

# 2021/22

## ANNUAL REPORT



IF WE CHANGE  
THE BEGINNING  
OF THE STORY,  
WE CHANGE THE  
WHOLE STORY.

RAFFI



Learn without limits



ANNIVERSARY

# Dear GRIT Friends,

GRIT is recognized across Canada for its ever-developing frameworks that incorporate best practices, ground-breaking research, and lessons from experience. As we celebrate 40 years of service, growth, and respect, this Annual Report showcases GRIT's impact on hundreds of families. It is the experiences of these families, and the hope that GRIT brings to them—as shown in our [“Stories of Impact” videos](#) highlighting the family journeys of Peter, Holly and Charlie, Vienna, and Kyle —that grounds and inspires our work.

Over the past year, the 2021-22 Board of Directors has worked hard to develop effective and vision-focused governance to match GRIT's outstanding operational reputation. We welcomed two new members as well as two student leaders from the University of Alberta School of Business with interests in non-profit governance, and together we tackled an ambitious agenda. A few highlights:

- Invited GRIT Experience Speakers to open Board meetings to deepen board members' knowledge of GRIT
- Implemented Board Committees and associated Terms of Reference (Governance, CEO Evaluation, Nomination and Finance and Audit) with defined objectives

- Embraced a Board Calendar, use of consent agendas, and in-camera sessions
- Completed a labour-intensive review of the GRIT Bylaws
- Carried out an overdue external review of the Executive Director's Compensation and adopted a salary range structure
- Developed major organizational policies (e.g. GRIT Officers' Roles and Responsibilities, COVID Policy, Financial Policies and Procedures, Board Expectations of the CEO)

Beyond these efforts, we have continued to share our insights and experience to support the effective leadership of GRIT's newly titled Chief Executive Officer, Barb Reid. We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the senior staff in adapting to these wide-ranging governance reforms and participating in the creation of a Strategic Direction for GRIT.

With the Board of Directors poised and ready to expand GRIT's impact, reach, and reputation in 2022-23, I extend my sincere appreciation to my fellow board members for their support during a very productive year.

Karen Lynch  
CHAIR, GRIT



# Vision

Communities embrace diversity and uphold the value and rights of all children and their families.

# Mission

To build on the skills, knowledge, and confidence of families and educators to ensure that children are supported in inclusive settings and meaningfully participate in everyday routines.

# Values

GRIT embodies these values in all aspects of our organization:

## ► Family Centered Practice

Parents hold a central role in decision making and choices for the well-being of their child and family. Parents actively participate, learn and gain confidence to positively influence their children's future.

## ► Inclusion

The belief that "we all belong". All children have the right to participate in every day places where children play and learn. When children are included, they are active and valued participants in life.

## ► Learning Through Play & Everyday Routines

Play nourishes development and forms a strong foundation for learning. Through play, children make sense of their world, expand their imagination, gain independence and develop friendships.

## ► Learning Community

Passionate people are our most valued asset. Together, we learn, seek knowledge, and discover innovative practices for our work.



# 2021/22 OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## 1 Engage families as active participants and decision makers in their child's well-being and learning

DIRECTION

Being thoughtful and strategic, GRIT continues to put families first as we move towards implementation of the evidence-based Primary Service Provider (PSP) approach to collaborative teaming. This past year our education teams were restructured and staff began to apply the PSP practices. While families continue to have access to all team members, they participated in a selection process to identify one "primary" lead who will build a closer relationship to understand and support individual family priorities.

The PSP approach came to life when GRIT hosted experts M'Lisa Shelden PT, PhD. and Dathan Rush, Ed. D., CCC-SLP at our 2022 conference. Close to 200 participants from across the province explored how they can more effectively meet the learning needs of children and families by using

this model. Families report a stronger connection to the PSP model and knowing who their "go to" person is. In turn, staff report more focussed and intentional visits with families and community partners.

GRIT continues to be a valued partner in our provision of Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) services. Over the year, our professional teams focussed on efficiency and effectiveness of delivering FSCD services. With this, our team structure was changed with the aim to deliver all FSCD services with one team. We also extended our Specialized Services to families over a 12-month period and have been approved as a provider of Developmental Supports. All of these changes allow us to be more responsive to the needs of our families.

