

 **DISABILITY SERVICES**

**FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

COMPLETED BY

GATEWAY ASSOCIATION

April 30, 2023- March 31, 2024

# Key Impacts

Gateway Association opened its doors to the Family Resource Center (FRC) on May 14, 2021. The FRC continues to see an exponential impact on the community over the past 36 months. As found in the report below, the FRC has been celebrated by families, caregivers, individuals living with disabilities, professionals and disability service caseworker(s). The FRC instills a methodology of Enhancing knowledge through learning opportunities, Implementing knowledge through planning supports and Mentorship and Ongoing support through system navigation and community building. This holds the values of Gateway Association and allows a framework that empowers individuals and families alike. The FRC offers direct support to families across the lifespan and regardless of diagnosis or disability. The FRC proudly provides services with a pan disability lens.

To ensure continued success of the FRC, program evaluation processes are established and maintained to identify strengths, client satisfaction, measure deliverables and monitor feedback. Some key findings have resulted from this process which provide us with the opportunity to continually evolve and improve our deliverables.

The FRC sees direct impact that we have on families. We hear (formally and anecdotally) from the community that Gateway’s FRC increases the capacity of families and FMS administrators accessing FSCD and PDD; increases caregiver capacity and builds access to natural supports for children, youth, adults and their families. We continue to enhance involvement of community and civil society organizations to create opportunities to maximize the inclusion and independence of children, youth, adults; promote individual and family leadership, mentoring, peer to peer support; utilize innovative approaches and support strategies to promote inclusive lives for children, youth and adults living with disabilities.

Gateway Association has offices on both Treaty 6 and Treaty 7territories. Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton; on Treaty 6), Home of the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Tsuu T'ina & Dene and Mohkinstsis (Calgary; on Treaty 7). Recognizing the land on which we live and work is a starting point in understanding and respecting the Indigenous communities that have been here for centuries. Reconciliation, to our organization, means prioritizing critical thinking about intersectionality and equity throughout all our work; continuous un-learning of oppressive thoughts/ideas/beliefs/actions; listening to (and believing) Indigenous peoples and their communities about their experiences; and making space for equity-seeking groups (of all kinds) to determine what is best for them.

**Hello my name is Sahana Parameswara, a Dravidan queer woman and settler in** [**Amiskwaciy-wâskahikan**](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=cbcfc1ccda94e8caJmltdHM9MTY4MTk0ODgwMCZpZ3VpZD0yNWQ5ZDYxNS1kOWMxLTY1M2YtMjhiNS1jNDg5ZGRjMTZiNWYmaW5zaWQ9NTE5OQ&ptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=25d9d615-d9c1-653f-28b5-c489ddc16b5f&psq=amiskawacis+waskahigan&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZWFsdC5jYS9pbmRpZ2Vub3VzLWNvbm5lY3Rpb25zLWJsb2ctbGlzdC9hbWlza3dhY2l5LXdza2FoaWthbi1lZG1vbnRvbi1oaXN0b3J5&ntb=1)**. Reconciliation and land back are my guiding principles.**

**I, Betty (she/her) am a white settler, second generation Canadian. I was born and grew up on the land of the Mohawks in Kanien’kéha, and currently live on Treaty 6 land on Amiskwaseewaskigun, the land of Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Blackfoot and the Métis Peoples. I acknowledge the seen and unseen privileges that have been afforded me, including use of the land, the educations system, the health care system and the employment opportunities.**

**I, Yonique Ritch (she, her) I identify as a racialized Black Canadian woman. I am honored to live, work and play on Treaty 6 Territory – Amiskwacîwâskahikan - home of the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene, and Nakota Sioux. I would like to continue to expand my knowledge on how I can support equity seeking groups in the community through my professional and personal life.**

**I, Miriam Ading (she/her) am a proud black Kenyan woman residing in the Treaty 6 region - Amiskwacîwâskahikan**, **a traditional meeting ground and home for many Indigenous peoples, including the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, and Nakota Sioux. I stand committed to respectfully acknowledging their history and presence on this land. Embracing a journey of ongoing learning and unlearning, I am dedicated to the vital work of reconciliation and the forging of pathways that honour the spirit of kinship and mutual respect.**

**I, Stacy (she/her) identify as a third generation German Canadian, racialized white settler. I was born on the beautiful land of Treaty 4 within the traditional territory of the Metis. I had the gift of growing up, living and experiencing Treaty 8 Territory; the ancestral and traditional territory of the Cree, Dene, as well as the Métis and Treaty 6; within the Métis homelands and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. I currently continue to reside on Amiskwacîwâskahikan and acknowledge the many privileges afforded to me and I continue in my journey in learning and unlearning of inequities.**

