

**ALDER**  
ACADEMY

**2025**

# ANNUAL REPORT

*Family*  
is everything





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### A Note from the Chair, Board of Directors

This year, the Board focused on strengthening Alder Academy from within. With continued growth in our four distinct programs across three locations, we felt it was an important time to prioritize organizational stability, connection, and support for the community we already serve.

As part of this work, the Board took time to reflect on how we function and how we represent the voices within our community. One important outcome was updating our bylaws to allow for greater parent representation—an important step toward ensuring our decisions reflect the diversity and values of our families. We also introduced a new Governance Coordinator role to support continuity and ease transitions between Board terms. This added capacity has already made a meaningful difference in how we work to support Alder Academy.

A heartfelt thank you to the incredible staff and Executive Director—your dedication and care are truly at the heart of all we do. And to the families we serve: thank you. Your trust and partnership during these early years of learning are truly appreciated. It's an honour to be part of a community that values connection, curiosity, and the lifelong impact of early childhood education.

With deepest appreciation,  
Ashley Hughes  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Alder Academy







## A Note from the Executive Director

Reflecting on the past year, I am deeply grateful and proud of the outstanding team at Alder Academy. Throughout the year, I have had the privilege of witnessing the unwavering dedication and commitment consistently demonstrated by our staff. It has been truly inspiring to observe the children grow into inquisitive, resilient individuals who actively engage with every challenge presented to them. Our educators, social workers, specialists, and support staff employ innovative and individualized approaches to address the unique needs of each child, equipping them with the essential tools for growth and learning.

In my capacity as Director, my focus has been on supporting program managers, ensuring full compliance with all reporting requirements and regulations, and advocating for the development and implementation of a high-quality early learning and care system in Edmonton that prioritizes the needs of low-income and vulnerable families. Alder Academy maintains a strong partnership with the Edmonton Head Start Project, where research plays a central role in informing our initiatives. Through collaboration with CUP, E4C, and ABC Head Start, Alder Academy continues to provide relevant data and insights regarding the needs of young children and their families, thereby enhancing our collective impact.

As you review this annual report, you will note a clear emphasis on classroom practices and the work undertaken to support young children in acquiring the skills necessary to become contributing members of their communities.

With gratitude,  
Sue MacLean  
Executive Director







## **Vision**

All children have an opportunity to be successful

## **Mission**

To provide and advocate for accessible and affordable, high-quality early childhood education programs and targeted wraparound services that support all children and build healthy, successful families regardless of socio-economic status.



**Imagine a place where families thrive, children grow, and curiosity provokes inquisitive, empowered, mighty learners.** At Alder Academy, our teams provide children and their families with the tools to succeed. From the moment they walk through the doors at any one of our Alder programs, they are met by someone who will guide them, support their needs, and provide them with practical resources to support their family. This report will take you on a journey into the classrooms and the experiences of the children and educators of Alder Academy.



## What it means to be employed by Alder Academy

When I first started working in this role, I could not have imagined how deeply it would impact me. Just two months into my position, I went through one of the most difficult times of my life, facing domestic violence and homelessness. Being a part of an Indigenous childcare program has not only supported me professionally but has also connected me with my own culture.

