



ANNUAL REPORT

25

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Community Strength Through Family Strength

Our mission at 4 Wing MFRCS is to enable a mission-ready force by addressing the unique challenges faced by CAF members and their families that result from military service, and to work for the general betterment of life for military families within 4 Wing's area of responsibility.

To do so, we assess the needs of the community and respond with a professional and consistent system of support, programs, services, and activities. This community-based system of family support is aimed at promoting health and social well-being.

This Annual Report is a showcase of the work done to achieve this mission in the 2025/26 fiscal year.

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A Message From the Board Chair

Resilience, Progress, and Gratitude

Dear Stakeholders,

As we reflect on another year at the Military Family Resource Centre, I am proud of all that we have accomplished together in support of our military community. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to share our 2026 Annual Report and recognize the many individuals and organizations whose dedication has contributed to another successful year.

The strength of the Military Family Resource Centre lies in its ability to adapt to the ever-changing needs of military families while remaining committed to its core mission of providing support, connection, and resources. Throughout the past year, our staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters have continued to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to ensuring military families receive the services they need to navigate the unique experiences of military life.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our funders for their continued confidence in our organization. Your investment allows the MFRC to provide programs and services that strengthen military families and build a resilient community. Your ongoing support is invaluable, and we are truly grateful for your partnership.

To our dedicated staff, thank you for the professionalism, compassion, and enthusiasm you bring to your work every day. Your commitment to serving military families is at the heart of everything the MFRC accomplishes. Whether delivering programs, supporting

individuals through challenging times, or creating opportunities for families to connect, your efforts make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

To my fellow members of the Board of Directors, thank you for your leadership, thoughtful governance, and dedication to the long term success of the Military Family Resource Centre. Your volunteer service and commitment to our mission are greatly appreciated.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to ensuring the MFRC continues to evolve alongside the needs of our military community. Together with our staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters, we will continue to foster a welcoming, inclusive, and responsive organization that military families can rely on throughout every stage of their journey.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Military Family Resource Centre this past year. We are honoured to serve our military families and look forward to continuing this important work together.

Sincerely,



Amanda Hillock

Chair, Board of Directors, 4 Wing MFRCS



A Message From the Executive Director

A Summary of Successes & Looking Ahead

Dear Stakeholders,

This past year has been one of continued service, growth, and innovation for the 4 Wing Military Family Resource Centre Society (MFRCS).

Every day, our team is privileged to support military and veteran families through some of life's most significant transitions. We help families relocate to Cold Lake, provide support during military absences and deployments, assist new Canadian Armed Forces members and their families as they adjust to military life, and help members and their families transition back to civilian life.

Living in Cold Lake brings many opportunities, but it also presents unique challenges. As a semi-isolated military community, families often face barriers related to distance from extended family, access to specialized health care, and building new social connections. These realities reinforce the importance of a strong Military Family Resource Centre that helps families feel connected, supported, and resilient.

Growing to Meet Community Needs

One of the most significant accomplishments this year was the expansion of our First Flights Child Care Centre.

For several years, child care demand in Cold

Lake has exceeded available spaces, with our waiting list reaching as many as 180 children. To help address this critical need, we expanded our licensed child care capacity by **40 new spaces**.

Working closely with 4 Wing Construction Engineering, we renovated a portion of our Welcome Centre to create two new classrooms. This project was made possible through the strong leadership and support of Wing Commander Colonel Mark Hickey, whose commitment was instrumental in bringing the project to completion.

The **City of Cold Lake contributed \$30,000** toward the expansion, while Military Family Services funded the furnishings and equipment for both the new classrooms and upgrades to our existing classrooms. We look forward to welcoming children into these new spaces beginning in August 2026.

Alongside the child care expansion, we also completed a major renovation of our Welcome Centre. The updated space provides a warm, modern, and welcoming environment where military families can access relocation, deployment, transition, and community support services. The renovation reflects our commitment to ensuring that families feel welcomed and connected from the moment they arrive in Cold Lake.

Executive Director's Message

In addition to these renovations, we continued investing in the safety and security of our facilities. New camera systems were installed throughout the Youth Centre and child care areas to enhance safety for children, families, and staff. We also implemented a FOB access system on child care entrances, ensuring that only authorized individuals are able to enter the facilities.

Building Connections Through Programs

Our Morale Booster events continue to be among our most popular initiatives.

This year we hosted **16 Morale Boosters**, welcoming **more than 2,200 participants**. These events provide military families with opportunities to build friendships, strengthen community connections, and create lasting memories.

One exciting addition was our first Silent Santa event. This initiative was intentionally designed for children who experience neurodivergence and their families. By creating a quieter, more accessible environment centred on dignity, inclusion, and understanding, many children were able to enjoy a visit with Santa in a way that met their individual needs. The overwhelming response from families has ensured that Silent Santa will become an annual tradition.

We also expanded Couples Night Out, increasing participation in this monthly program that gives couples an opportunity to strengthen their relationships while enjoying fun and engaging activities together.

Another new initiative this year was our Buy and Sell Workshop for military members and

their families who were posting into or out of Cold Lake. Purchasing or selling a home during a military posting can be both stressful and financially significant. The workshop featured a local mortgage broker and realtor who provided practical advice, answered questions, and helped families better understand the home buying and selling process in today's market.

To help families beat the winter blues, we once again hosted our popular Snowed-In Cinema event in January. This family-friendly afternoon gave military families an opportunity to relax, enjoy a movie together, and connect with others during one of the coldest times of the year. Events like these help reduce isolation, strengthen community connections, and support the overall well-being of military families.

Listening to Our Community

The greatest measure of our success is the confidence families place in our organization. Our annual program evaluation survey showed that **96% of respondents said they would recommend the MFRCS** to a friend. This feedback reflects the dedication, compassion, and professionalism of our staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, Military Family Services, 4 Wing Cold Lake, the City of Cold Lake, and our many community partners. Together, they help make the MFRCS a trusted resource for military and veteran families.

Looking Ahead

The coming year will bring several exciting new initiatives designed to strengthen family relationships, resilience, and community connection.

Executive Director's Message

Pints & Ponytails

This innovative father-child program gives military and veteran dads the confidence to master everyday hair care while creating meaningful moments with their children. More than learning braids and ponytails, it transforms an ordinary morning routine into an opportunity to strengthen attachment, build confidence, and create lasting memories.

Couples Counselling Program

Our Family Liaison Office will offer evidence-informed couples counselling grounded in the Gottman Method. The program provides military couples with practical tools to strengthen communication, deepen friendship, navigate conflict effectively, and build resilient relationships that support long-term family well-being.

Brave Bears

Brave Bears is an innovative resilience program designed for children experiencing deployments, military training, and extended family separations. Through age-appropriate learning, emotional support, and meaningful symbols of courage and belonging, children develop healthy coping skills while recognizing they are an important part of the military community.

Bounce Back Bugs

Designed for young children, Bounce Back Bugs uses a cast of friendly neighbourhood bugs to teach emotional awareness, resilience, and confidence through storytelling and play-based learning. The program helps children navigate everyday challenges while encouraging curiosity, optimism, and self-belief.

Military Dads

Military Dads is a specialized, evidence-based parenting program delivered jointly by the MFRCS and the Wing Padre. The program equips fathers with practical parenting and relationship skills while creating opportunities to connect with other military dads who understand the unique challenges of military family life.

Thank You

As we reflect on another successful year, we remain inspired by the resilience of the military and veteran families we are honoured to serve.

None of our accomplishments would have been possible without the dedication of our exceptional staff, committed volunteers, supportive Board of Directors, Military Family Services, 4 Wing Cold Lake, the City of Cold Lake, our community partners, and the many families who place their trust in us every day.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to our staff and volunteers. Their passion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment are the foundation of everything we accomplish. Every day they make a meaningful difference in the lives of military and veteran families, and I am proud to work alongside such a dedicated team.

Together, we are building a stronger, more connected, and more resilient military community. Thank you for your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Floyd Perras".

Floyd Perras

Executive Director, 4 Wing MFRCS

Highlighting our Successes of the Year

+ 40 child care spaces

With the help of MFS and the City of Cold Lake, we were able to open 2 new child care classrooms that will address the critical need within the community.

\$380,135 funds raised

None of the things we do would be possible without the generosity of our sponsors and local community – Thank you!

276 activities offered

From Morale Boosters to First Aid courses to Craft Nights to Kids Club activities and more, the MFRCS team was busy this year!

5,759 activity attendees

All the planning and coordinating was worth it to see the thousands of guests enjoying themselves and/or learning something new.