**I, Li (she/her), am an Asian by birth, raised in Germany, and for the past six years, I have proudly called Canada home, becoming a first-generation Canadian. I have embraced the land I reside on, which originally belonged to the Mohawk people in Kanien’kéha, and currently reside on Treaty 6 territory, known as Amiskwacîwâskahikan, home to the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Blackfoot, and Métis Peoples. My cultural journey has instilled in me a deep sense of pride in my heritage. Through engaging with and respecting diverse cultures, I have come to prioritize diversity, inclusivity, and equitability. As a member of a multicultural society, I cherish traditions while championing for inclusivity and equitability, aiming to cultivate a community where diversity is celebrated, and every individual feels valued and included.**

**I, Jacqueline, was raised as a white settler, both 16th and 1st generation Canadian. I was born and grew up in Fort McMurray, originally called Nistawâyâw, located on Treaty 8 territory, home of the Cree and Chipewan bands. I am the descendant of the Munsee Delaware tribe, also known as Lenni Lenape. Currently, I live, work, play, and raise my family on Treaty 6, Amiskwacî Wâskykan, territory of the Papaschase and homeland of the Métis, Region 4. I recognise the privilege I have had growing up as a white settler and while I acknowledge the land on which I reside rightfully belonging to those people who came before us, I am committed to doing the work of healing and DECOLONIZING by being a partner/ally, standing and speaking up, modeling this to my children, and by learning as much about my own ancestry as I can.**

**I, Fiona Wilson (she/her), am a white settler and a first-generation Kiwi-Canadian. I currently live in Treaty 6 territory in Amiskwaciwaskahikan (colonially known as Edmonton). The ancestral territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, Nakota and Metis homeland and Metis Nation of Alberta Region 4. I benefit from unearned privileges including the use of traditional land. I am grateful to all the Indigenous peoples, who presently live on this land, those who have spent time here, and like their ancestor’s hunt, gather and protect the land known as Turtle Island.**

**I, Shelley, am a white settler, 4th generation Canadian. I was born in and have always resided in Treaty 6 territory, Amiskwacîwâskahikan, the land of Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Blackfoot and the Métis Peoples. I have become aware of the privileges I am afforded as a white woman and am committed to educating myself about indigenous people’s experience by listening to and reading about their history and ongoing issues. I am working to support indigenous people in a way that is respectful and meaningful to them; challenging inequality wherever it exists.**

* Formal Program Evaluation Process is in place to track and collect data after **every** workshop, after **every** Individual Support Plan (ISP), and there is an Informal Process to gather anecdotal feedback on general inquiries and within the community.
* The FRC facilitated a variety of workshops; a total of **50** were offered during the reporting year.
* Once again, we are thrilled to report there was a satisfaction rate of **95%** (94.7%; last report 2022/23; 94.1%; 2021/22; 94.6%) of respondents that indicated satisfied to very satisfied with the workshop they attended.
* A growing increase over the years, the vast majority of respondents (**95.5%;** last report 2022/23; 94%; 2021/22; 92.3%) indicated they would recommend the workshop they attended to others.
* A significant number of the respondents indicated that they plan on attending other workshops that the FRC hosts and all but one of the respondents indicated that they feel confident implementing strategies learned in the workshop (**99%;** last report 2022/23; 96.5%; 2021/22; 98.9%).
* Nearly all families **(85.1%;** last report; 89.5%)also report that they have increased their confidence in navigating community resources, have increased ability to enhance inclusion strategies **(91.2%;** last report; 89.7%), and feel they can apply knowledge learned from our FRC for planning for their family member **(96.5%;** last report; 94.8%). This is a significant direct impact on Albertan families which speak to building families voices; their capacity and confidence and ability to help navigate the system(s).
* Families continue to report that they felt supported by their learning at the FRC workshops **(94.7%;** last report; 97.5%) and that their voice was heard **(92.1%;** last report; 92.1%).These are integrals components of families ability to build their capacity, their connections and their confidence in helping their loved ones.
* There were **14** community presentations for resource fairs and various community organizations.
* The RDSP coordinators expanded their work tremendously by completing **540** (last report year; 170) family support calls. Their significant impact can be summarized by the following family’s story:

“The stars aligned for an expert at Gateway and me to connect, and our bonding was instantly established over shared feelings, emotions, and experiences we’ve faced through our children. A mutual immediate complete understanding was present, without words needing to explain anything else further. This instant non-judgemental and empathetic comprehension was incredibly meaningful to me, especially as a single mom navigating life with a to-be-diagnosed child with exceptional needs at the time. I was not alone!

