



H&R MFRC

2024 – 2025 IMPACT REPORT



Indigenous Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG_MA_GEE), the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people. This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship.

We are all Treaty People.

Message from the Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre Board Chair and Executive Director

Over the past year, we have navigated significant funding uncertainties. Despite this operational challenge, we remained steadfast in ensuring that family support and service delivery were not impacted and we worked towards our strategic goals of education and advocacy, as well as strengthening our team.

To align our resources with the needs of the community, we actively sought feedback from families and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members, monitored engagement and usage, identified gaps in support, and remained informed on emerging military and veteran research. This approach enabled us to make evidence-informed decisions about allocating our limited resources and to identify opportunities for enhancements and innovation.

We recognize that some families have found themselves at a financial tipping point due to a range of circumstances, and financial stability was challenged by the cost of living in Nova Scotia. As a result, we continued our Community Pantry; a service that is truly a 'for families by families' model, sustainable by community donations, CAF partners and Units, and veteran organizations. Op Dasher, our holiday assistance program, had the highest usage to date, with 78 families receiving support. We thank everyone who made donations and whose support made financial assistance services possible.


Our dedicated Board accomplished significant work this year committing well over 800 volunteer hours. They revised 18 policies and 9 Terms of Reference to ensure alignment with the newly approved by-laws. Our Board also approved and monitored the yearly budget through funding uncertainties and recently signed a newly updated Memorandum of Understanding with Military Family Services and the Base Commander.

Our Board is committed to sustaining a professional membership of military family members. Our annual recruitment ensures our Board brings on new voices each year. We participated in the annual Atlantic MFRC Board of Directors Conference in CFB Gander, which allowed us to share and learn best practices. Our Board is pleased with what we have accomplished to advance us toward our strategic goals this year.

The H&R MFRC values and is grateful for the support and partnership of our military community, including Base Commander Capt (N) Fortin and Wing Commander, Col Holmes, as well as Chiefs who represent the interests of the military community on our Board of Directors, and the countless Command Teams, we engage with for deployment support.



Larissa Page
Board Chair



Shelley Hopkins
Executive Director



Shelley Hopkins (left) and Larissa Page (right)
with Premier Tim Houston (centre) at a RCAF 100 celebration.

Family-Centred Support

We offer flexible and confidential support, tailored to the needs and circumstances of families from all three elements. Our team gathers feedback to inform our practice, planning, priorities and service offerings. Our responsive and proactive family-centred client pathway to care has three areas of focus:

Information and Awareness



Angela, Denise and Chelsea at the H&R MFRC tent during DND Family Days 2024.

- **5,049** occurrences of information and referral
- **197** referrals to Padre
- **1,450** CAF members checked out our base and wing pop-ups
- **674** CAF family members were reached at enrollment ceremonies
- Over **6,000** interactions with family members through community engagement connection activities
- **913** morale mail packages sent through our sites

Navigation Support

- **7** naval deployments and **13** land-based deployments
- **1,425** check-in calls, **1,573** texts, **143** emails to **632** families experiencing an absence
- **32+** absence-focused events and programs
- **40+** spouses/partners and youth were supported with Career and Employment Counselling
- Over **5,000** individual interactions with family members of all ages through a variety of navigation programs and services
- **91** family members with diverse needs supported



Our Build-A-Bear events help families preparing for or experiencing an absence make memories and kids get to bring home something that reminds them of their special person.

Intervention Services



Our Occasional & Respite Child Care services are available at the Shearwater and Halifax sites throughout the week and select Saturdays.

- **270+** family members accessed our Mental Health & Well-Being services. The top presenting issues included accommodations, mental health (self), and couple relationships.
- **21** families experiencing financial challenges were supported with financial assistance.
- **479** nights of stay in our short-term accommodation apartments
- **73** children attended our Occasional & Respite Child Care service which prioritizes families experiencing deployments, transitions and relocation

Cultivate and Enhance Relationships

We take a proactive approach to advocating for military families both regionally and nationally. With the support and partnership of the Honourable Barbara Adams, Minister responsible for Military Relations, we now have military liaisons in every provincial government department.

Our Military Family Navigators offered programs and services both online and in-person while also reaching out to communities in HRM to deliver our school outreach program. Nationally, we provided input to policymakers and steering committees such as Seamless Canada.

Our engagement with stakeholders includes the military chain of command, policymakers, service providers, and families.

Delivering briefings, Unit info tables, and Unit Family Representatives are some of the ways we connect with serving members.