## Enhance the public awareness and sustainability of our organization



Given GRIT's success in rolling out Inclusive Childcare Program (ICC) within Alberta, GRIT received a national, Early Learning and Care Innovation grant in 2022, from the federal government. Connecting Canada will provide training to an organization in each province and territory to support their adoption of the evidence-based Pyramid Model framework to support the quality of inclusive early learning environments. A national Advisory Committee has been established with members representing thought leaders from across the country to inform our project implementation.

A Communications Coordinator was added to our team. The coordinator will assist our organization in adopting strong and consistent key messages, in increasing our profile on social media platforms and in assisting in the recruitment of new partnerships across the country.

In addition, GRIT continues to actively build relationships with our funders, advocate for adequate resources for our services, and identify policy gaps that hinder positive pathways for children, families and early childhood educators along their learning journeys.



DIRECTION

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## Work with community partners to build a more inclusive province



In partnership with the U of A, our annual survey of childcare directors focussed on the impact of leadership development in the sector. Directors reported the strongest impacts were:

- an increase in educators' use of social and emotional resources,
- the positive changes to the quality of the early learning environment, and
- an increased commitment to develop an inclusive policy – a big step forward towards quality inclusive early learning and care.

In spring 2022, the new Inclusive Childcare Program (ICC) launched across Alberta. ICC is grounded on the strong framework of the Pyramid Model and the success of ASaP (Access, Supports and Participation). GRIT provides ICC supports to the City of Edmonton and west-central region of the province. In sharing knowledge, GRIT provided onsite coaching and lunch n' learn series to about 200 programs. GRIT also led the development of an ICC web-based resource bank of inclusive resources.

## Our 40th Anniversary - It's time to celebrate!

GRIT was launched in 1982 around a kitchen table by five tenacious mothers of children with developmental disabilities with a BIG vision. In creating GRIT, they established an early childhood service model that reflected their family values, their hopes and dreams for their child, and that provided opportunities for children to learn in everyday places and routines just as their siblings had. After 40 years, GRIT is still doing just that!

As a learning organization, GRIT continues to adopt and apply evidence-based research to guide our work, and uses data and lessons learned to make the changes needed to remain a vibrant organization that is responsive to family and community needs.

Since the 2012 launch of ASaP (Access, Supports and Participation), GRIT has responded to an urgent need in the Early Learning and Care sector. Our team is working to strengthen the skills and confidence of early childhood educators to

implement the evidence-based, inclusive Pyramid Model.

This framework is grounded in inclusive practices to build the social and emotional development of children. This work is foundational in shifting the landscape to create high-quality, inclusive early learning and childcare.

Over the past 40 years GRIT has seen immense growth from serving the Edmonton region, to provincial and now nationally with Connecting Canada. We are proud to extend our influence to better support the meaningful participation of more children with diverse learning needs through inclusive practices and policy.

To add to our celebration, we captured *Stories of Impact* of four alumni families across the lifespan to hear first hand how their journey was shaped by their early years, supported by GRIT. The stories are powerful and affirm our core values.



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# Our Impact

## CHILD

Children are active and valued participants in natural environments of home, community and school.

Children transition to inclusive education in their neighborhood school.

Children form positive and lasting relationships with family and peers.



## FAMILY

Parents gain knowledge for supporting their child's development.

Parents make choices and informed decisions for their child and family.

Parents have skills and confidence to articulate a vision, advocate and positively influence their future.



## COMMUNITY

Community settings welcome all children.

Parents are active leaders in local school districts and advocacy associations contributing insight and expertise.

All policies are welcoming, inclusive, and reflective of diversity.



# Financial Highlights

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 2022

## Revenue

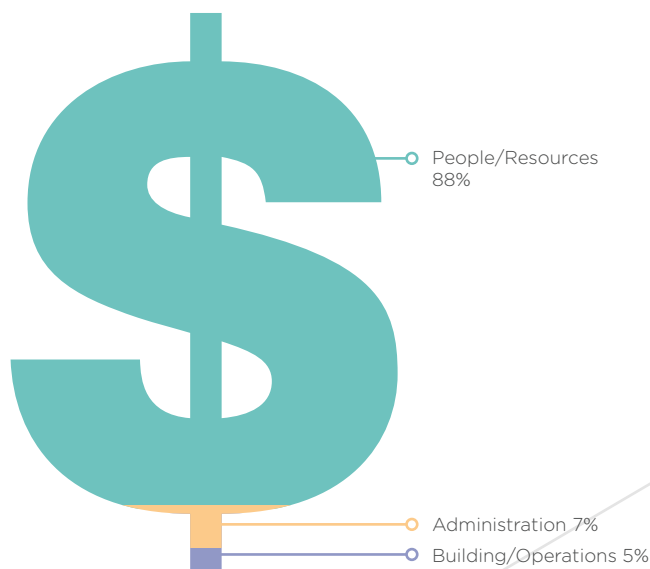
Early Childhood Services	\$3,247,385
ASaP/ICC	\$3,241,226
Specialized Services	\$106,588
Connecting Canada	\$169,021
Grants/Professional Services	\$33,608
Donations	\$74,574
Fundraising	\$28,246
Investment Income	\$61,032
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$6,961,680</b>