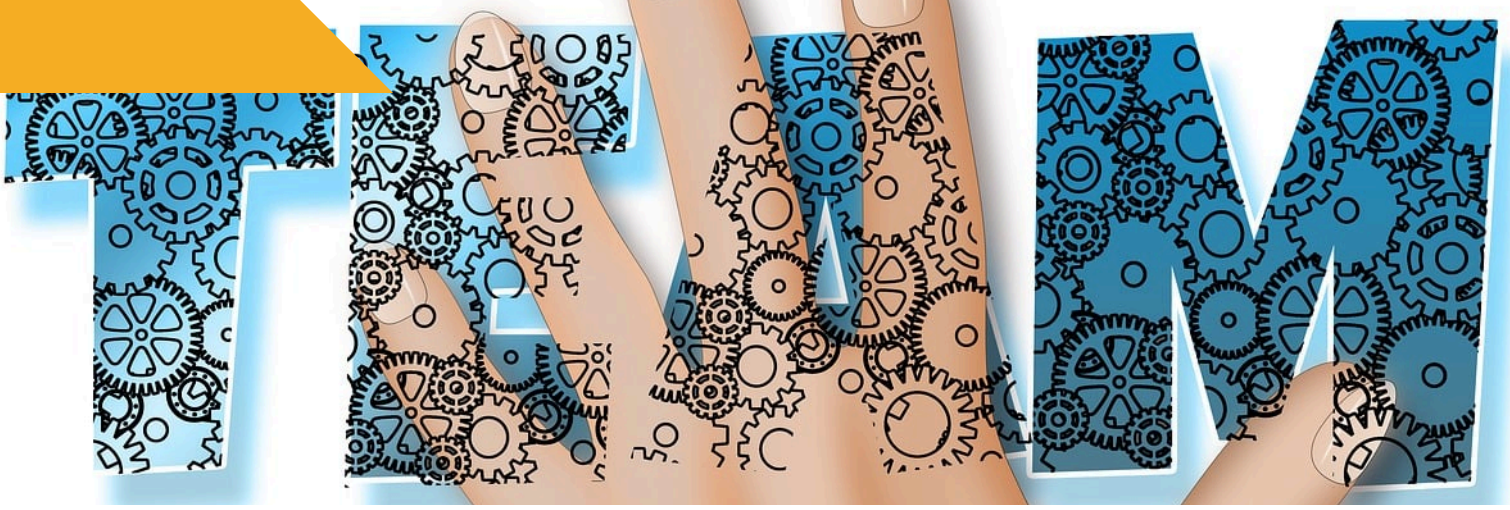
Through my work helping to build a tipi and creating an Indigenous resource binder to bring cultural teachings into our daily programming, I have been able to grow both personally and spiritually. This work has helped me heal parts of my inner child and find strength in community, language, and tradition.

For me, this journey is also a part of reconciliation—rebuilding connections that were once broken, creating understanding through education, and ensuring the next generation grows up proud of who they are. I am proud to be a part of a program that not only nurtures children but also uplifts identity, belonging, and cultural connection.

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## What it means to be employed by Alder Academy

I joined Alder Academy Early Learning Society in January 2025, and as I look back, it's hard to believe it has already been ten months. In this short time, Alder Academy has truly become more than just a workplace—it has become a family.

Although my role as an HR Manager doesn't involve direct interaction with the children, I still find myself inspired every time I see them learning, laughing, and growing. Watching our educators nurture their curiosity and creativity reminds me daily of the meaningful impact this organization has on young lives—and it fills me with pride to be a small part of that mission.

I am deeply grateful to my colleagues, whose teamwork, passion, and kindness make every day rewarding. A special thanks to my Director, Ms. Suzanne MacLean, whose continuous support and encouragement have been instrumental in my professional growth. Being part of Alder Academy has been an incredible journey—one of learning, belonging, and purpose—and I look forward to many more chapters ahead.



### Did You Know?

**Alder Academy employs 65 staff members, 35% of whom have been with the organization for more than five years.**





## A Toddler's Experience

### The Squirrel Room: A Place Where Little Skills Grow Big Confidence

In the Squirrel Room, magic happens every single day. Our toddlers arrive curious, energetic, and eager to explore—and we, their educators, guide them with patience, care, and a whole lot of heart. We know that at ages 2–3, every moment is a learning opportunity, and we are proud to help our little squirrels build the foundations they'll carry with them for years to come.

We create an environment where independence is encouraged and celebrated. From learning to sit at circle time to joining in singing, dancing, and listening to stories, children discover the joy of being part of a group. We help them find their voice, express themselves, and feel confident sharing their ideas and talents.

Self-help skills shine in our room! We teach children to put on and remove their own shoes, dress up independently, and take pride in doing things “all by myself.” These small victories are big steps toward self-confidence.

We embrace problem-solving as part of our daily rhythm. Whether it's figuring out how to build a tower, deciding whose turn is next, or finding a peaceful solution with a friend, we guide them with encouragement, strategies, and gentle coaching. We model and teach sharing, turn-taking, gentle hands, and how to play together in a respectful and caring way.

