

Annual Report



2023/2024

April 1st, 2023 - March 31st, 2024



*Helping families break free from
the cycle of abuse*

Grande Prairie Women's Residence Association



www.odysseyhouse.ca



780-538-1332



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Treaty 8 Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge Treaty 8 territory—the traditional and ancestral territory of the Cree and Dene. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Settlements and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Regions 1, 4, 5 and 6 within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.

Director's & Board President Statement

Each year we compile the Odyssey House Annual Report to reflect on and share the many incredible accomplishments we achieved the previous year. In 2023, our growth and impact were the result of our continued focus, collaboration and determination.

This fiscal year we embarked on a substantial childcare expansion, increasing affordable access to childcare from 12 spaces to 33. Our dedicated caring staff have managed through multiple programs in a condensed workspace, navigated grant expectations and construction sites, and still delivered a quality of care that kept children safe and thriving.

To support this year's work, we need a strong foundation—our employees must have the capacity and resources to serve the community in this incredibly complex and meaningful work. That's why we are investing in training to ensure our services are response-based and always trauma-informed. Our Board of Directors, staff, and management have invested in ensuring that our purpose and mission are clear and focused on ensuring our service delivery is safe, dignified, and client-centered.

The 2024/2025 fiscal year will focus on a shift to a response-based practice model and ensure that prevention is a complement to our well-established intervention-based services.

We all believe in our purpose and we are confident that we are on the right path to a community free from violence, but there is much more work to do. With your support, we know that our work is bringing us closer to a world that is safe, just, and equitable. On behalf of our Board, Executive Director, and staff, thank you for standing with those in need and empowering them.

Jenna Canavan
Board President

Lisa Watson
Executive Director

Board of Directors



Jenna Canavan
President



Amy Diaz
Vice President



Shawn Penney
Treasurer



Shanda Berns
Secretary



Jenny Weaver
Director



Jason Smith
Director

Raylene Browne
Director

Values & Purpose Statement

Values

Safety

Ensuring emotional and physical safety

Choice

Everyone has ability to influence their environment

Collaboration

Making decisions together and sharing power

Empowerment

Continuing to grow trust in self

Professionalism

Task clarity, consistency, and interpersonal relationships

Committed to trauma-informed practices.

Purpose Statement

WE SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE.

Through:

1. Safe secure living options and services.
2. Education and resources to end the cycle of abuse.
3. Targeted advocacy, collaboration, and guidance.



Organizational Health Pillars



The organizational pillars help Odyssey House balance strategy and actions and ultimately reflect the most critical aspects of our organization's ongoing health and sustainability. Our annual planning and intentional work throughout the organization encompass these pillars and the desired outcomes.

Emergency Shelter

Odyssey House supports a 42-bed private, secure, welcoming facility for women and children needing short-term emergency accommodation.

218 women

supported by the
emergency shelter
program

161 children

supported by the emergency
shelter program

2,287 calls

received on the crisis
line for support &
services.

The Emergency Shelter Offers:

- 14 bedrooms (42 beds)
- Staff specialized in crisis intervention and safety planning
- Free on-site laundry
- Hot meals and snacks
- Clothing
- Recreational and private spaces
- Support groups
- Respite Childcare and After School programs
- Accessible facility
- Pets welcome



Emergency Shelter Highlights



Positive Outcomes & Personal Goals Met

The shelter continues to see women achieve positive outcomes by setting personal goals, starting their healing journey, and building strong support networks, empowering them to stay engaged in their progress even after transitioning from the shelter.

Breaking Barriers Between Newcomers



Due to an increased number of women staying in shelter who are newcomers, our partnership with the Centre for Newcomers has increased. They have worked in collaboration with shelter Client Support Workers to assist women with achievement of goals, ESL classes, community connection and navigating form filling and processes related to immigration.