I was invited to a community event by Gateway, which opened the door for me to meet other families with children with exceptional needs and professionals who encouraged me to connect further with their various experts based on my specific circumstances. Engaging with experts at Gateway enlightened me about the support available to families living with disabilities and the options for my family. Their specialized in-depth guidance was instrumental in successfully navigating the application for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), setting up necessary supports through the Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) program, and securing accommodations at work for me, among other invaluable support.

The support offered by the Gateway Association has been beyond anything I could have imagined. Knowing there's a community of specialized professionals who genuinely understand and empathize with the challenges of living with disabilities gives me immense peace of mind. I am deeply thankful for the confidence and empowerment I've gained to face future challenges, and I know I can rely on their invaluable support and guidance if needed.

Warmly, Mom of a four-year-old child with exceptional needs”

* Program impact is shown not only quantitatively above; however also from numerous qualitative comments; feedback and anecdotally. Families have felt heard. They have felt seen. They feel supported. They no longer feel alone. They are appreciative of the growth they experienced personally after taking a workshop, the internal self reflection and growth they experienced and are able to apply to the individual they support. “….this workshop was something I didn’t realize I wanted to hear about. I really appreciate the thought that went into this by families that have been through it before me. I will look for other workshops being offered in the future.”.
* Other qualitative comments included families gratitude and appreciation. Specifically, the impact that the FRC team provided in their families journey. In addition to the above comments, there were dozens of qualitative comments on the impact that Gateway had with families across the lifespan. Here are a few examples:
	+ “Thank you to ….all gateway staff. You are very appreciated.”
	+ “This workshop is one of the most informative and thought provoking I have ever been to, I was happy to have attended it.”
	+ “This was a fantastic workshop. It was informative but also comfortable. It is not often I join a workshop and feel like disclosing my situation and thoughts but [Gateway staff] was kind and made it very easy.”
	+ “….Just wanted to say THANK YOU so very much for your kindness yesterday. I so appreciated you being available to speak with me…………..Thank you for the information regarding….. This is exactly what our family needs as we plan and look  forward to [individual’s] future….Thank you again for your kindness and all you are doing to support [individual] and our family. It was a pleasure meeting you.…….Thank you again so very much.”
	+ “[Gateway individual staff] is very near and dear to my heart. This is where it all started with Gateway was with [Individual] and now it is a big part of our lives. [Individual] (& Gateway) have made such a difference to us in helping our child and our family. It all started here. We'll forever be grateful. Thank you.”
	+ “……I want to thank you for the very informative workshop you moderated/led online last night.  I am thankful for the work the Gateway Association does to assist families and individuals with disabilities. Thank you again….”
	+ . . . . I guess it’s an opportune time to thank you for being such a great support to me,  especially during the most difficult family crisis that we had last year. I’m teary-eyed right now recalling that time, wondering if we’d be able to get through that alive, but we triumphed and you held me through. I am forever grateful for your time, patience and friendship. You are such an angel. Please know that my family and I are grateful for all that you’ve done and will continue to do….”
	+ “….As the year comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation for the incredible work you do. Your dedication to helping others and making a positive impact in the lives of those in need is truly inspiring.
	+ “We came to this workshop because we heard you speak at a lunch n learn at [another organization] and we were impressed with the insightful contributions you made so we looked up Gateway and found this workshop!”
	+ “Thank you so much; there was so much useful information and I’m so glad Gateway exists and is around for us.”
	+ “Dear [Gateway staff],…..A million thanks for all the incredible help that you have given us!...... A million thanks to you from us for guiding us in this crucial process….”
* The FRC yielded over **729** (last report year; 574)inquiries over the past year (an incredible increase from the past year). Inquiries came through social media (PDD/FSCD Facebook group, Gateway to Living Supports Facebook Group, Gateway Association Facebook Page, Instagram), our website.
* The FRC continued to collaborate with many organizations, partners and community members throughout the year.

