWORK

The Family Resource Network is a provincial initiative that ensures every community in the province has a place where families can go to access supports. The Children's Cottage Society is the hub for West Calgary, and including Okotoks and Cochrane.



"Recently, we had a family walk in who was struggling with meeting their basic needs, and concerns about having enough was high on their list of priorities. This family ask for immediate food resources, as they did not have anything in the home to feed their children. The family browsed our free food pantry provided in partnership with the 'Spinz-Around' program, and was able to take enough to get them through the week. We were also able to provide them with emergency gift cards for groceries while helping them to come up with a more long-term solution for their struggles. The family shared how relieved they were to receive such quick and kind support in their time of need."

761 vulnerable families, including 1630 children, had access to free resources and activities through the Calgary West Family Resource Network.



Our Family Resource Network Partners



Hope in Action with the Hope's Cradle

Our new Centre is home to Calgary's first ever safe and anonymous infant surrender site, Hope's Cradle. This life-saving alternative is made possible through our partnership with Gems for Gems and collaboration with the Calgary Police Service, the Calgary Fire Department, and City of Calgary.

We are also thankful for the support of key donors who helped us make this possible at our new Centre. Hope's Cradle provides safety and hope for infants when a parent is in a desperate situation and makes the difficult decision that they cannot keep their baby.

Learn more about the Hope's Cradle here





BRENDA'S HOUSE

Brenda's House provides temporary shelter for homeless families. While at Brenda's House we provide support for our families to move back into their own housing, assistance with basic needs, referrals, child development and assist in getting their family securely on their feet again.

Amelia's Family Story:

Amelia and her two daughters came to Calgary to flee an unsafe situation. They had no family to help and no place to stay, and found themselves at Brenda's House.

"When we landed in Calgary, we didn't know anybody. We were scared and tired. I was lucky enough to come across Brenda's House and they welcomed us in the very day we got here. My girls loved it there. I don't think they even knew they were in a homeless shelter. Volunteers provided so many fun activities for them to do. This was a distraction for them while I figured out how to get our life back together. Now, we are together in a home and finally starting our life over.

We helped Amelia:

- To shelter her family when she was homeless.
- To reduce the trauma of homelessness for her children by providing a room of their own and activities to help make life feel normal.
- To connect to appropriate community resources including counselling services for domestic violence survivors.



HOMELINKS HOUSING PROGRAM

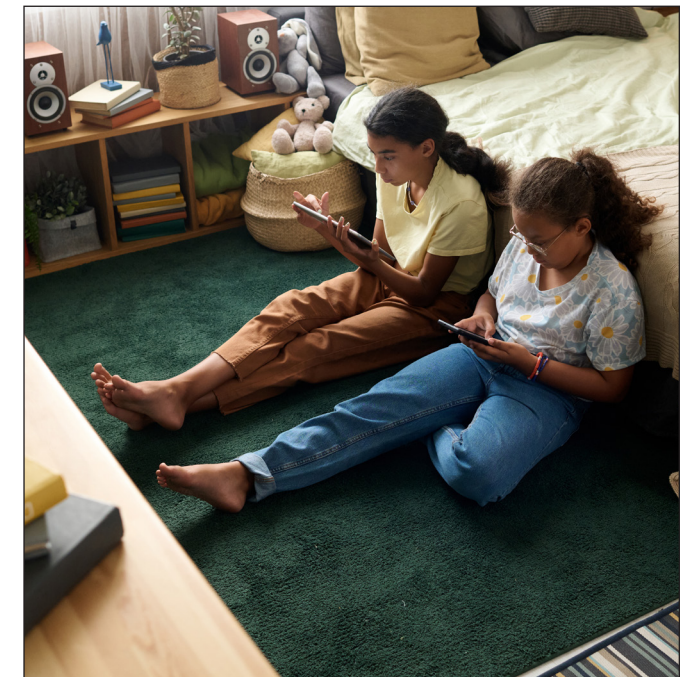
Families in shelter can request support from the HomeLinks program to help them locate affordable housing, get assistance with moving and furnishings, access rent subsidies and other financial assistance. We also follow-up with families for up to two years helping them learn new skills and/or connect them with resources to stay successfully housed and become self-sufficient.