Forming Community-Based Partnerships

The shelter continues to utilize community-based partnerships with The Friendship Centre, Native Counselling, and Metis Housing. These agencies support Indigenous women to access services from an Indigenous perspective and minimize barriers. Friendship Centre, in particular, is a community partnership the shelter leans on frequently to achieve positive outcomes for women facing financial barriers to finding or maintaining housing, accessing culturally sensitive mental health services, and maintaining a connection to Indigenous roots and practices.

Serenity Place, Second Stage Shelter

8 women

12 children

supported by the second-stage shelter program

Freedom from violence is a long road. A few weeks in a shelter isn't enough to heal the scars of abuse or to lay a foundation for an independent life. With that in mind, we built a Transitional Supportive Second-Stage Shelter, Serenity Place, a new 14-unit apartment building to meet that more significant need. We offer 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom apartments with the help of our 'flex units.' Each apartment is fully furnished with all the necessities, from furniture, bedding, dishes, etc. Power, heat, and water are included in the rent, and pets are allowed. Rent is based on the Alberta Works Core Funding for Shelter or 30% of their income. We have two highly trained, caring support workers to assist with attaining personal goals and client support.



Second Stage Shelter Highlights



Fostering Growth and Independence



Serenity Place has successfully empowered its residents to transform their lives positively. Residents are voluntary participants, committed to individual development and improving their lives and children. Client support workers work closely with their residents to identify strengths and aspirations. All residents are now enrolled in workforce readiness programs or post-secondary education or have secured employment. The monthly community supper has dramatically influenced the program, strengthening the sense of community among residents. Residents actively support each other by providing childminding and mutual assistance, creating a supportive and caring environment. Residents have pride in their homes and diligently maintain their apartments and common areas of the building and grounds.



Partnerships

Odyssey House has partnered with Sagesse, a domestic violence prevention network based in Calgary. This partnership resulted in the revision of weekly support groups into a weekly workshop series with material provided by Sagesse.

Community Support & Outreach

317 people	24 people
<p>were supported by the community support program. (158 women, 8 men, 151 children)</p>	<p>living outside of Grande Prairie were supported by the community support program. (7 from Beaverlodge, 17 from Valleyview)</p>

Odyssey House is more than just a bed; accessing our services does not only mean accessing the emergency shelter program. Our Community Support Team provides 1:1 support to all, regardless of identified gender, background, or socioeconomic status, who have already left, need assistance navigating resources, or are still struggling with an unhealthy or abusive relationship. A Community Support worker can assist with danger assessments, safety planning, housing, court support, income support, and walks with individuals to achieve set goals and move forward in their healing journey. Support groups are also provided.

84 support groups	255 hours
<p>facilitated with 611 participants</p>	<p>of trauma counseling to 174 individuals</p>

Community Support & Outreach Highlights



Partnerships

Partnerships with Safe Psychology and Bear Creek Counseling now provide no-cost trauma counseling for clients, ensuring they receive the support needed to heal from complex trauma and improve outcomes. Additionally, Community Supports has teamed up with Sagesse, a domestic violence prevention network in Calgary, to transform weekly support groups into a workshop series using Sagesse's materials. A successful collaboration between Community Supports and the Family Education Society has also been developed, allowing for joint referrals.

Odyssey House offers Self-Esteem Groups and Presentations to Family Ed participants, while the Family Education Society provides literacy development programming to Odyssey House.

Legal Aid



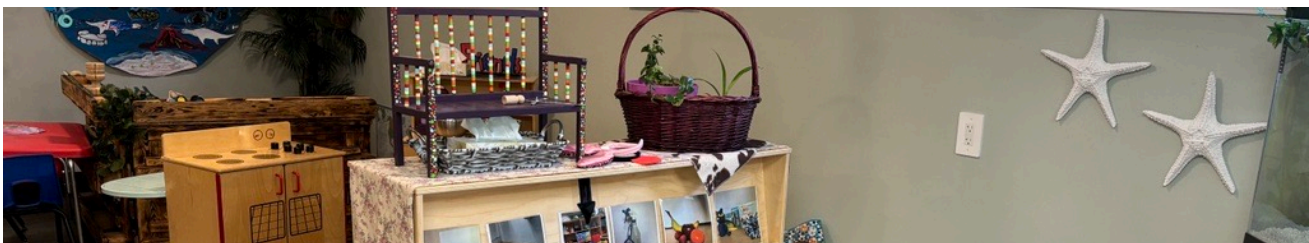
The Community Support team have established working relationships with Lawyers, enhancing staff knowledge of legal processes and systems, enabling them to better prepare and empower clients for court and legal challenges.