4,339 Facebook followers

Compared to other businesses in the non-profit category with similar organic reach on Facebook, ours is currently above the 75th percentile for this metric.

96% would recommend

Out of 101 respondents of our Annual Survey, almost all of them “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would recommend the 4 Wing MFRCS to a friend.

Recognizing our Sponsors and Donors

We want to thank our generous sponsors and donors for their ongoing support this year.



Fund Development

Making an Impact

As our programs, services, and events have expanded, so too has the level of commitment and investment of our community stakeholders. What once was a handful of sponsors and donors has now grown to a strong and steady group of ongoing partnerships that are active, engaged, and invested in the 4 Wing MFRCS' vision to improve the lives of our military members, veterans, and their respective families.

Fundraising isn't just about data, numbers and stats — it's about the 'Impact Stories'! It is so rewarding to be able to write to a funder about a young child in our Tutoring Program who is now doing well in school after struggling for years. Or about a father who surprises his son with free playoff hockey tickets courtesy of the Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation. Or the beautiful smile on a woman's face when she receives a handmade quilt to comfort her on her cancer journey, presented by the Lakeland Cancer Peer Support Group on behalf of Canadian Natural.

Whether the funding is \$500 from a donor to buy treats for the Moms and Dads in our child care program or \$100,000 from a sponsor in support of Programs and Events, the rationale is the same. They believe in us. They believe in what we do. They believe their funding will have an impact. And it most certainly does!

4 Wing Honorary Colonel Andrew Abbott

What once began as a \$125 monthly donation has now more than doubled over the years. HCol Abbott and his wife Carolynne have always had a special interest in our childcare services, and over the course of 5 years (and counting) have donated \$12,400. This is proof that donations, however small to begin, have a powerful impact and do make a difference in the lives of our military families!



Morale Packages with Canadian Natural

The 4 Wing MFRCS prepares bursting-at-the-seams Morale Packages for Christmas and Canada Day to send to our deployed 4 Wing Troops wherever they are serving in the world. The packages are filled with treats, games, personal items, and provide a 'touch of home' for the holidays. Canadian Natural has been our unwavering sponsor, contributing gifts, swag, and cards of gratitude.



Funding

At A Glance

To our amazing Sponsors & Donors:

We want to thank you for your ongoing funding in 2025-2026 – without your support, a number of our programs would not happen. We truly appreciate each and every one of you and look forward to growing our relationship with you in the coming years.

Together, we make a difference!

Contributions \$50,000 +

- Cenovus Energy

Contributions \$30,000 +

- Canadian Natural
- True Patriot Love
- City of Cold Lake
- Military Family Support Society
- Canada Job Grant
- Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation/Entertainment Group

Contributions \$10,000 +

- Top Aces

Contributions \$2,500 +

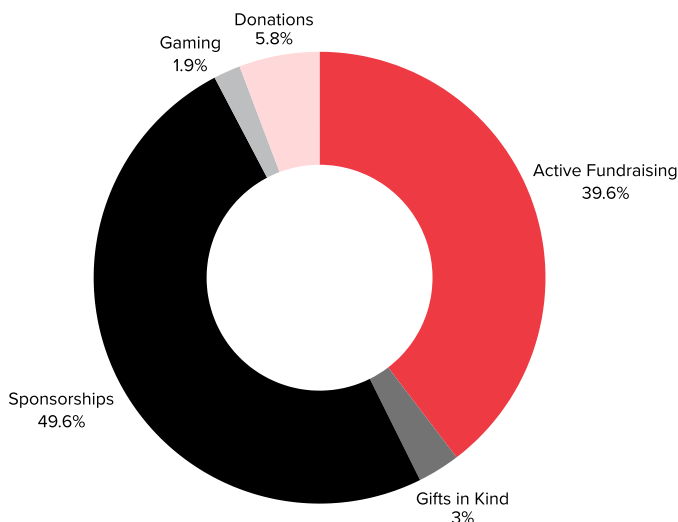
- Imperial Cold Lake
- Cenovus Energy Employees
- Honorary Colonel Andrew Abbott
- Lakeland Co-op
- Casual Canoe/Glad Hospitality
- 4 Wing Chaplains
- 4 Wing MFRCS Raffle

Contributions \$1,000 +

- NE Alberta Commissionaires

Total Raised: **\$380,135**

Fundraising Sources



Boasting our People & Culture

Our mission could never be accomplished without the amazing people we recruit. Our staff and volunteers are the best!



Human Resources

Supporting Our Team

Our employees deliver a wide range of essential services, including high-quality early learning and child care, youth and community programs, morale and welfare initiatives, and administrative support that ensures the effective delivery of our programs and services.

Employee Engagement

Recognizing and celebrating our employees is an important part of our organizational culture. Long-term service recognition acknowledges the dedication and commitment of staff members who have contributed to our success over many years.

Throughout the year, employees also participated in team-building activities, including an employee appreciation luncheon, fostering strong relationships, collaboration, and a positive workplace culture.

Health, Safety, and Well-being

Providing a safe and healthy workplace is fundamental to our operations. We continued to promote workplace safety through established health and safety initiatives, regular training, and ongoing compliance with occupational health and safety requirements.

Our focus on employee well-being supports a positive work environment where staff can thrive while delivering exceptional care to children and families.



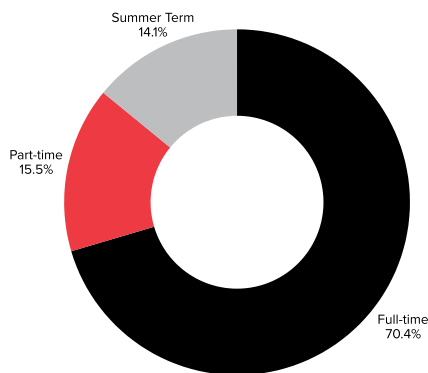
Human Resources

Staff Composition

Our organization employed an average of 61 staff members during the reporting year, reflecting our commitment to maintaining a skilled, dedicated, and compassionate workforce that supports military members, veterans, and their families.

Over half of our employees are child care staff, including a strong leadership team consisting of an Early Learning Manager, Early Learning Coordinator, and 3 Lead Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). The rest make up our Core staff, Youth Centre staff and summer term employees.

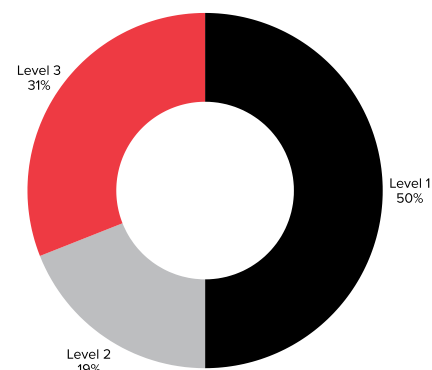
Percentage of Employees per Job Type
at 4 Wing MFRCS



Staff Training & Development

Investing in our employees remains a priority. Throughout the year, staff were encouraged and supported in pursuing ongoing Early Childhood Education training to enhance their knowledge, skills, and professional growth. The qualifications of our ECEs continue to reflect our focus on providing high-quality care and education.

Early Childhood Educator Certification Levels
at First Flights



In addition to ECE-specific education, all employees had access to leadership development opportunities, wellness initiatives, and team-building training designed to strengthen collaboration, resilience, and workplace effectiveness.

Challenges and Priorities

Like many organizations in the early learning and child care sector, we continued to experience recruitment challenges driven by a competitive labour market and ongoing workforce shortages.

Looking ahead, our priorities include strengthening recruitment and retention strategies, supporting employee wellness and professional development, and continuing to foster an engaging workplace that attracts and retains qualified professionals.

Volunteer Recognition

Our Special Volunteers

With deep gratitude and immense pride, 4 Wing MFRCS recognizes the outstanding dedication and contributions of its volunteers. These individuals have consistently gone above and beyond in service, not only advancing the organization's mission but also strengthening the fabric of the entire community. Their steadfast commitment, selfless sacrifice, and genuine care continue to define and elevate the volunteer program year after year.

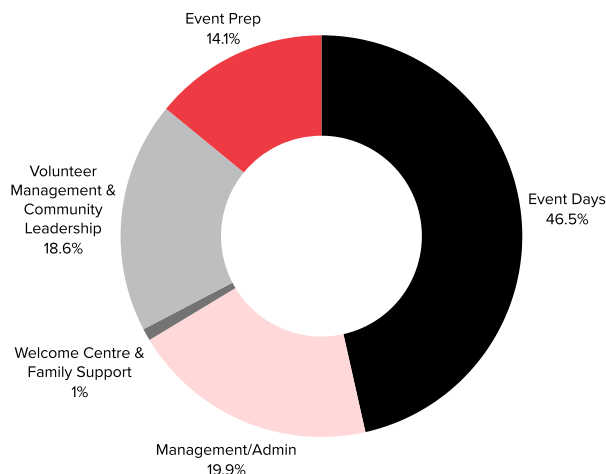
The contributions of these individuals have fostered a positive, healthy, and thriving environment — one where people feel seen, supported, and inspired. The ripple effects of their service are felt in every smile, every successful initiative, and every strengthened relationship within the CFB Cold Lake family.