Teal Up

During the Month of the Military Child, we expanded our Teal Up awareness campaign. This initiative was started by the Shilo MFRC and is now celebrated by military communities across the country. This year we held our first flag raisings at CFB Halifax (cover photo) and 12 Wing Shearwater.

Last year, we ordered Teal Up shirts with our custom design for our staff and Board members. Due to popular demand, this year we launched an online clothing store! With various styles available for all ages in a wide range of sizes, we sold 196 pieces of Teal Up clothing.



CPO1 Lynn Cassidy (right) with the Defence Women's Advisory Organization, cheering for a young attendee to win a prize with their sucker pull at Bluenose Bienvenue.

Photo Credit: ©2024 DND-MDN, Canada



Cortney, Natasha and Don showcasing their Teal Up gear as they set up for the Month of the Military Child Kick-Off celebration.

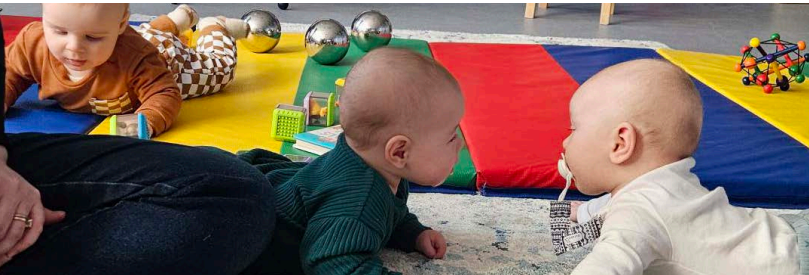


H&R MFRC staff with Juno, the Canadian Army's mascot, ready to cheer on the Halifax Wanderers at their 2024 DND Appreciation Match.

Educate and Advocate

We seek input from families through formal and informal surveys, questions, and general feedback. We analyze that input and use the latest research in family support to guide our practices. The research often comes from sources such as the Canadian Institute for Military & Veteran Health Research, Military Family Services studies, the Quality of Life Survey, and the MFS Military Resilience Experience Survey.

Our evidence-based approach has led us to develop new programs and resources to support families with intimate partner relationships, time apart, parenting, and the high cost of living.



Tummy time at New Baby!



SCC staff Audrey and Shauna wearing their support for military kids.

Classroom Collaboration

For several years, we engaged in school outreach initiatives, delivering military 101 to educators, support groups and/or workshops for students, and providing resources to school administrators. As military families increasingly live in communities far from their Base or Wing due to factors like housing shortages, reaching these families and their schools has become more complex, and vital.

Expanding our reach to schools and students in a larger geographic area led us to develop and launch an online, self-directed military lifestyle training course called **Educators Supporting Military-Connected Children**, thanks to funding from **Lockheed Martin**.

Check out the course!



13 local schools
5 Francophone
8 Anglophone

800+
children
participating

112 enrolled in the Educators Supporting
Military-Connected Students course

“

It was easy, helpful and benefited my knowledge of military families and children. I found that the videos were simple to follow along to and were easily understood in the way they relayed the information. The mini quizzes to support learning allowed me to more easily remember and comprehend the material.

Our School Outreach team celebrating Teal Up at Island View High School.

H&R MFRC staff and volunteers at Happy Harry's birthday celebration.



Responsiveness and Innovation

Connection during time apart

Our Family Navigators focused on building strong connections and relationships with families before, during and after a deployment. The Deployed Together: Kids Activity Guide and corresponding kit aims to foster that connection and strengthen family bonds by providing meaningful activities that help children, and their deployed loved ones stay emotionally close, no matter the distance. Each kit is filled with helpful strategies and fun activities for all stages of the deployment cycle.

Our Mental Health and Well-being team offered a 4-part series on self-care with one session focusing on boundaries as self-care for military spouses/partners experiencing deployments as well as education on healthy relationship boundaries. The facilitators created a no stigma environment.

Expecting Baby & New Baby

For CAF families welcoming a new baby, the added stress of relocation (possibly being away from close family and friends) and experiencing time apart can create more challenges. These programs can help reduce feelings of isolation.