Childcare Support

96 children	10,409 hours
supported by the childcare programs	of trauma informed programming to children accessing our programs

Child care is available to individuals staying at the Emergency Shelter or Second-Stage shelter, accessing groups, other programming, or seeking support from the Outreach team. We are also here to support all parents. We are available to listen and work with parents regarding any concerns or questions you may have. We will work with you and your family to help you strengthen bonds and create structure and routines within a positive and supportive environment. We provide respite care for mothers so they can attend appointments and meetings or those who need a break.

Out-of-School Care Program has been developed for school-aged children (5 to 18). The program is open to those staying in the shelter, those who have stayed in the shelter in the past, or accessing the outreach team.



Childcare Program Highlights



Delivering for unique needs

Childcare and parenting support are delivered professionally, nonjudgmentally, and sensitively while considering diverse cultures. Every child has the right to live and play in a safe, protected environment that fosters optimum physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social growth. We endeavor to provide the best possible information and support for all families in our program. This may include, but is not limited to, advocacy, referrals, resources, and case conferences. We recognize the unique and individual needs of each child and their family. Therefore, the services are delivered case-by-case, allowing for unique and specific family needs.



Development of Strategies



Beginning a two-year partnership with ASAP (Access, Supports, Participation) to implement the Pyramid Model and strategies. We have a coach come into our program weekly to observe our childcare support workers in direct supervision with the children and provide feedback on how we are implementing the pyramid strategies. This has greatly supported our ability to reflect on our individual practices and grow our skills thus resulting in a truly trauma informed, inclusive, high-quality program.

Public Education

Our Public Education Program is designed to increase awareness of the social issues related to family and gender-based violence through education, support, referrals, and advocacy. We also have custom presentations for schools, colleges, community groups, summer camps, businesses, and non-profit agencies. Odyssey House is active in elementary, as well as Junior and Senior high schools in the City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, and our rural communities.

A few examples of our presentations are:

School	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being Kind & Calm• Emotions and Self Esteem• Bullying and Healthy Friendships• Healthy Relationships• Safe Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Relationships• Odyssey House Services• Understanding Family Violence• How To Help

*This year we provided presentations and public engagement sessions to over **13,000** individuals.*

Public Education Highlights

40	58	25
New partnerships formed	Existing partnerships engaged with	Public engagement events attended



Forming Community-Based Partnerships

The public education program has a partnership with Western Cree Tribal Council to ensure trauma-informed and culturally appropriate educational programming to the women engaged in their supportive programming. A third-party Indigenous knowledge-sharer is working with the public educators to continue the growth and development of our programming to ensure our content is safe and empowering.

Marketing Strategies Implemented



Our program has adopted a lens that focuses on meeting people where they're at. When engaging with the public through education and marketing we recognize that people will likely remember the way we made them feel before they remember what we said. For that reason, we ensure that our messaging positions Odyssey House as a safe place in the community and encourages people to become passionate about the topic of gender-based violence.

121 school

presentations given with a total of **2417** participants.