Our classroom is more than a room—it's a community. We help children learn to stay with the group, follow routines, and build the self-regulation skills that help them feel safe, included, and part of something special. With consistency, compassion, and clear expectations, we support each child as they learn how to navigate the world around them.

We know that every child learns at their own pace, and as educators, we celebrate every milestone—big or small. We encourage effort, applaud perseverance, and cheer for every “I did it!” moment. Our patience, creativity, and dedication create a space where children feel loved, capable, and empowered.

Because in the Squirrel Room, we don't just supervise—we teach, we nurture, we inspire, and we believe in every child who walks through our door.

## Our Youngest Learners

Young toddlers have an incredible natural curiosity and an openness to dive into new experiences without fear. To them, everything is a new discovery. When we share these moments with their families, they are so happy and grateful to see their children growing and learning in so many ways. This picture shows Aaron and Brian discovering the texture of pumpkin pulp and watching the colors swirl and mix. You can see their intense curiosity and concentration as they explore the sensory materials. It was a joy to capture such a great moment of hands-on learning through sensory play.



## Preschoolers

Participating in the annual December Food Bank Drive has become a tradition in the Woodpecker classroom. To help the children understand the importance of supporting their community, our educators initiated a food drive with them. This exercise was part of teaching the children how to share and show empathy for others, helping them to identify with and feel part of their community.



## Inclusion at a Glance

In the fall of 2023, we met a child who was visually smaller, developmentally delayed, and more fragile than the other children in the classroom. Upon getting to know him, we observed that he was not very verbal, had repetitive behaviors, and loved purple things. In a classroom of 16 children with very high needs, we struggled to understand how to make his experience easier and manage him in a way that he could progress. The task seemed unimaginably hard.

We gave ourselves time to observe his keen interests and the things that made him smile. He loved drumming with sticks, purple and indigo objects, sea animals, and bugs. We incorporated his favorite things into his daily tasks. A whale would 'take' him to the washroom, and his special objects had places to stay when he was expected to participate in classroom learning.

With a lot of time and patience, the boy began to present a calm demeanor, use words to connect with his peers and educators, and show interest in his self-help tasks. Through teaching, connection, love, and understanding, he can now eat independently, get dressed, use the washroom, make friends, and join learning experiences. Best of all, he learned how to speak! He can express his needs and wants, share his thoughts, and giggle endlessly at jokes.

This child won our hearts and taught us so much.