Marisol's Success Story:

Marisol's first goal was to find affordable housing that would fit her family's needs. She reached out to Home Links and they assisted her in finding a duplex, large enough for three children, in a family friendly community. Her next goal was to get her children back living with her. She did this by connecting to community resources that would ensure a safe and stable home. This included accessing the Food Bank when there was no food in the house. Marisol's third goal was to ensure her addiction issues were being addressed so that her children could remain in her home. Marisol attended addictions counselling programs and has been clean and sober for two years. Her hard work has ensured that her children have remained in the home as a family.

"I am generally happy for the first time in my life. I am sober and I have all my kids with me in a safe house. It wasn't easy for me to get here, and my case manager made me work really hard. But because of her, I have everything I need. I set goals with her, and she made me accountable to them. I'm doing so well now, and I have no fear that my kids will be taken away. We are a real family and I'm hopeful for our future."

86% of HomeLinks families were able to benefit from the program and move into a home to call their own.





HOME VISITATION

Our Home Visitation program offers parents of children, newborns to age six, weekly home visits with an experienced family support worker (Home Visitor) who helps them build on their strengths, develop their parenting knowledge and skills, by increasing their understanding of child development, and connecting them to community resources and services relevant to their unique family needs.



Building Parent Confidence

A young mother who had recently had a premature baby boy, now seven months old, reached out for help. She wanted to better understand his development and learn more about positive parenting skills.

Despite her initial anxiety regarding her meeting his developmental milestones, she was reassured by doing a developmental screening for her child. Completing the screening questionnaire with her worker and taking the time to talk about the results helped this young mother understand that her baby was on schedule in every area, greatly alleviated her anxiety.

With the help of Home Visitation, mom learned how to support her child's development, and build her own parenting confidence. She also received help with referrals to access community resources, relieving her financial worries and reinforcing her commitment to positive parenting.

EARLY YEARS FAMILY SUPPORT

This program provides in-home support service to at-risk new parents and their infants through a collaboration with Alberta Health Services and Calgary Police Services. Family Life Coaches work closely with vulnerable families to keep them together and prevent the need for their infants to be placed in foster care. Our Coaches provide parenting guidance and teach childcare skills to ensure safety, healthy child development, and wellbeing in the home. Coaches also connect parents to other support in the community to eliminate risk factors and build their network of support.

"When Luke and Simone were referred to our program, Children's Services had concerns about his history of substance use and his ability to care for and provide a safe home for his children. While Luke was in a period of sobriety, he had experienced a relapse during his partner's pregnancy. There were also concerns related to adequate housing for the family and worries about Simone's mental health capabilities as a parent.

While in the program, the parents were supported in following through with the plan outlined by Children's Services and took steps to address their concerns, demonstrating they could be safe and reliable parents. Luke completed an addiction treatment program and the family was assisted in building a network of support to guide them. Luke acknowledged that sobriety was key to keeping their young family together. Finding adequate housing was a challenge, but the parents persevered in their search and with the support of a community program and secured housing for their family. Luke and Simone learned to recognize their strengths as parents and how to navigate challenges. Simone developed healthy coping and problem solving skills to improve her mental health, and she learned to value and nurture herself so she could be there for her children.





NUTURING NEWBORNS

Nurturing Newborns (formerly In-Home Infant Respite Program) offers prenatal support as well as infant respite care for isolated families with babies aged newborn to 6 months. By providing regular weekly respite for 3 to 4 hours, parents who are overwhelmed or exhausted can take the time for rest, engage in self-care activities, and make connections to services in the community.



"This program for me is more than just providing care for babies, it is a way to give help to a struggling family. By supporting a mom this way, it is an entire family's life that is changing. I don't know how I would have been without this program, but I know I was not far from depression. Having my Respite Care Worker come over was a high point in my life, she was such a kind and intentional woman. Sincerely, I am lacking words to express all my gratitude to this program and especially to my Respite Care Worker."

100% of parents felt more prepared to care for their children because of this program.

How the Brain Story Weaves into our Programming

The Children's Cottage Society has integrated the science of brain development into all our programs and services. Knowing that a child's early years are important windows of opportunity for us to set a strong foundation for healthy brain development, all our employees complete the Brain Story online training within the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. All our programs integrate support tools to help parents meet the development needs of their children. By applying this strength-based prevention and early intervention framework, we achieve long-term outcomes for children and families.

Here are examples of how we support the healthy brain development of children:



Our Crisis Nursery program, through the provision of respite care for children under the age of 10 years, reduces a parent's stress during a time of adversity and protecting children from being exposed to toxic stress.