23 community

presentations given with a total of **182** participants

Success Stories

Emergency Shelter

Odyssey House's Hotel Partnership

The hotel partnership was established to address significant gaps in resources within Grande Prairie. Specifically, the city lacks safe spaces for men experiencing domestic abuse and has no shelters dedicated to women and children facing homelessness. Recognizing these needs, Odyssey House formed a partnership with the Sandman Hotel and Motel 6, both of which agreed to provide discounted rates and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with our agency to offer safe accommodations when needed. The hotel partnership has primarily been utilized to support men experiencing domestic abuse. In these cases:

- **Emergency Shelter Staff:** Conduct the client intake into our database and collaborate with the Community Supports team to coordinate ongoing assistance.
- **Community Supports Team:** Provide transportation, emotional support, and practical resources such as food, toiletries, and gift cards for meals.
- **Extended Collaboration:** In one case, Odyssey House worked with Wapiti House to secure funding, enabling a male client and his children to stay in a hotel for an extended period while accessing safe, affordable housing in the community.

For women and children experiencing homelessness, the hotel partnership has not yet been activated. Odyssey House has successfully supported these clients within the emergency shelter, connecting them to necessary resources to transition back into stable housing.

This partnership demonstrates Odyssey House's commitment to filling critical service gaps in the community by offering creative and compassionate solutions. By ensuring access to safe accommodations and wraparound support, the organization continues to empower individuals and families during their time of need.

Success Stories

Second-Stage Shelter

Serenity Place has been a part of many women's journeys toward a life free from domestic violence. Recently, we received a heartfelt letter from a former resident who achieved incredible milestones while enrolled in our program.

In her letter, she shared how, during her lowest moments, Odyssey House provided the necessities she and her child needed to escape a life of oppression and gain their freedom. Through her determination and the unwavering support of Odyssey House staff, she has moved forward with remarkable accomplishments.

Today, this individual has a full-time job, secure childcare for her child, and a place of her own. Her story is a testament to the resilience of those we serve and the life-changing impact of the support provided at Serenity Place.

Public Education

One local company was interested in our work after seeing us on social media and decided they would like to fundraise for Odyssey House at their staff Christmas party. Our donor relations staff member worked closely with the organization to ensure their experience hosting a 3rd party fundraiser for the first time went smoothly. Their staff were all very eager and generous to donate during the holidays and enjoyed collaborating with Odyssey House. The company owner connected with our staff member after their fundraiser had ended to thank her for her help and expressed their interest in donating to us again in the future.

Community Support & Outreach

The Community Support Program began the year with high hopes for its new peer support groups, Finding Our Voices and Growth Circle, developed in partnership with a sister shelter. However, the transition proved difficult. Long-time participants struggled with the changes, and a complex registration process deterred many. Attendance dwindled until the groups were no longer sustainable.

Recognizing the need for a fresh approach, the team came together for a brainstorming session. With guidance from a clinical supervisor and drawing on their collective expertise, they reflected on what had worked in the past and what hadn't. This led to a pivotal decision: transitioning from drop-in groups to structured, four-week psycho-educational workshops. By requiring pre-registration and offering closed sessions, they aimed to create a more committed and supportive environment.

The first workshop, Boundaries, exceeded expectations, sparking strong interest and fostering meaningful engagement among participants. Building on this success, the second workshop, Navigating Trauma & Finding Healing, drew even more registrations and overwhelmingly positive feedback. The team realized they had found a model that resonated deeply with their community.

Despite a challenging start, the Community Support Program's creativity and collaboration transformed the initiative. The workshops not only revitalized the program but also provided a renewed sense of hope and connection for participants. This successful shift has laid a strong foundation for continued growth, empowering participants and the team alike.

Childcare Support

At The Family Resource Centre/Serenity Place Daycare, we follow the Circle of Courage model, focusing on Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. A key challenge, especially with toddlers, is developing expressive language skills. We've found success using ASL/sign language, helping children who struggle to communicate.

Exciting Update: Our Renovated Playground

We are thrilled to share that our newly renovated playground has been a wonderful addition for the children and families in our programs. Previously, the playground was divided into two smaller sections—one for Serenity Place and the other for Odyssey House. Thanks to a generous donation in 2022, we were able to begin the creative process of updating and renovating this outdoor space, transforming it into a larger, more unified area.