|  |
| --- |
| **Partnerships & Collaborations** |
| Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital | Edmonton Food Bank | Children’s Link | Ethiopian and Eritrean (Autism Parent Group) | Edmonton Region Candora Society |
| GRIT (Getty Ready for Inclusion Today) | Stollery Children’s Hospital | Regional Provincial Advisory Committee (RPAC) | Autism Alberta FRC | Childrens Autism Collab Team (CACT); Under 18 Interagency HUB |
| Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA) | Medically Complex Fragility Inclusive Support Parent Working Group  | Canadian Mental Health Association | CHIMO Youth Retreat Center | Connecting CommUnity (Red Deer) |
| Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB) | St. Albert Mental Health Youth HUB | Edmonton Public Library | CASA Mental Health | IG Wealth Management |
| Africa Center | Centre for Autism Services | Bissell Centre | Cohesive Communities (Parkland County; Tri Region) | ASSIST Community Services |
| Alberta Center for Sexuality | Society for Autism Support & Services | Cerebral Palsy Alberta | Under 18 Interagency HUB | Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers |
| Family Futures Family and Community Support Services Fort Saskatchewan | Ron Burrows Accounting | Good will Industries of Alberta | Jasper Place FRC | Two Pillars Financial Solutions Inc |
| MultilingualAbilities | Prosper Place-CMHA Edmonton Region | Parkland & West Family Resource Network | Voices of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) | Speech Matters |
| Self Advocacy Federation (SAF) | Slinntax | Skills Society | IG Wealth Management Sheldon Pickering (Financial Advisor) |  |