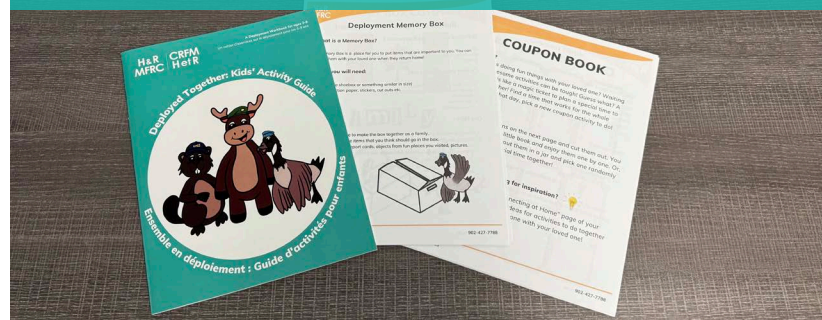
Community Pantry & Food Insecurity

The pantry continues as a self-sustaining military family community initiative and sees daily usage. This is all possible thanks to the incredible generosity of local donations from families, CAF units, and donors like the **Veteran Farm Project Society, Angus G Foods, UN NATO Veterans, the Stokers, Halifax Military Wives Choir, and the Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund**. Feedback from users helps us shape how we stock the inventory.

OP Dasher

The number of families accessing this service fluctuates yearly, but we have seen a steady increase in the last two years. We rely on the generosity of individuals and Units to fund this initiative. This year **78 families** (333 family members) were assisted through our OP Dasher holiday service.

450 guides and resource kits distributed



“

It has been nice to have a chance to get out of the house and have a social activity for both mom and baby. I have been looking forward to it every month! Having a variety of guest presenters share their specialized knowledge on baby topics has also been a valued resource as a first time mom.



Military Police from Windsor Park held a "Stuff-a-Cruiser" food drive during the holiday season, delivering this donation to our Community Pantry just in time for Christmas.

“

The program helped me and my daughter to buy what is necessary during the holiday. It is not easy to ask for help, but I put the pride away and asked for it. I don't want to be shy to say that you helped me, I want to show my child that sometimes it could be harder but there is help everywhere when you have the courage to ask for it. Thank you for your help.

Shearwater Children's Centre

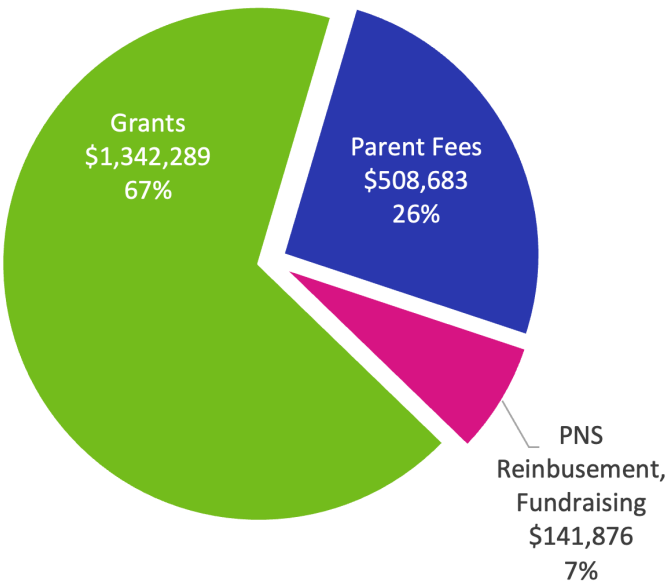
Shearwater Children's Centre (SCC) marked a milestone 30th anniversary this year. Opening in 1994 with 14 spaces, it expanded to 161 spaces by 2017. SCC holds a special place in the hearts of countless children, families, Early Childhood Educators/staff who enjoyed their time there learning and growing, which we celebrated in a variety of ways throughout the entire year.

We are pleased to report that we are seeing the positive results of Early Childhood Educator recruitment and retention due to provincial investments in fair compensation, with sustained staffing.