## Expenses

Wages (Service Delivery)	\$5,490,829
Resources/Materials/ Transportation	\$527,895
Administration	\$503,693
Building & Operations	\$344,105
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$6,866,522</b>

**NET SURPLUS FOR 2021/22** **\$95,158**

## Where do our dollars go?



## Our Major Supporters

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!





# Board of Directors



**Karen Lynch**  
PRESIDENT

Karen is a respected community and civic leader. Karen's forte is creating and nurturing networks of people. Graduating with a degree in Economics, she served in senior positions in communications before following her passion for community volunteerism and political engagement. In 2012, Karen received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her dedication to non-profit sector leadership.



**Roger Cable**  
PAST PRESIDENT

Roger is a decisive, yet fun-loving entrepreneur. He has built Veyron Projects into a growing enterprise serving the commercial construction and renovation market. The recent acquisition of Aquarian Renovations, a partnership with F45 Fitness, and his membership with Entrepreneurs' Organization ensures he keeps busy. Roger holds his integrity and spiritual values close to his heart. He has great respect for GRIT's vision and families and is generous in the ways he gives back to the community.



**Bernie Bolton**  
TREASURER & INTERIM  
VICE-PRESIDENT

Bernie Bolton is an accomplished leader with extensive experience working collaboratively with executives and Boards. She is a professional accountant (CPA) and internal auditor, with expertise in strategic planning, performance evaluation, risk management, and board policy. Bernie is thankful for the opportunity to play a part in positively impacting the lives of the children and families GRIT serves.



**Christina Radyo**  
RECORDING SECRETARY

Christina Radyo is a civil engineer at Urban Systems Ltd. She is pleased to be serving her third term on GRIT's board of directors as the board secretary. Christina enjoys volleyball, snowboarding, hiking, and music in her spare time.



**Jeff Bisanz**  
DIRECTOR

Jeff has had a long-term interest in the wellbeing of children and serves on the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, the Steering Committee for the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (CUP), and the Board of Directors of the Muttart Foundation. He is retired from the University of Alberta, where he served as a professor of developmental psychology.



**Andy Akle**  
DIRECTOR

Andy is and has always had the entrepreneurial spirit. Andy's current role is as a Certified Financial Planner with IG Wealth Management. Andy is married with three children, one of whom was a part of the GRIT program. Giving back to the community is a guiding principle that Andy leans on.



**Alycia Fritze**  
DIRECTOR

Alycia is a human capital management consultant at Accenture plc in Calgary. She was born and raised in Edmonton, attended the University of Alberta, and is passionate about the community-building work that GRIT accomplishes. Alycia loves hiking, cooking, and playing sports in her spare time.



**Sandy Hodgetts**  
DIRECTOR

Sandy is an associate professor, an occupational therapist, and director of the Supporting Kids Inclusion and Participation Lab in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Alberta. She has a long-term interest in the wellbeing and inclusion of children who experience disability and their families, including participation in their communities. Sandy has heard accolades of the GRIT program 'walking the talk' since moving to Edmonton in 2002 and is delighted to be engaged with the program as a board member. She enjoys playing games, skiing, and camping with her two daughters, traveling to new places, and you may spot her running in Edmonton's beautiful river valley.



**Barrett Westerlund**  
DIRECTOR

Barrett is the co-parent of a child with a developmental disability who accessed GRIT's support early in his life. Now 16 years old and in grade eleven, he's positively thriving at home, at school, and elsewhere in the community. Board leadership provides an opportunity to both celebrate Jake's belonging and support other families similarly realize their "best selves" unique to their life journey, for none are alone on this walk taken together.

ANNUAL REPORT DESIGNED BY: BROKEN ARROW SOLUTIONS INC.

## GRIT

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The GRIT Program

@theGRITprogram