Our Home Visitation and Early Years programs, through the provision of home-based coaching and educational supports, build parenting capacity for caregivers and build supports for all family members to build resilience.



Brenda's House prevents all family members from exposure to toxic stress through the provision of a safe place to stay while experiencing homelessness.



Our Nurturing Newborns program through the provision of respite care reduces a parent's stress and adds positive supports to a family.



Our Family Resource Network provides positive supports to build skills through the provision of direct on-site family supports programming.



Our HomeLinks program helps to remove toxic stress by building a stable home environment for children through the provision of case management programming.



Learn more about The Brain Story



Volunteers – Essential Threads in our Fabric of Care

What the volunteers give to the Children’s Cottage Society goes far beyond mere time – it shapes lives, nurtures hope, and creates a lasting impact with the children and families we serve. A shout out our volunteers, the dedicated people who give selflessly of themselves and their talents. We would not be able to do all the great work we do without all our amazing volunteers. A special thanks to the many volunteers who supported us with our move into our new Child and Family Centre. As you reflect on the moments you have contributed, we hope you feel a sense of pride for all that you’ve helped us accomplish.

“I started volunteering in the Crisis Nursery in 2022. I do this because I love playing with the children and seeing their faces light up when they’re having fun. I also enjoy cuddling the little ones. I just want to make these children happy for the hours I’m there. I remember one little boy about 4 years old, he taught me and the staff how to do the Michael Jackson moon walk. That made my day. This is why I volunteer.”

In 2023-24 we received support from 1076 Volunteers, including individuals and groups, who contributed more than **14,479 hours**, which is equivalent to **\$343,144** in financial value. Thank you!

Did you know that we had 210 volunteers contribute over 800 hours to help us get through the busy holiday season?

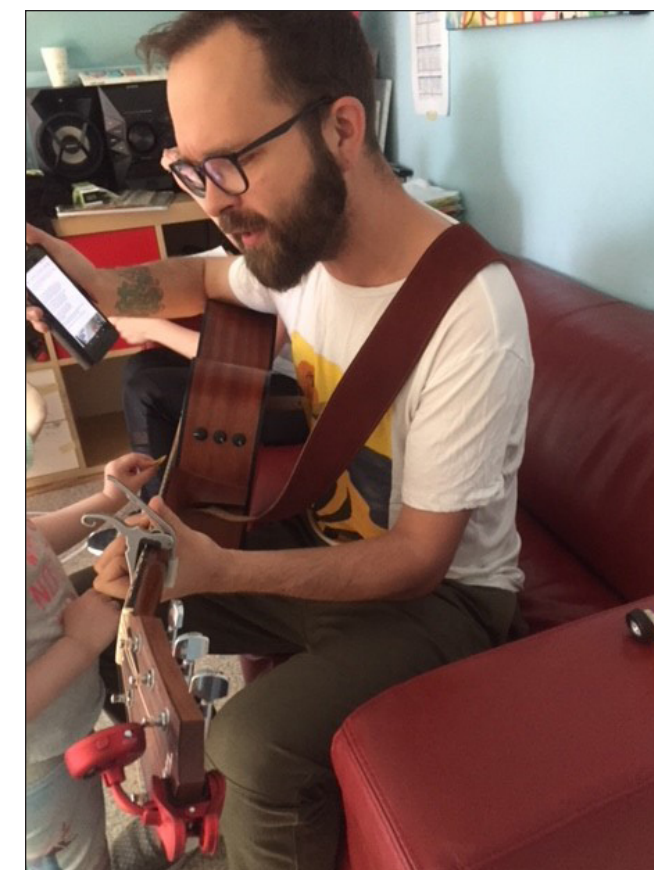


Students Play an Important Part in our Success

The Crisis Nursery, Family Coaching, and the Family Resource Network benefited from the involvement of practicum students from the faculties of Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Early Childhood Education, and Child and Youth Care from the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge College, Mount Royal University, Ambrosia University, University of Calgary, and University of Alberta.

As these students learn from us, we also learn from them! They support our staff in caring for children and help support the parents and caregivers. Our practicum students also assist staff with program planning and facilitation, support on-site activities with families and children, and help with client intake and referral processes. And we have even hired some students on completion of their tenure with us.