Renovating and installing new playground equipment is no small task, but with the necessary funds in place, we were able to bring our vision to life. The new space includes professional-grade equipment, including a much-loved tire swing, and was designed with input from our Childcare Support Manager and Facility Manager to ensure the playground is developmentally appropriate for all age groups.

The playground officially opened in the Summer of 2023, and has already become a joyful and engaging space for all to enjoy! We are so grateful for the support that made this project possible and look forward to the continued fun and learning that will take place in this new space.

Empowerment Through Community

DONATION SUMMARY

392 total monetary donations made this year. 117 from businesses/organizations & 275 from Individuals.

303 people donated money to Odyssey House this year.

%10.5 contribution of our annual budget.

TOP ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTORS OF THE YEAR

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of **ALL** of our contributors this year. Every dollar, whether from businesses or individuals, makes a significant impact and provides the crucial funding needed to keep our operations running. Your support directly helps us continue offering essential services to those who need them most. Our top organization **monetary** contributors this year are:

- Royal LePage Shelter Foundation
- Keyera Corporation
- Peace Diagnostic Imaging
- Rotary Club of Grande Prairie
- Arc Resources
- Heartland Generations Ltd.
- Longshore Resources Ltd.
- Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.
- New Horizon Co-Operatives Ltd.
- Dynamud Logistics Services Inc.
- Pembina Pipeline Corporation
- RONA Foundation
- Climb Machine Ltd.

Individual contributions are just as important. We are continually amazed by the generosity of our community and will continue to recognize your support throughout the year.

At Odyssey House, we're incredibly thankful for the physical donations we receive, which help us replenish essential supplies and reduce costs, allowing us to focus more on supporting those we serve. Among our most impactful donations are toiletries, clothing, non-perishable food items, baby supplies, and household essentials. These thoughtful contributions directly enhance the care and resources we can provide to those rebuilding their lives. Our top **non-monetary** organization contributors this year are:

- Costco
- Cobbs
- Giant Tiger
- Winners
- Marshalls
- Home Sense
- Bootlegger
- Warehouse One
- Pennington's

Gift-in-kind contributions from individuals are incredibly valuable. We are constantly inspired by the generosity of our community and remain committed to showing our gratitude for your support all year long.

FUNDRAISERS

During the 2023/2024 period, we hosted 2 impactful fundraising events to support our programs and raise awareness for domestic violence prevention. :



ODYSSEY SUNRISE GOLF TOURNAMENT 2023

Huge thank you to our title sponsor **Hansen Ford**.



GRANDE CON 2023

Huge thank you to our title sponsor **Stringam LLP**.

TOP THIRD-PARTY FUNDRAISERS

We were fortunate to have local companies host third-party fundraisers on our behalf. Below are some of the major fundraising initiatives that were held during the 2023/2024 period:



GP 100

We were the lucky recipients chosen by the **GP 100** members. The GP 100 is a community group in Grande Prairie who meets once every quarter to donate money to a selected charity.

ARC RESOURCES STAFF



Arc Resources organized an internal staff fundraiser to support Odyssey House through their generous donation efforts.



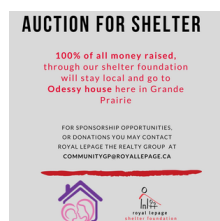
RONA FOUNDATION HOME SWEET HOME CAMPAIGN

RONA Grande Prairie as part of their Home Sweet Home Campaign hosted a silent auction and yard sale where all proceeds went to Odyssey House.



COATS FOR KIDS

BNI Northern Connections in partnership with **Richmond Dry Cleaners** collected, cleaned and donated winter coats for our residents!



ROYAL LEPAGE AUCTION FOR SHELTER

Royal LePage Realty Group hosted an online auction in support of Odyssey House.



OdysseyHouse
Equality and Empowerment

Thank You

Get in Touch!



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