Volunteers are not only the heart of this program, but the foundation upon which much of its success is built!

↑ **171**
New Volunteers

↑ **229**
Unique Volunteer
Participants This Year

Distribution of Volunteer Hours by Department Out of 2,360 hours worked



Volunteer Garden Party

Our Volunteer Gratitude Garden Party was a heartfelt celebration of the individuals whose generosity and dedication helped support our military community throughout the year. The afternoon provided an opportunity to pause, reflect, and recognize the invaluable contributions of our volunteers, whose time, compassion, and commitment make countless programs and services possible. Surrounded by good conversation, shared laughter, and a welcoming atmosphere, volunteers gathered to celebrate not only the impact they have made but also the strong sense of community they helped foster.



Celebrating our Special Events & Activities

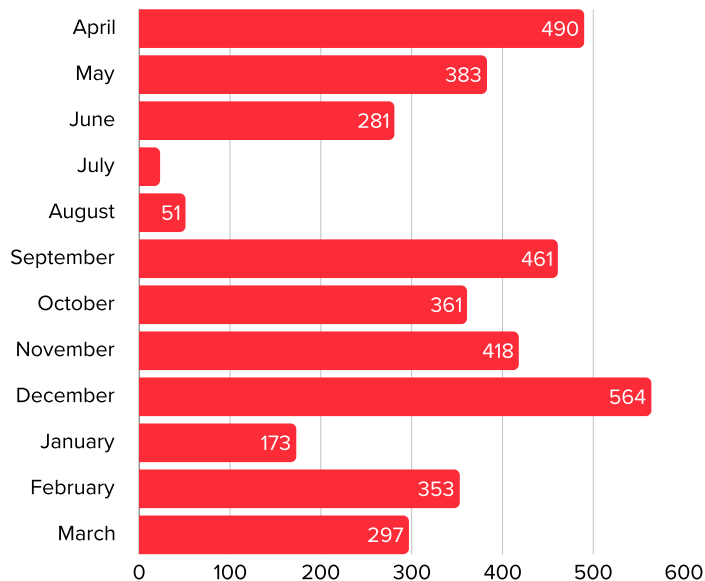
Our events are always a great opportunity to bring the 4 Wing community together — keeping morale up and fostering a sense of belonging.



Event Statistics

At A Glance

Unique Attendees Per Month



5,759

Total attendance for all events of the year

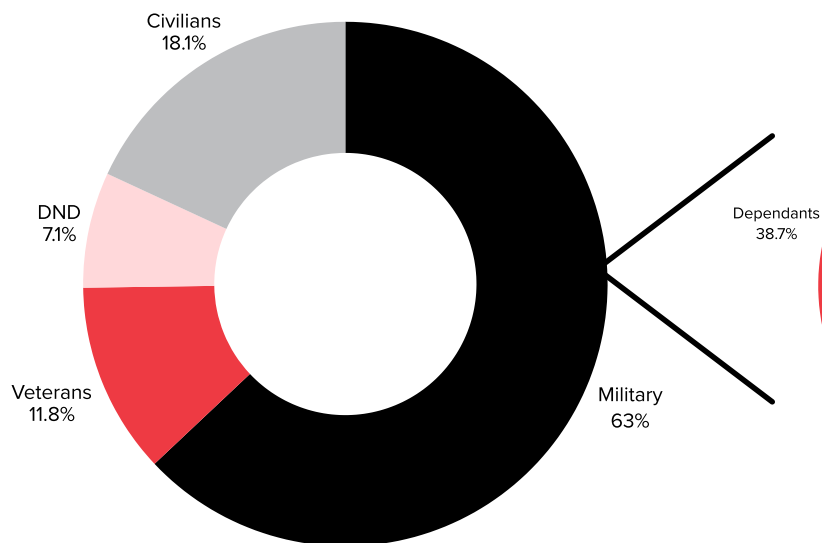
276

Events/activities offered

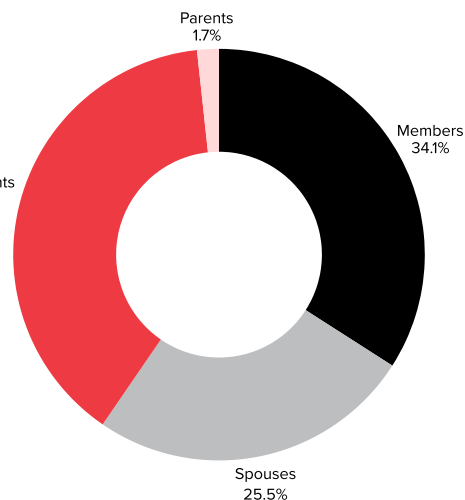
1,669

Unique attendees throughout the year

Demographics of All Attendees



Demographics of Military Attendees



Morale Boosters

Mother's Day — Drive Thru Flower Baskets

This year we were able to distribute **182 beautiful flower baskets** to deserving mothers. These lovely hanging baskets serve as a reminder of our recognition of these wonderful ladies for the entire summer.



Halloween Hootenanny — Ticket to Transylvania

Families were summoned to spend an unforgettable evening within Count Dracula's Castle, sipping "blood bags" deep in the shadowed forests of Transylvania. This immersive Halloween experience invited children to dress in their favourite costumes, create seasonal crafts suited to all ages and abilities, and embark on a night filled with mystery, frights, and hidden secrets. More than just a Halloween celebration, the event provided **217 attendees** with an opportunity to connect, create lasting memories, and experience the joy of community in a fun, imaginative, and inclusive environment

Military Family Appreciation Day (MFAD)

MFAD brought in **249 participants** for an afternoon of bounce houses, mimes, games, cotton candy, and popcorn. This was a perfect follow-up to the Welcome Race, both of which are generously sponsored by Top Aces and Cenovus Energy.

Father's Day — Touch-a-truck

This event celebrated dads in the most unique way by bringing together trucks of all shapes, sizes, and even smells for families to explore in a Disney Cars-inspired adventure. Children and their dads climbed aboard impressive vehicles, discovered how they worked, and shared an afternoon of hands-on fun and connection. More than just a Father's Day event, it created opportunities for military families to spend meaningful time together, build lasting memories, and celebrate the special role fathers and father figures play in their children's lives. Fun was had by **230 attendees**, with dads and kids beaming brighter than the headlights of a Mack truck!



Morale Boosters

Silent Santa

Our Silent Santa event provided a calm, inclusive, and magical holiday experience for neurodivergent children and their families. Recognizing that traditional holiday events can be overwhelming, we created a welcoming environment where children could meet Santa in a way that respected their individual needs and comfort levels. With dim lighting, minimal noise, scheduled appointments, and compassionate staff, the **29 attendees** were able to enjoy meaningful holiday moments without the stress of crowds or sensory overload. Children were encouraged to interact with Santa in whatever way felt right for them, whether sitting together, waving from a distance, or simply taking in the experience at their own pace. By removing common barriers and embracing each child's unique way of engaging, Silent Santa fostered a sense of belonging, acceptance, and joy, ensuring every family had the opportunity to create cherished holiday memories in a supportive, judgment-free environment.

Home for the Holidays

The 4 Wing MFRCS, along with the 4 Wing Chaplains, hosted a delicious catered traditional Christmas Dinner for **193 attendees** who were spending Christmas in Cold Lake. Glimmering lights, sparkling decor, and a touch of festive glamour filled the air while families got to spend time with their loved ones. This event is generously sponsored by Canadian Natural and Cenovus Energy.

Holiday Family Photos

We were thrilled to welcome **175 families** for our annual holiday photo sessions. With Christmas-themed backgrounds, appearances with Santa, and even a few furry family members joining in, it was a joyful way to kick off the season with some holiday cheer.



Storytime with Santa

Story Time with Santa was a wonderful event for the **319 attendees** that participated from all over Cold Lake. An afternoon filled with festive stories, holiday treats, and pure Christmas magic, even Santa's reindeer were in attendance to welcome the children!