Plus, we work with several of the University of Calgary’s volunteer groups, including Music Box, a weekly program teaching young children the basics of music, the UofC Club who facilitates various craft and baking sessions with children at the FRN, and the Home Food Group who provide cooking sessions with families via Zoom, teaching children basic cooking skills and nutrition.





A Quilt of Collaboration and Partnership

As a part of a vibrant sector in Calgary, Children's Cottage Society is supported by, and works with many partners and collaborators. This work both supplements and enhances the programming we are able to offer our clients in their times of need. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with these agencies, to learn and grow in what they offer, and ultimately to help make an even larger impact on the lives of our clients.

Support from our Community Groups and Businesses

We are proud to have a community that chooses to support our agency and mission by engaging their members and employees in fundraising initiatives. Over the year we have had many organizations returning to support us, and many new ones joining. All funds raised, go towards our ongoing programs and projects, as well as towards our new Child and Family Centre.

It was great to see Lexus of Calgary select us as their charity of choice at their golf tournament, along with AECON and Pete The Plumber, to name a few. A variety of Rotary Clubs supported us with everything from furnishing our new sensory room, to providing new mattresses for Brenda's House. The Alberta Ballet hosted a toy drive for us during The Nutcracker, and the children loved seeing the Grinch visit with truckloads of toys from the trio of Uniquenergy Solutions, Baytex Energy, and Saturn Oil + Gas Inc. Thank you from the bottom of our heart to this wonderful community of supporters who contributed or held a fundraiser in 2023-24:

Accredited Condominium Management Services (ACMS)
 AECON Golf Tournament
 Alberta Ballet
 BigYellowBag
 Baytex Energy Corp
 Calgary Stampede Rotary
 Calgary Sport and Entertainment Corporation
 Delta Hotels
 Donate-A-Car Canada
 Kimmet Cup
 Royal LePage Shelter Foundation
 Lexus of Calgary
 Lowe's Home Heroes

MacQuarie Group Brew-Off
 Pete The Plumber
 Peters & Co Limited
 Rainbow Pony Clothing
 ScotiaBank Calgary Marathon
 Shaw Birdies for Kids
 SkiptheDepot
 St. Pius School
 Saturn Oil + Gas Inc.
 TruEarth
 Webber Academy
 Wee Wild Ones
 Uniquenergy Solutions

Alberta Health Services
 Alberta Home Visitation Network Association
 Calgary Food Bank
 Bridgeland Day Care
 Made by Momma
 Children's Place Day Care
 UV-Natoo'si
 WINS
 Sproutz Spinz Grocery Program
 Autism Calgary
 Calgary Reads
 Magic of Christmas
 Miskanawah
 CUPS
 Stoney Nakoda Reserve
 Kids Hotel
 Twins & Triplets
 Awo Taan
 Discovery House
 Bridgeland Community Centre
 Calgary Counselling Centre
 United Way
 Trellis
 Wood's Homes
 LUNA
 Hull Family Services
 United Way
 Momentum
 The Mustard Seed
 Community Kitchen
 Calgary Board of Education
 Kindred Connections Society

Calgary Housing Corporation Distress Centre
 Renfrew
 Legal Aid
 ICan4Kids Food Program
 Little Red Reading House
 Enviros
 Worth Resolving
 McMann Family Services
 Okotoks (FCSS)
 Cochrane FRN
 Okotoks FRN
 Child Advocacy
 ALIGN - Association of Community Services
 Assure
 Calgary Immigrant Women Association
 Wild Rose Community Connections
 Shaganappi Health Centre
 Town of Cochrane
 The Alex
 Enough for ALL
 NorthWest Community Health Centre
 Cochrane Pregnancy Care Centre
 Cochrane BGC
 Families Matter
 Big Brothers Big Sisters
 North Hill Community Health Centre
 Elbow River Healing Lodge
 Centre for Newcomers
 Wheels for Kids
 Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
 City of Calgary (Fare & Train)
 I belong backpacks

As an agency, our collaborations and partnerships extend our reach into the community and provide families with better access to a wide range of supports.

Our Commitment to Reconciliation

Approximately 40% of the children and families we serve identify as Indigenous. Our goal to build resilient children in healthy families includes forging meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.

One such example is a reconciliation-themed collaboration between our Family Coaching program and Stoney Health Services at the Stoney Nakoda Nation in Morley. Together we developed and implemented a customized Family Coaching program to meet the unique needs of Indigenous families in the Morley community. The Children's Cottage Family Coaching program also supported Stoney Health Services' own home visitation program by providing information on parenting support and healthy child development.