# Highlights of 2025

**Children  
Supported**  
**438**



**Volunteer  
Hours**  
**142**



**Health and  
Development  
Screenings**  
**443**



**People  
Reached**  
**766**



**Parent  
Groups**  
**117**

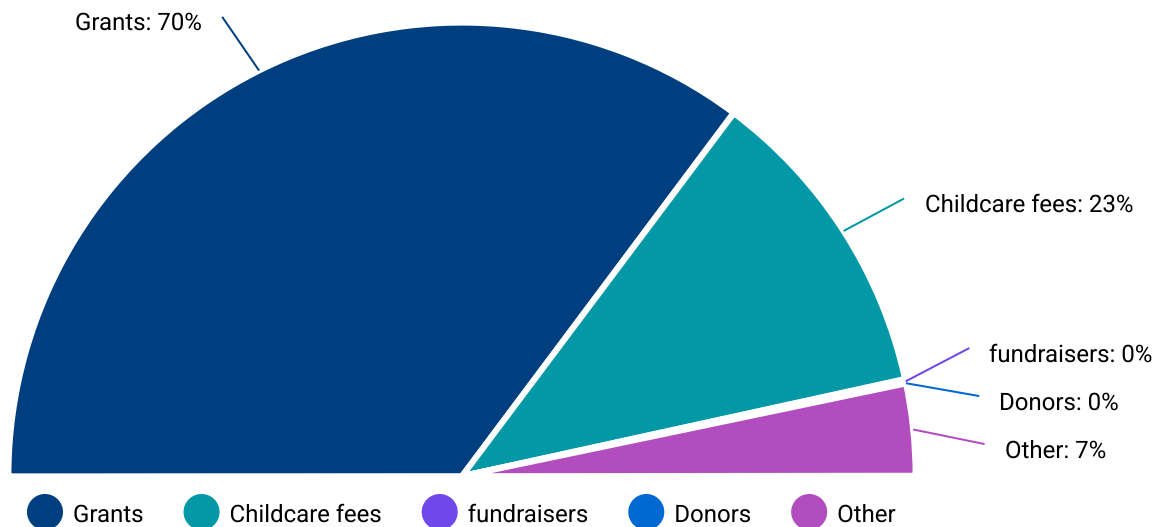
**Home  
Visits**  
**171**

**Student  
Practicums**  
**15**

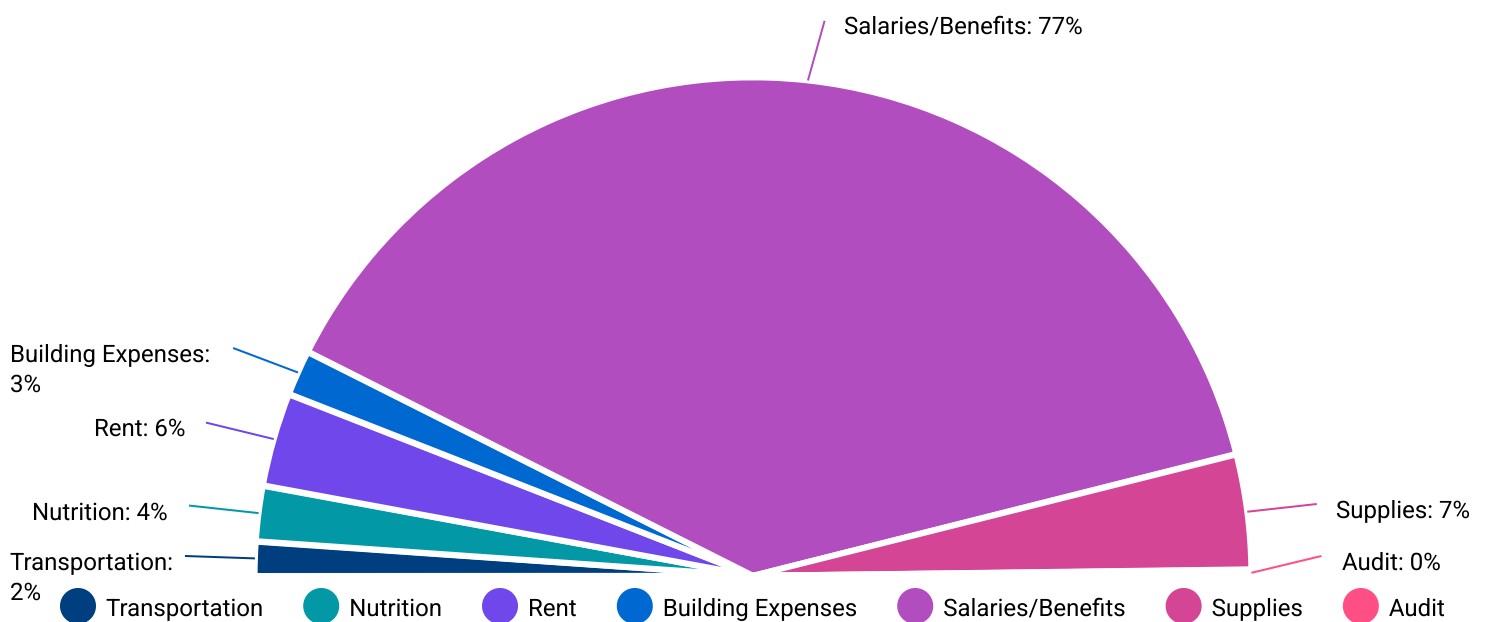


# Financials 2024/25

## Revenue



## Expenses





# How to Donate: CanadaHelps.com

All donations are used to support the nutrition programs offered at each site. 100% of your donation goes directly to programming for the children and families of Alder Academy. Alder Academy would like to thank everyone who has donated to the organization over the past year.

## Every dollar counts!

Email: [info@alderacademy.ca](mailto:info@alderacademy.ca)  
Phone: 780-482-2116