Morale Boosters

Winter Survival Series

The idea for this new series was to help with the seasonal blues by getting people out of the house, interacting with their community and keeping the kids occupied! The series started with a Little Picasso Party, where **31 parents and children** unleashed their inner artist. The following week, families were invited to the 'Snowed-In Cinema', where **74 attendees** enjoyed a magical screening of the movie Frozen, complete with Frozen inspired snacks and wintery vibes.

Hop into the Movies

Families enjoyed a family friendly Easter movie morning filled with cozy fun and sweet treats, including a DIY popcorn bar and take-home surprises for the kids. It was the perfect way for the **113 attendees** to celebrate the season.

Valentine's Day — Choco Vino

This year, **13 couples** ditched the dinner reservations and joined us for a night of indulgence, laughter and connection at our Choco Vino Date Night event. We started the night by learning the art of handcrafted chocolate making, then delighted the participants senses as a wine expert guided them with perfect pairings to compliment each bite.

Fantasy Ball — Under the Sea

All **190 parents and kids** dressed up in their favourite costumes and enjoyed an afternoon of dancing, games, fun snacks, and ocean-themed crafts in a magical under-the-sea setting.



Women's Conference

The theme for this year's Women's Conference was Reclaim-Recharge-Renew. Our keynote speaker was Kate Davis, who had all **55 attendees** laughing within the first five minutes of her presentation. Participants each chose three workshops to attend where options included Bath Bomb making, Wreath making, Jewelry making, Mocktail making and the Wellness Experience. Included was a catered lunch, table gifts and the chance to win door prizes. Attendees left with bright smiles and hands full of goodies to take home.

Adult Programming

The MFRCS team stayed busy this year organizing **92 unique Adult Programming activities** including Sew & Sews and Crop Haven retreats, monthly craft and paint nights, First Aid courses, Cancer Support Group meetings, and monthly Table Top Games and Virtual Music Bingo nights. Next year, we will be launching a series called “Creative Escapes” which will give new life to the craft and paint nights while leaving room for more variety in the activities. Table Top Games and Music Bingo will be discontinued as we saw a decline in participation. Otherwise, the other great events like the ones below will go on!

Couples Date Nights

The year started with a Scavenger Hunt Date Night, then couples got hands-on at Sip & Sculpt Night, enjoyed our Palette & Pairings Night, and created Winter Wonderland String Art. Add to that a Quiz Night, Music Bingo and a Dotted with Love workshop, where participants transformed plain terracotta pots into colourful dot art masterpieces. In total, **79 couples** came to our date nights and we look forward to welcoming more next year!

Realtor’s Guide — Buying & Selling Simplified

This past year, we introduced a brand-new educational event featuring a licensed realtor and mortgage broker. The **15 attendees** received valuable information, practical tips, and expert guidance on buying and selling a home, including insights into the current market, financing options, and the home buying and selling process.

Night Out Loud

This programming for members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and their allies continued to be popular, with **48 total attendees** at 6 unique events. We created mason jar lanterns, custom bath bombs, wood slice wreaths, ‘Hello Spring’ door decor, and whimsical gnome friends. These nights offer a fun and creative opportunity to have an evening out in a safe and inclusive space!



Community Baby Shower

We were excited to host two Community Baby Showers for expecting and new moms, one in the fall and one in the spring. These events brought **33 attendees** together to enjoy some snacks, games and gift bags. Most importantly, they provided opportunities for new parents to make meaningful connections within the community.



Supporting our Youth & Children

The Youth Centre is more than just a place to play – it is a supportive hub where children can explore, learn, and grow in a safe and welcoming environment. Built with the unique needs of military families in mind, the centre provides consistency, connection, and community for children facing the challenges of relocation, parental deployments, and shifting routines.



Youth & Children's Programs

↑ **202**

Little Sprouts

Total attendees over **17 sessions**

Little Sprouts

Little Sprouts is a monthly parent-child program for children five and under. With a focus on sensory play, creativity, and early learning, this initiative supports strong family bonds and social development in a fun, nurturing space. It was so popular this year that we expanded it from one to two 1-hour sessions each month, offering more flexibility for parents.

Babysitting Course

This fall course was a full day of hands-on learning for the **12 attendees**, building confidence, safety skills, and real-world readiness. Participants practiced everything from age-appropriate activities to emergency response basics, working together in a supportive, interactive environment.

↑ **1,082**

Kids Club

Total attendees over **111 sessions**

Kids Club

Programming for ages 6 to 12, Kids Club gives kids a place to connect and unwind. The kids enjoyed a variety of activities, including sports, crafts, STEM experiments and movie nights, with access to all the amenities the Youth Centre has to offer.

STEM Programming

Our STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) programming, sponsored annually by Imperial Cold Lake, was a hit again this year, capturing imaginations and fueling discovery. Young minds were fully engaged as they got hands-on with exciting science experiments. These experiences made learning feel like an adventure empowering the kids to think critically, work as a team, and gain confidence in their abilities.



Youth & Children's Programs

Tutoring Program Summary

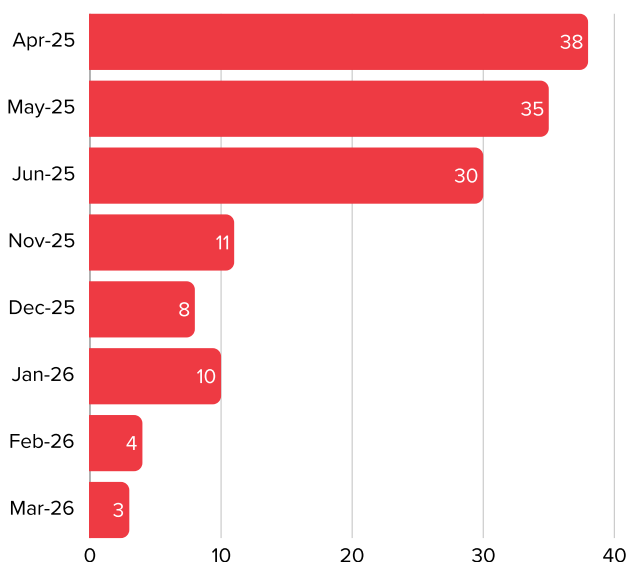
The Tutoring Program experienced a significant decline in participation over the past year, with Tutor availability being a primary limiting factor. A province-wide teachers' strike, combined with illness-related absences and a noticeable drop in tutor interest resulted in frequent staffing shortages. While the program continued to operate when possible, the cumulative impact of these factors led to a marked reduction in engagement. Nevertheless, the support from our generous sponsors — True Patriot Love, Cenovus Energy, and Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation — is greatly appreciated!

36

Tutoring
Sessions
Held

Unique Children in Attendance Per Month

Tutoring program



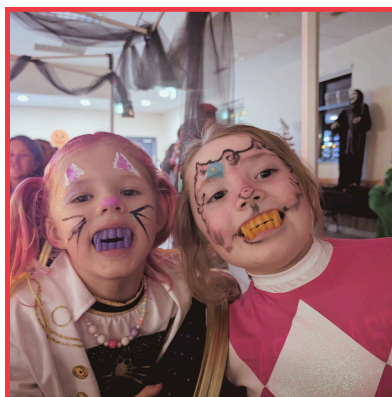
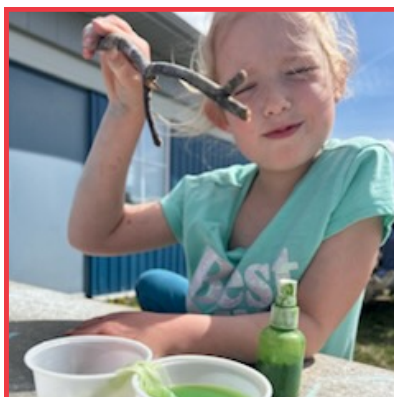
Tutoring Subjects Covered

Math

Reading

English

French



First Flights Early Learning and Child Care

Supporting Play, Participation, and Possibilities

First Flights' goal is to provide a holistic, play-based, inclusive learning environment for all children who attend our programs that meets the developmental needs of children in all developmental areas – gross and fine motor, social, emotional, intellectual, and language.





A Message From the Early Learning Manager

Creating a Home Among Friends

As a Military Family Resource Centre, we understand that change is a constant in the lives of the families we serve. Military life brings new beginnings, unexpected transitions, and frequent farewells, making a strong sense of belonging more important than ever. At First Flights Early Learning Programs, we strive to create a place where every child and family feels welcomed, supported, and connected—a true Home Among Friends.