In exchange, our staff received guidance and learning opportunities to better understand and support the Indigenous children and families we serve in our urban programs.



The onsite work helped build cultural competencies that we have adopted and continue applying to provide more robust support to Indigenous children and families. The program is funded through the United Way Calgary and Area's Natoo'si Indigenous Healing and Well-being Initiative, making it more sustainable over the long-term.



Communication Strengthens the Fabric of our Work

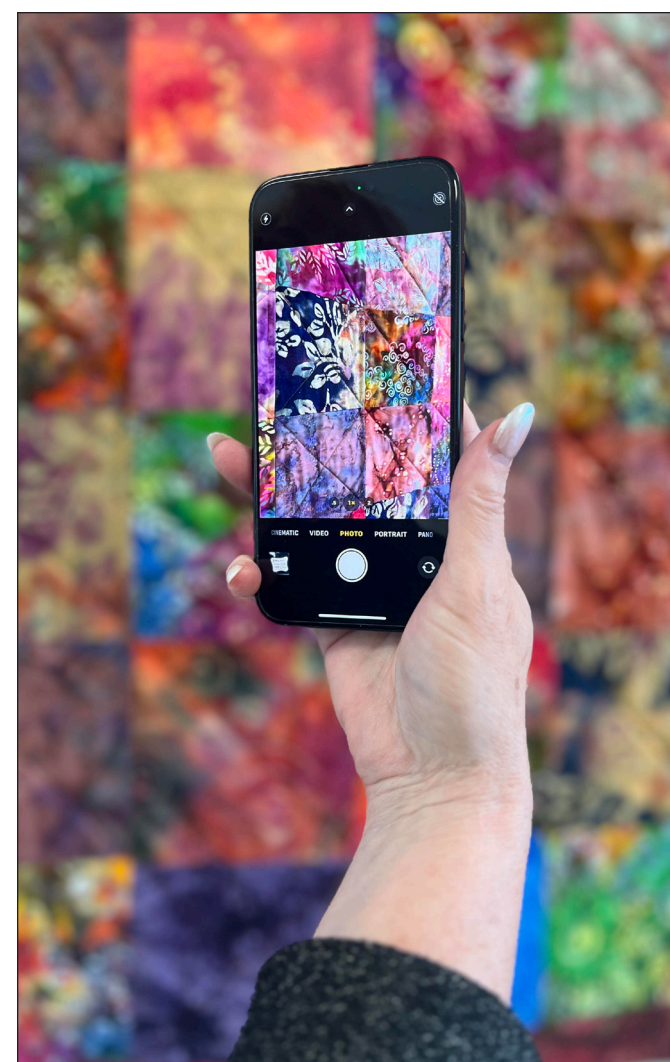
Our mission in communications is to inspire our community to get involved and support everything the Cottage is doing! We're working to share stories, collaborations and connections so families can access resources, and connecting with our community, so they can further support our work.

We've had so many new things happening in our organization and our social media accounts are the place to go to see what we've been up to – follow along with us:





And subscribe to our new online newsletter, the Cottage Buzz. Plus check out our brand-new website!



#noplacelikehomeroad #thankyou #childrenscottageyyc #CommunityHeroes #childrenscottageyyc #noplacelikehome



Followers

-  Instagram: 2,706
-  Facebook: 4,055
-  LinkedIn: 1,531
-  X: 2,216

In the tapestry of life,
we're all connected.
Each one of us is a gift
to those around us
helping each other be
who we are, weaving a
perfect picture together.

– Anita Moorjani



Our Program Locations

Crisis Nursery & Nurturing Newborns

Child & Family Centre
1804 Home Road NW
Calgary, AB T3B 1H1
P: 403-233-CARE (2273) (24/7 Crisis Line)

Brenda's House Family Shelter & Housing Programs

1921 28 Street SW
Calgary, AB T3E 2H1
P: 403-242-8575

Calgary West Family Resource Network & Home Visitation

Child & Family Centre
1804 Home Road NW
Calgary, AB T3B 1H1
P: 403-830-3153

Administration Office

Child & Family Centre
1804 Home Road NW
Calgary, AB T3B 1H1
403-283-4200
admin@childrencottage.ab.ca



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