* GRIT and the FRC collaborated once again for a successful visioning and planning full day with GRIT families and alumni. Families were appreciative and grateful for this day of capacity and connection building. All families indicated they were satisfied (100%) and would recommend this to other families (100%). There was a request from one family that had attended two years in a row; “Please keep doing visioning workshops. I think there is a lot of value in visioning and it is good to reconsider visions regularly. I’ll be back.”.
* FRC staff also held **7** (last report year; 12) Understanding Disability sessions over the year both at Gateway Association, ASSIST Community Services and Caregivers Alberta. The satisfaction rate for these sessions was nearly **96.2%** (last report year; 94.5%) with **96.2%** (last report year; 89%) of the respondents indicating they plan on attending future Gateway Association workshops and **100%** (last report year; 89%) recommending these sessions to others. Participants continued to express their gratitude for these sessions as well as some topics they’d like to see in the future; “As every workshop I had attended there was a very rich information about resources and how to access it. Thank you.”; “Super informative…..”.
* **23** Families Forward (FF) meetings and events were held and brought various families together monthly across the lifespan (FF under 18 years; FF over 18 years; FF Financial Resources). There was also a summer picnic including 60 individuals and families as well as a Christmas dinner with 75 individuals and families.
* External workshops were customized and held at organizations such as GRIT, ASSIST Community Services and Caregivers Alberta.
* In the Fall of 2023, a new event called “Empower” was developed to meet the needs of families in a condensed 1 or 2 day in person setting held at Gateway. It was developed to equip families with tools for a future that exceeds expectations and enriches lives specifically for families with children with disabilities ages 15-18. Empower was a success in the Fall of 2023 and offered again in March 2024. Both events provided the ability for families to come together and for the FRC to meet families where they were at and complete an ISP with them simultaneously. It also provided the opportunity for families to meet other families and connect over similar life transitions, challenges and celebrations with their families. It equipped families with tools to build a plan that reflected family members dreams, strengths and their future.
* The FRC began asking families during workshops and presentations what was the most common language their family chose to speak at home. The majority of participants/families indicated English, however, many families indicated a variety of other languages: Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Tagalog, Amharic, ASL, Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, French, Filipino and Cantonese. This speaks to the necessity for a diverse team as well as a diversity in what is offered by Gateway Association and how it is offered. Funding for interpreters, translators and cultural brokers are necessary and non negotiable to ensure that Gateway is not only providing supports to families but is also impacting capacity of organizations that serve diverse families.
* The FRC also asked workshop participants if there was anything that the FRC could have done to help them feel more comfortable and included with respect to race, disability, culture, gender, religion, age and/or sexual orientation. Respondents that chose to answer this question mainly included that they felt welcomed, understood and comfortable. Overall, there were an array of comments including “everything was perfectly inclusive” to “accommodations made were helpful and appreciated” to “it was very welcoming and inclusive” to “I felt understood and comfortable” to specific requests and suggestions on material/information/resources.
* Continuing with Gateway Association’s strategic planning moving forward with AROC, there was continued growth in 2023. A new role was developed for a Family Support, Anti-Racism and Equity Strategist.
* In 2023, Gateway Association's journey through Anti-Racism Organizational Change (AROC) has taken strides of significant growth and strengthened commitment, especially within the Family Resource Centre programs. Our strategy has been marked by integrating anti-racism and equity principles underpinned by the Cultural Humility framework. Through dynamic weekly discussions, the team has not only engaged with these principles intellectually but continues to put them into action, fostering profound collaboration with families and community organizations.
* Our continued collaborations with community organizations such as Multicultural Health Brokers, Metis Nation of Alberta, ASSIST Community Services Centre, Multilingual Abilities, and Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers have been pivotal. These alliances have broadened our understanding, enabling us to customize our services to meet the nuanced needs of our community and build enduring inclusive support networks.
* We have witnessed substantial development in several key areas:
* **Enhanced Capacity Building:**Our investment in developing a shared language and understanding has cultivated a team that is not only increasingly informed but also united in its resolve to meet the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities.
* **Amplifying Equity-Seeking Voices:** By bringing the voices of those impacted by intersectionalities such as race, sexuality, and disability (among other identities) to the forefront, we ensure that our initiatives are not only responsive but also driven by the lived experiences and expertise of those we serve.
* **Transformative Power Dynamics:** We're committed to examining and adjusting the power structures within our team and community engagements, striving to provide equitable access to resources and support for all community members.
* As we move forward, these critical areas of growth will not only guide our ongoing AROC work but also reflect our resolve to serve with intentionality, inclusivity, and respect for every individual’s journey.
* In addition to organizations, the FRC team collaborates with various professionals and professional bodies and schools across the regions.
* In response to our continued collaborative efforts with ERAPs (now known as RAPs), RAPs did not seem available or willing to collaborate. Perhaps due to the changed scope of service that is now being offered.
* In the past report year, we had a dedicated position within the FRC that was strictly taking family support inquiries. Therefore, our monthly reporting process captured a more accurate measure of those requiring support for Housing; Staffing; Guardianship and Trusteeship. In total we captured **120** inquiries regardingBrokering; Housing; Staffing were supported (last report year; 20 families). We indirectly supported **116** (last report year; 40)families with the Guardianship/Trusteeship application process.
* We also substantially increased our ISP deliverables. In the past year, over **76** ISPs (last report year; 49) were done for over 18 years old, and **72** ISPs (last report 50) were done with under 18 years old as well as **9** (last report year; 8)FMS ISP renewals were completed.
* We continued to survey families and gather information from them regarding their ISP experience. Families indicated that they found the process of the preparation for the ISP helpful with respect to their introduction to Gateway, the questionnaire the family is asked to complete, the follow up call and intake call along with setting up the meeting, the accessibility specifics and having the ability to ask questions ahead of the meeting.
* Families indicated that the ISP meeting itself (along with the goal setting) reinforced what they wanted as a family, offered new ideas and was very helpful as they were not thinking this way. As a few families stated, they came away with “new ideas on what to do and how to progress.”; “Everything at the meeting was elaborate and helpful” and “[it] guided me with getting in touch with PDD personnel.”.
* When families were asked if they felt they received adequate support from the FRC team member with their ISP, most respondents (**86.4%** last report year 79%; 2021/22; 92%) indicated they agreed to strongly agreed with this statement.
* When families were asked to provide qualitative feedback with how the ISP will help their family going forward, families indicated how the ISP will help them. Some specific examples include:
	+ “It opened up ideas for the future.”
	+ “Its helping us figure out what we need in the future for….”
	+ “It will help as a guide in achieving my sons goals.”
	+ “It will help….grow and become more self sufficient.”
	+ “It gives us structure to work with so we can communicate well with PDD….”
	+ “I think it just helped put on paper different goals and awareness of resources that were presented as well.”
	+ “It gave is a foundation to work on going forward.”
	+ “It will help to articulate a vision to staff.”
* Consistently, most respondents (**95.2%;** last report year 78.6%; 2021/22; 92%) also indicated that they were satisfied to very satisfied with the overall ISP experience.

In closing, the impact of the FRC can be summarized by words from a family member that commented*:* “….Gateway is an extremely important addition to this difficult [adulthood] transition…” and another family simply stated“[gateway resources] gave us valuable information and addressed us to another person who helped us with other subjects. We as a family are grateful to the Gateway team.”

The ultimate goal of our Family Resource Centre is to enhance each family’s expertise on their own children and provide concrete resources that can ease the journey as the family navigates the next steps. Our FRC team is made up of families, neurodiverse individuals, and multiple ethnicities that have varied experiences. The team partners with various organizations to continually increase our diversity of thought and capacity to work with all families.