This year marked an exciting chapter for our programs as we continued to grow and evolve. Alongside the addition of two new classrooms at our MFRC location, we introduced a new classroom naming theme inspired by Alberta's natural landscapes. Forests, meadows, ponds, groves, and coves now represent our learning spaces, reflecting both the beauty of our local environment and our commitment to creating welcoming places where children can explore, learn, and thrive. More than a change in names, Our Home Among Friends reflects our belief that each classroom is a child's home away from home—a place where meaningful relationships, curiosity, and a sense of belonging flourish every day.

Guided by the principles of Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, our educators continued to create responsive, child-led learning environments where children were recognized as capable, curious, creative, and mighty learners. Through outdoor exploration, inquiry, creative expression, and play-based experiences, children built confidence, strengthened friendships, and developed the skills that will support them throughout their lifelong learning journey.

Throughout the year, children welcomed new friends into their classrooms while also saying heartfelt goodbyes to those whose families were posted to new communities. Our educators supported these transitions with compassion and care, helping children build resilience, celebrate friendships, and understand that although military life often brings change, First Flights remains a place where they are welcomed, valued, and always belong.

Seasonal celebrations, family engagement opportunities, and the everyday moments shared between children, families, and educators continued to strengthen our learning community. As children transitioned between classrooms and celebrated new developmental milestones, they did so with the encouragement of caring educators who recognized and celebrated each child's unique strengths and accomplishments.

As we reflect on another remarkable year, we are proud of the vibrant learning community we continue to build together. Every friendship formed, milestone reached, question explored, and challenge overcome contributes to a foundation of confidence, resilience, and belonging. We look forward to another year of welcoming new families, celebrating lifelong connections, and ensuring that every child who walks through our doors knows they have found Our Home Among Friends.

Cheramie Smith

Cheramie Smith

Early Learning Manager, First Flights—4 Wing MFRCS

First Flights Programs

Early Learning Centre – Annex Site

The Annex continued to thrive as a nurturing environment where relationships, responsive care, and quality early learning remained at the forefront. A significant achievement this year was welcoming many new infants and families, which kept the centre at **full capacity** and reflects the continued demand for the program. Additional educators joined the team to support this growth, strengthening the centre's ability to provide individualized care and meaningful learning experiences. Leadership transitions throughout the year were managed smoothly, ensuring continuity of care and ongoing support for children, families, and educators.

Children at the Annex experienced a rich variety of play-based learning opportunities inspired by their interests and the changing seasons. Daily experiences included process-focused learning that encouraged imagination and discovery, such as:

- outdoor adventures
- neighbourhood walks
- playground exploration
- sensory investigations
- loose parts play
- building with magnets and construction materials
- creative art projects

Educators thoughtfully incorporated meaningful celebrations such as Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Remembrance Day, and the holiday season into programming while maintaining a strong focus on belonging, kindness, empathy, and caring relationships. The team also demonstrated a commitment to continuous professional growth, with educators pursuing additional certification and professional learning to further strengthen the quality of care and education provided to children and families.

Early Learning Centre – MFRCS Site

The MFRCS Site experienced a year filled with curiosity, discovery, and meaningful learning as children engaged in experiences that reflected their interests, strengths, and emerging ideas. Guided by the principles of Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, educators created responsive environments where children explored through play, developed strong relationships, and built a deep sense of belonging within their learning community. Across the classrooms, children demonstrated growing confidence, creativity, and independence as they investigated the world around them through open-ended experiences that encouraged exploration, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Outdoor learning remained an integral part of the program throughout every season. Children embraced the changing environment through neighbourhood walks, nature exploration, snow play, puddle jumping, and investigating animal tracks and the natural world. Seasonal changes inspired inquiry as children observed plants growing, explored sensory experiences with mud, water, snow, and natural materials, and celebrated International Mud Day, providing opportunities to connect with nature, engage in joyful risk-taking, and experience the universal language of play alongside children around the world.



First Flights Programs

These experiences encouraged curiosity, resilience, physical development, and an appreciation for the outdoor environment.

Within the classrooms, educators thoughtfully planned invitations to play that reflected children's interests and encouraged creativity, imagination, and meaningful learning. Children explored dramatic play through kitchen and grocery store experiences, built increasingly complex structures, solved puzzles collaboratively, expressed themselves through art and sensory experiences, and investigated concepts through planting activities, loose parts, and open-ended materials. Daily opportunities for child-led exploration fostered language development, communication, critical thinking, and creativity while allowing children to revisit ideas and extend their learning over time.

Relationships remained at the heart of the program. Throughout the year, children developed empathy, kindness, and respect as they learned alongside one another, building friendships and discovering how their actions positively impact others. Educators supported children in exploring emotions, collaboration, and conflict resolution through intentional conversations, group experiences, and responsive interactions. These meaningful relationships created a warm, inclusive environment where every child felt valued, capable, and supported in their learning journey. Together, children and educators cultivated a vibrant learning community where curiosity, belonging, well-being, and joyful play continued to flourish every day.

Out of School Care

The Out of School Care (OSC) program continued to provide engaging, high-quality programming that encouraged school-aged

children to explore, create, collaborate, and develop confidence through meaningful play experiences. Throughout the year, educators intentionally designed activities that reflected children's interests while supporting leadership, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. Children participated in a wide variety of activities, such as:

- STEM challenges
- engineering projects
- sensory explorations
- dramatic play
- collaborative art
- slime experiments
- construction activities
- board game design
- typewriter exploration

Team-building challenges, cooperative games, and child-led projects encouraged children to strengthen friendships, develop resilience, and practice problem-solving in fun and engaging ways.

Outdoor exploration remained an important part of the program as children enjoyed playground activities, community outings, and active play throughout the changing seasons. During school breaks and no-school days, the program offered memorable enrichment experiences including library visits, pottery, planting activities, cookie decorating, tobogganing, and other special events that extended learning beyond the classroom. Across every season, the OSC program consistently embodied the principles of the Flight Framework by fostering curiosity, creativity, belonging, and child-led learning, creating an inclusive environment where children built meaningful relationships, developed confidence, and experienced a strong sense of community.

First Flights Programs

Summer Program

The Summer Program was filled with exciting opportunities for children to explore, create, and connect through play-based learning and community experiences. Each week featured a unique theme that inspired curiosity, creativity, and hands-on discovery while supporting children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Themes included:

- **Mindful Moments** – exploring mindfulness, emotions, and relaxation.
- The Land of Possibilities – storytelling, creative world-building, and imaginative play.
- **Adventures Take Flight** – children became young engineers by building airplanes, creating rocket launchers, and experimenting with aerodynamics.
- **Spy School** – encouraged teamwork, communication, and problem-solving through secret missions, disguises, and outdoor challenges.
- **The Great Outdoors** – children enjoyed camping activities, birdwatching, outdoor games, and visits from LICA and Alberta Parks, helping them build a deeper appreciation for nature and local ecosystems.
- **Island Adventures** – included a treasure hunt, bubble science, sea creature exploration, and a trip to Kinosoo Beach.
- **Operation: Masterpiece** – where children welcomed a local artist, experimented with a variety of art techniques, and celebrated their work with a gallery showcase.
- **Alberta Animals** – featured storytelling, animal crafts, a visit from Annie Fudge, and a memorable trip to The Mini Goat Farm.
- **Mess Fest** – wrapped up the summer with mud play, sensory exploration, science experiments, and tie-dye activities.

A special focus of the Summer Program is supporting children transitioning to Kindergarten in the fall as they moved from the Early Learning Centre into a school setting. Children had the opportunity to become familiar with the school environment, helping to build confidence, reduce anxiety, and create excitement for this important milestone. This experience allowed children to explore classrooms, playgrounds, and routines while beginning to see themselves as capable and confident learners ready for their next adventure.

The Summer Program provided children with meaningful opportunities to build friendships, strengthen confidence, develop new skills, and create lasting memories through joyful exploration, community connections, and unforgettable adventures.



First Flights Programs

After-Hours Care

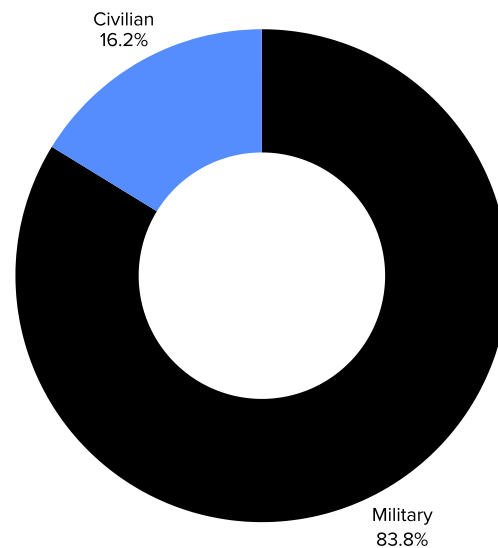
The After-Hours Care program continued to provide Military, Veteran, and Defence Team families with flexible, high-quality child care outside of traditional operating hours. Operating from September through to June, the program quickly became a valued support for families, offering a warm, welcoming environment where children could relax, build friendships, and engage in creative, play-based experiences after a busy day.

Led by qualified Early Childhood Educators, the program provided families with the confidence and security of knowing their children were being cared for by trained professionals in a safe, nurturing environment. For many families— particularly those who are new to the community or living without extended family nearby — After-Hours Care offered an important source of support, making it easier to attend social events and enjoy an evening out. It also helped ease the unique demands of military family life, including periods when one parent was away on deployment or course, giving caregivers valuable time to recharge while knowing their children were safe, engaged, and well cared for. Through meaningful relationships, engaging activities, and dependable care, the program continued to strengthen family well-being while fostering children's confidence, belonging, and enjoyment.



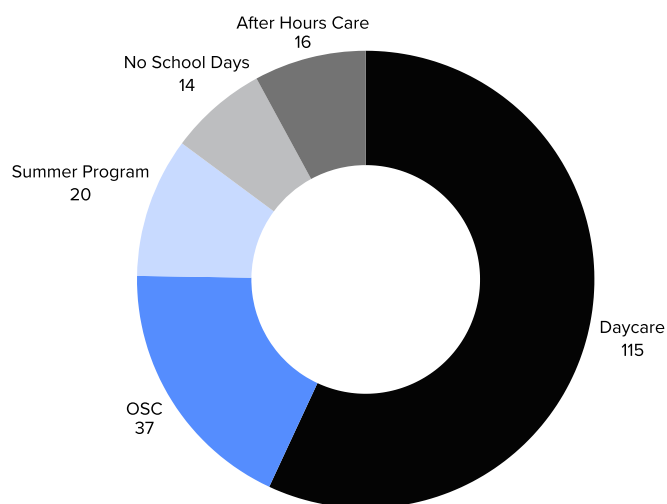
Average Demographics

All programs combined



Average Monthly Attendance Per Program

Unique children



Showcasing our Welcome Centre

The Welcome Centre has continued its vital role in supporting Canadian Armed Forces members and their families during significant transitions, including postings to and from Cold Lake, deployments, and medical releases. Our focus remains on providing timely, relevant information and fostering a sense of community connection.



Welcome Centre Overview

The Welcome Centre underwent some major renovations to make room for the additional First Flights classrooms. The renos spanned most of the fiscal year, but we were able to reorganize the main office so we could continue to offer the same amenities, such as:

- Access to computers and printers
- DWAN computers for official use
- A children's play area
- A variety of brochures and magazines offering information on 4 Wing and the City of Cold Lake

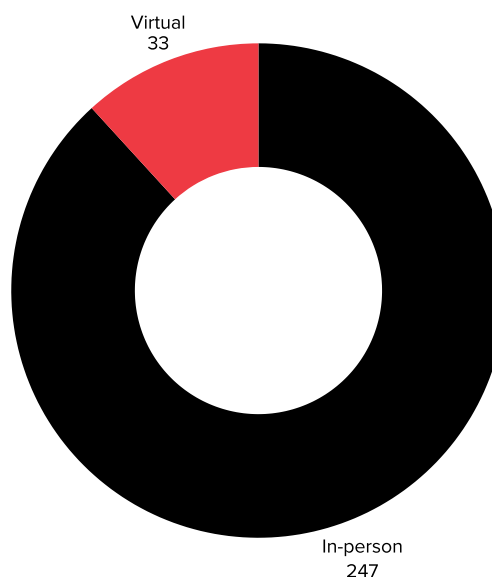
Despite the lack of space, the Welcome Centre staff continued to prioritize proactive outreach to posted-in members. Informational emails were sent to incoming families, offering essential details to help them settle into Cold Lake smoothly. This included:

- Comprehensive child care information
- Guidance on registering for the Maple Virtual Health National Program
- Detailed information about the local community, including schools, clinics, recreational facilities, etc.

Welcome Packages

To further support new arrivals, the Welcome Centre continued the distribution of Welcome Packages which contain information resources about 4 Wing and Cold Lake and some MFRCS swag items.

Welcome Packages Given



↓ **651**

Inquiries

↓ **599**

Independent Use of Space

↓ **298**

Welcome Orientations

Welcome Race

We loved meeting the **16 families (46 participants)** who joined our Welcome Race scavenger hunt. It was a fantastic way for newly posted-in families to get to know the community, connect, and start building memories together. Thank you to Cenovus Energy and Top Aces for their sponsorship.



Deployment & Veteran Support

Deployment Support

Supporting deployed members and their families remained an important focus this year. We offered assistance in many ways, including:

- Referring families to mental health resources to help navigate the challenges of deployment.
- Providing access to supplies through our Parcel Wrapping Station for sending care packages to deployed loved ones.
- Sending monthly warm line emails to stay connected and offer ongoing support.

Additionally, we made **35 warm line calls** and sent out a total of **46 Morale Packages** to 4 Wing CAF members who were deployed on various operations during the Christmas holidays and Canada Day — a small token of our deep appreciation for their service and dedication to our country.

Deployment Appreciation Dinner

In April, we hosted a special evening to celebrate our Deployment Families. The event featured a delicious catered dinner followed by an exciting circus show, generously sponsored by Canadian Natural. A total of **86 people attended**, coming together to share laughter, good food, and community spirit in recognition of the sacrifices made by deployed members and their loved ones.



Veteran Family Program

Throughout the year, we continued to provide ongoing support to Veterans and their families by answering questions and connecting them to various organizations and resources to help with their transition and well-being.

Mental Health First Aid Veterans Course

One highlight was hosting a mental health course for **11 attendees** tailored specifically to meet the unique needs of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans and those who care for them. This interactive workshop brought together military members, veterans, family members, friends, relatives, and health professionals to learn how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

Veteran Appreciation Dinner

We were pleased to host a special event just for veterans and their families, featuring a delicious lasagna dinner followed by a fun trivia game. The intimate event with **26 attendees** was very well received, participants expressing how much they enjoyed the evening. It was a wonderful opportunity to recognize their service while fostering connection, camaraderie, and a strong sense of community.



Reflections from our Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer (FLO) provides dedicated support to families associated with 4 Wing, including all family members of CAF personnel — whether currently serving, Veterans, or those in transition.



FLO Overview

Year In Review

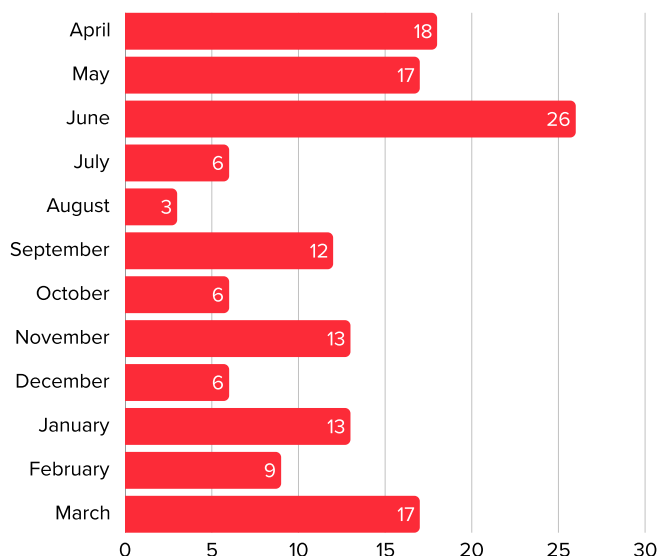
This year, the Family Liaison Officer continued to provide compassionate, person-centred support to individuals and families from all walks of life. At the heart of the role is creating a space where people feel heard, respected, and valued fostering emotional and relational safety during times of uncertainty, transition, or crisis.

The department supported clients by reducing barriers to care through tailored interventions that reflected each individual's unique circumstances, needs, and strengths. This included:

- connecting families with acute and specialized services
- providing timely referrals
- navigating complex systems of support
- ensuring access to meaningful community and military resources.

Beyond referrals and resource navigation, the Family Liaison Officer served as a trusted point of connection for military families, offering compassionate listening, practical guidance, and advocacy when it was needed most. By responding with empathy, flexibility, and cultural responsiveness, the department helped strengthen resilience, reduce barriers to support, increase access to essential services, and reinforced that no family has to navigate life's challenges alone.

Unique Contacts Per Month



↓ 185

Total Number of
Contacts

↑ 8

Strongest Families
Referrals

“Counsellor Mikayla is nice, my child enjoys her visits.”

FLO Key Activities

ASIST — Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

This workshop provided participants with practical skills in suicide first aid, including how to recognize and review risk, and how to intervene to support someone at risk of suicide. It was an intensive, interactive, and practice-focused two-day course, where the **12 participants** left with a certificate in suicide intervention. Thank you to the True Patriot Love Foundation and Cenovus Energy for their sponsorship.

Feedback from Participants:

“I thoroughly enjoyed the personal connection both the trainers and participants gave in this course and have already recommended it to other people in the community.”

“It was a great course that gave those learning so many tools to help. The instructors allowed and encouraged authenticity and allowed for vulnerability. I would definitely recommend this course. We need more of this type of education in our communities.”

“Great course to take. Get’s you talking about the uncomfortable subject that so many people avoid. I’ve definitely gained knowledge, terminology and proper language to attempt to help someone with thoughts of suicide and keep them safe for now. I would recommend this course to anyone.”

“It was amazing to do this course.”

Lakeland Cancer Peer Support Group

Thanks to the generous support from Canadian Natural, we were able to continue offering our Lakeland Cancer Peer Support Group. This group met monthly and provided individualized care and support to those who have cancer or who have had cancer.

Scary Stories We Tell Ourselves

Anxiety doesn't define who we are, and fear doesn't have to write our story. Through our Scary Stories We Tell Ourselves workshops (one with staff and one with the general public), participants learned to recognize unhelpful thought patterns, challenge anxious narratives, and replace them with ones grounded in hope, resilience, and self-compassion. Equipped with practical, evidence-informed strategies, the **22 attendees** left with tools they can apply in their everyday lives to better manage anxiety, build confidence, and navigate life's challenges with greater strength.

“ No family has to navigate life's challenges alone. ”

– FLO

Presenting our Marketing and Communications

By leveraging digital platforms, targeted campaigns, and creative content, we strive to reach a wider audience, foster meaningful connections, and support the overall mission of the organization.



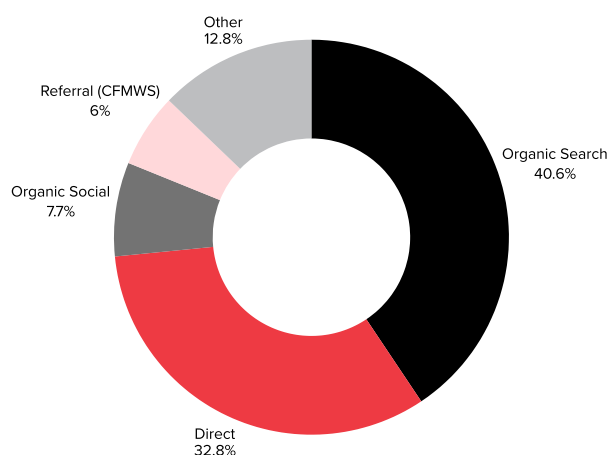
Website Performance

MFRCS Site

This fiscal year, our website had **2,106 Unique Visitors**, where **94% were 'new'**. The **Bounce Rate of 50%** and **Average Session Length of 1m, 59s** align perfectly with the industry average, suggesting the site is performing as intended – people seem to be finding what they need quickly. We have also received **31 Messages** through the site, so people seem comfortable reaching out with further questions.

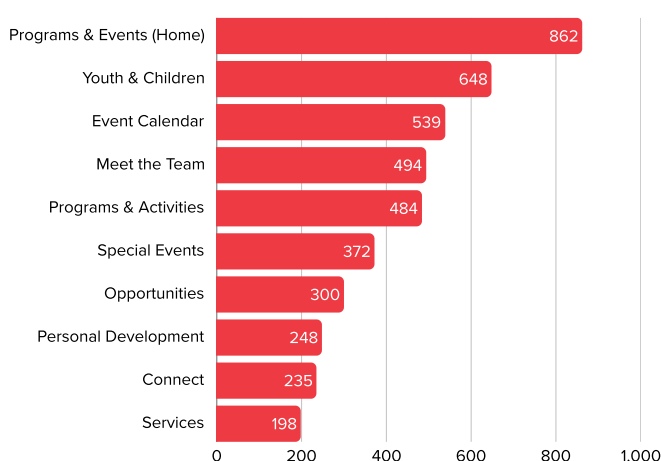
Traffic Sources

From 3,095 site sessions



Top 10 Pages Viewed

Out of 8,282 total page views

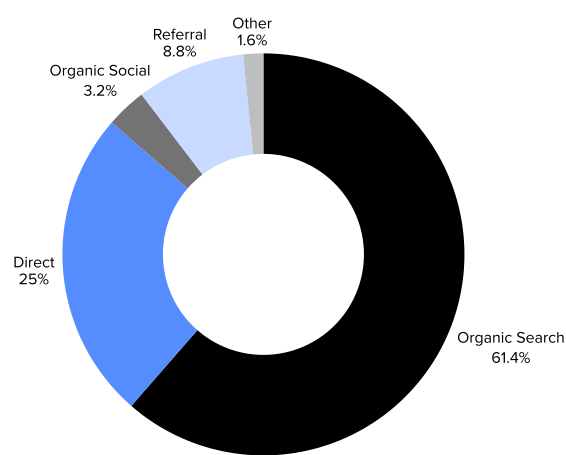


First Flights Site

This fiscal year, First Flights' website had **1,529 Unique Visitors**, where **93% were 'new'**. The **Bounce Rate of 55%** and **Average Session Length of 3m, 9s** falls within the industry average, suggesting the site is performing as intended – people seem to be finding what they need within a reasonable amount of time. We have also received **47 Messages** through the site, so people seem comfortable reaching out with further questions.

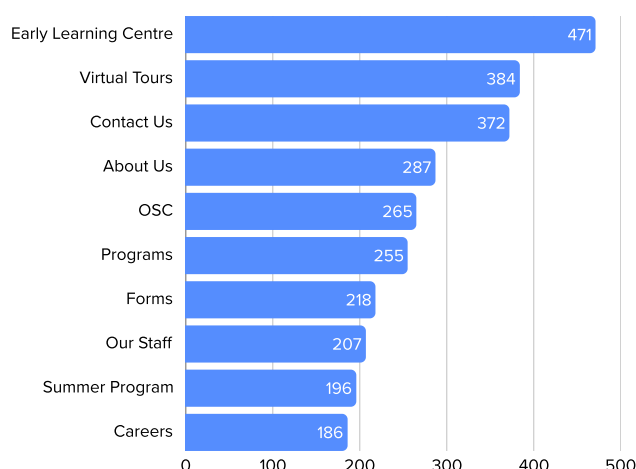
Traffic Sources

From 2,353 site sessions



Top 10 Pages Viewed

Out of 5,134 total page views



Marketing Growth

ECE Appreciation Campaign

Given the overwhelming success of last year's campaign, we decided to do it again, with a twist! Our ECEs sent in their baby photos and our followers had to guess "Who's Who", with the answers revealed day by day. This was a really fun way to honour and recognize our amazing child care staff.



30
Posts in the Campaign

60,050
Total views

126
Total Comments

956
Total Reactions

Marketing Growth

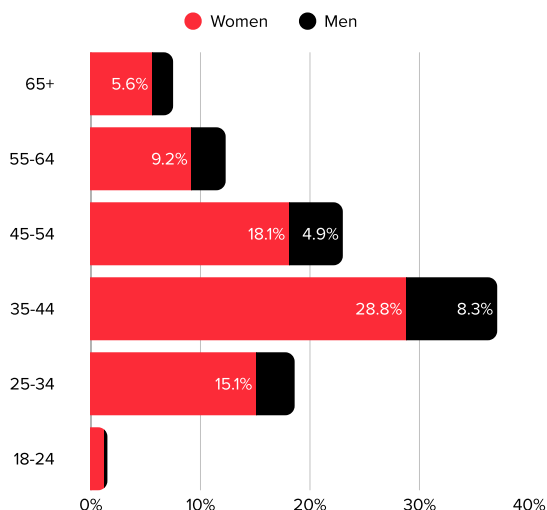
Social media

Our Facebook page saw a net **increase of 119 followers**, rising from 4,264, to **4,339**. We **posted 724 times** and garnered more interactions and visits than last year.

↑ **29,266** Page Visits

↑ **2,964** Post Interactions

Demographics of Facebook Followers by age



Collaborations

The MFRCS maintained a presence on the CFMWS website, keeping their events calendar updated with our Morale Boosters. We also made a special PDF version of our newsletters for the 4 Wing Public Affairs Officer to share with their Wing Base mailing list.

Newsletters

To keep our community engaged, the Communications Department (Comms) sends monthly newsletters as well as registration alerts to promote our special events. Last fiscal year, we sent a total of **68 emails** to our two main mailing lists (DWAN & General), which combined totalled **142,765 deliveries** with a **35% open rate**.

↑ **4,461** Subscribers

Looking Forward

As the websites continue to be a popular source of information, Comms will ensure the content stays relevant and up-to-date. On the First Flights website, we plan to add a page introducing all the ECEs so parents can learn more about the people that are helping shape their children every day.

On social media, Comms is reviving the 4 Wing MFRCS Instagram page this year in an attempt to reach those who may have drifted away from Facebook. We will also run a “Meet the Team” campaign for our core office staff to highlight the wide range of services the MFRCS offers in a playful, inviting way.

Expanding collaborations is also a goal in 2026/27. We are in contact with the Courier News team – the 4 Wing digital news source – and plan to align and support each others’ messaging to reach the most members possible. We also hope to get regional coverage on some major events like MFAD or new events like Pints & Ponytails with the help of Lakeland Connect.

Reviewing our Annual Survey Results

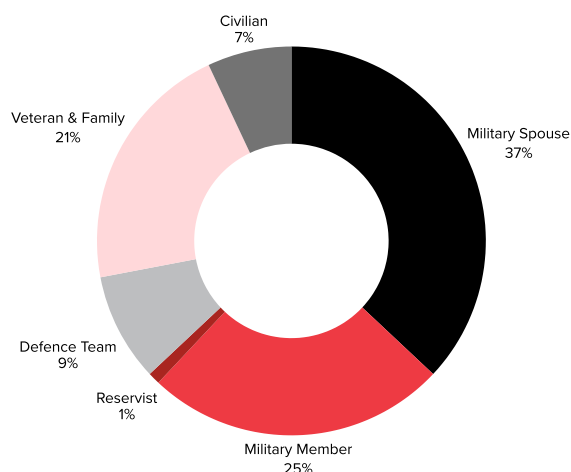
The goal of this annual survey is to gather feedback from the CFB Cold Lake community to determine whether the MFRCS is meeting their needs. It also provides valuable demographic data, insight into how respondents have engaged with MFRCS programs and events, and an opportunity to suggest new programming ideas.



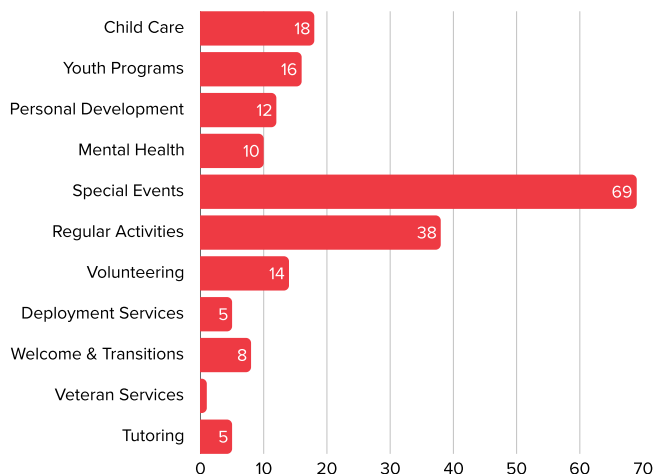
Summary of Results

The survey was conducted using Google Forms and promoted through all our communication channels. This year's survey was **launched in February and closed in May**, receiving **101 responses**. Most survey questions have remained consistent since the first formal version in 2019, allowing for year-over-year comparisons.

Responses to "How do you describe yourself?"



Responses to "Which services did your family access in the past year?"



Responses to "How would you rate the MFRCS in the following areas?"

Program	↑ ↓	2026	2025
Childcare	↑	93%	80%
Activities	↓	88%	89%
Workshops	↑	94%	90%
Mental Health	↑	94%	79%
Morale Boosters	↓	91%	92%
Volunteering	↑	87%	86%
Deployment Services	↑	93%	85%
Welcome & Transitions	↑	92%	80%
Tutoring	↓	84%	86%
Customer Service	—	96%	96%
Communication	—	94%	94%
Would Recommend	↑	96%	94%



"I've been in 5 bases, Cold Lake has the best MFRC from child care to family events and activities. Keep at it!"

"Every family event has been excellent. Staff were amazing and the whole family always had a great time."

"Just very appreciative of the variety of programming offered."



Community Feedback

Responses to “Please highlight any positive or negative experiences you have had over the past year at the 4 Wing MFRCS”. (Select few)

- A lot of activities for youths. My children enjoy the youth center.
- We love going to the little sprouts crafts.
- Have done a couple of craft nights, the hosts are excellent and it is always a highlight of my week!
- Absolutely loved story time with Santa and snowed in (frozen movie) event.
- Annual woman's conference is always outstanding
- My daughter loved the Fantasy Ball, was a wonderful experience for us.
- Santa pictures were amazing and ran smoothly we loved that opportunity.
- All of the special events go above and beyond, always exceeding expectations!
- The movie events have been great to test if my daughter is ready to sit through a whole movie without wasting money on it.
- As a volunteer, I am always amazed at the planning, set up and attendance. Family events are a happy event, parents take so much time and energy to prepare with their children. An absolute joy.
- Really enjoyed the realtor event evening . Very informative and honest.
- I appreciate the cancer support group which I am a part of.
- Welcome package had nice area guides.
- Always helpful and friendly when at the desk or asking about programs.
- The front staff reception staff are so welcoming!
- Only positive experiences. So many wonderful events that my toddler (and I) love!
- Gained a lot of knowledge from different events held.
- I would love to see child care options for weekday evening events to allow for more attendance.
- Miss the comedy nights.
- Dedicated Tutors during tutoring program, but they were unable to help my daughter much in Grade 11 Math.
- The Christmas party is always geared towards very young children. There's nothing for the older kids.
- Good programs are done but should be done more often.

Responses to “What types of events/programming would you like to see us host in the future?” (Select few)

- More regular scheduled daycare parent meetings for conversation and feedback.
- Cooking classes for teens, financial literacy classes for teens, leadership opportunities for teens.
- More safety tickets / training for veterans trying to transition to civilian work.
- More couples events and more variation, maybe some cooking/baking classes? That would be fun. Or more food events in general like couples dinners etc.
- Would love to see more theatre use or theatre programming.
- I really enjoy interactive events that involve food/drinks or are wellness focused.
- More events for childless people (non-family)
- I'd love to see smaller mom groups of kids the same age - many of us have no one an minimal ways to meet others.
- More sensory and neurodivergant things
- Women Veteran specific
- I would love to see the MFRCS partner with the woodworking shop on the base, maybe for mother or father's day!
- More photo opportunities for families outside of Christmas photos would be really cool! Like a printed photo for families to take home. Even at a cost of like 5\$ each I think would be awesome.

Improving our Facilities

We continue to improve our facilities with the support of Cold Lake RP Ops and 4MSS Construction Engineering Flight, ensuring that our spaces meet the evolving needs of military and Defence Team families.



Facility Updates

This has been a significant year for facility improvements, with several major projects completed to enhance the services and safety provided by the 4 Wing MFRCS. These facility improvements represent a meaningful investment in the future of MFRCS and demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing safe, welcoming, and high-quality facilities for the military families we serve.

New Child Care Classrooms

Working in partnership with 4 Wing Construction Engineering (CE), two new preschool child care classrooms were constructed. These new classrooms add **40 new licensed child care spaces**, helping to address the ongoing demand for child care in Cold Lake. MFRCS First Flights Child Care has maintained lengthy waiting lists throughout the year, and these additional spaces will provide much-needed child care opportunities for military, veteran, and defence families.



Welcome Centre Renovations

The newly renovated Welcome Centre has also been completed and provides an enhanced space to support military families and veterans as they navigate relocations, deployments, and transitions in and out of military life. The updated facility strengthens our ability to connect families with the programs, services, and resources they need.



Security System Enhancements

To further improve safety and security, a comprehensive camera system has been installed throughout the Youth Centre and preschool child care facilities. These cameras enhance the safety of both children and staff while supporting effective facility monitoring.

In addition, a new electronic FOB access system has been installed on the preschool child care entrances. The system allows authorized parents and staff convenient access while giving staff the ability to immediately restrict access to individuals who are not authorized or who may present a safety concern. This important enhancement provides an additional layer of security for the children, families, and employees who use our facilities each day.

ANNUAL REPORT

2025/26