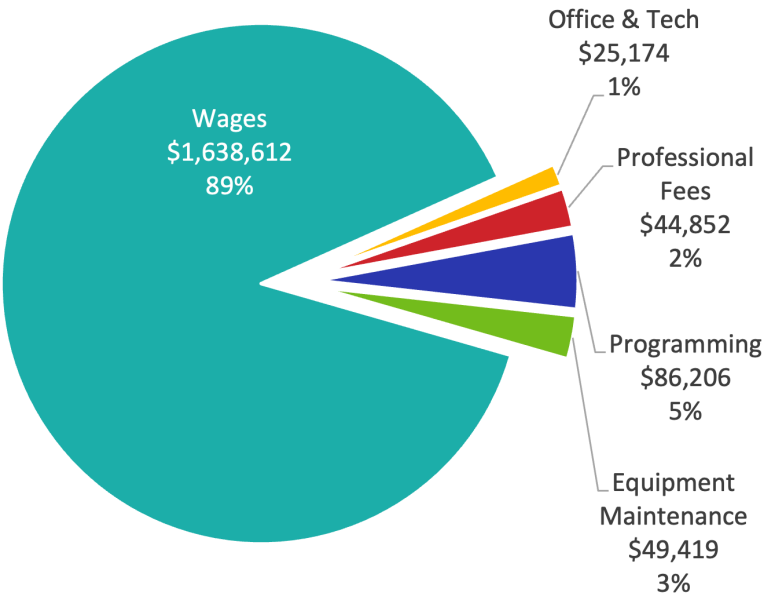


Shearwater Children's Centre Financials

Revenue



Expenses



Donor Impact

We are thankful for the continued commitment from our donors, including the corporate, community organizations, Units, and individual supporters, who fund essential programs and services.

Aethera Technologies
Angus G. Foods
BMO Bank of Montreal
Bright Star Communications
Cape Breton Island Building & Construction
Trades Council
Canadian Military Wives Choir, Halifax
CANEX
Eastlink
Halifax Wanderers FC
Happy Harry's
Lockheed Martin via Support Our Troops
Mi'KMAQ Office Furniture & Interiors
Music for Mental Health
Navy Stokers
One Veteran Group
Royal Bank of Canada
Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund
The Personal
The Royal Canadian Legion

- Centennial Legion Branch 160
- Caen Legion Branch 164
- Nunavut Command Branch 148
- Vimy Legion Branch 27

Together We Stand Foundation
Veterans UN NATO Group



In April 2024, we received a \$1000 grant from the Music 4 Mental Health Association, who chose us as a recipient for their fundraising initiatives. (Left to right) Colonel David Holmes, Commander of 12 Wing Shearwater, the Honourable Barbara Adams, Shelley Hopkins, and Chief Warrant Officer Kevin Wezenbeek.

Donations were received in memory of Petty Officer, 2nd Class (PO 2) Gregory Applin.

In addition to monetary donations, we are grateful for the in-kind donations received, such as coffee from Angus G Foods during departures and arrivals, hand-made quilts from volunteers at Project Linus, pantry donations, as well as Domino's Pizza during special events.



Shelley Hopkins (middle) with Angus G. Foods staff and RCAF members from 12 Wing Shearwater at the Woodside location of McDonald's for McHappy Day 2024.

“

It was a huge help to our family, dealing with increased costs of medication due to chemo treatments put stress on us and the OP Dasher program helped us to get through this with enabling us to get groceries we needed without having to burden our budget further.

“

I think the MFRC does a fantastic job and those who are nearby have lots of opportunity for support. Even being located two hours away I know I could contact the MFRC at any time and they will be responsive and helpful. It's been great to see the accommodation to allow after hours mail drops. That is a great service.



Our Board of Directors presented two new awards at the Annual General Meeting in June 2024. The inaugural recipients of these awards are the Veteran Farm Project for Outstanding Achievement, and Jesse Nervais for Significant Contribution.



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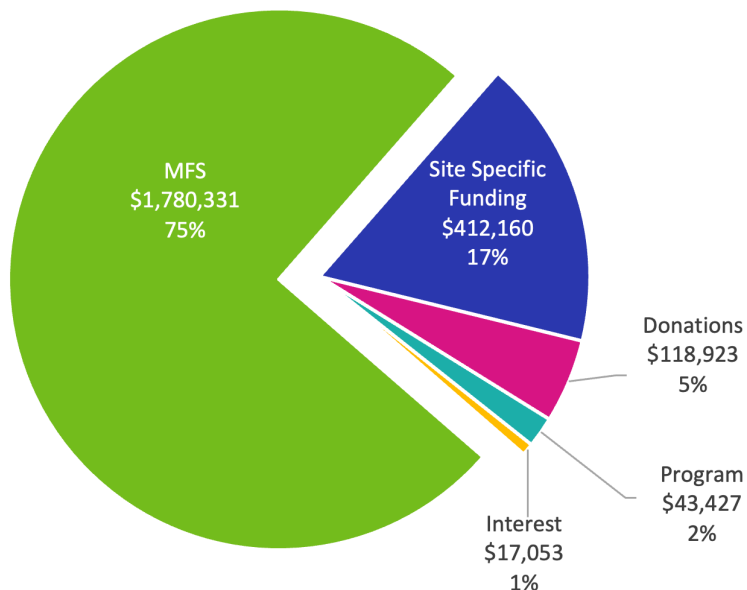
I am very grateful for the support from the deployment team at the MFRC, I appreciate all the work you guys do, especially in the evenings and weekends!

- HMCS Montreal Deployment

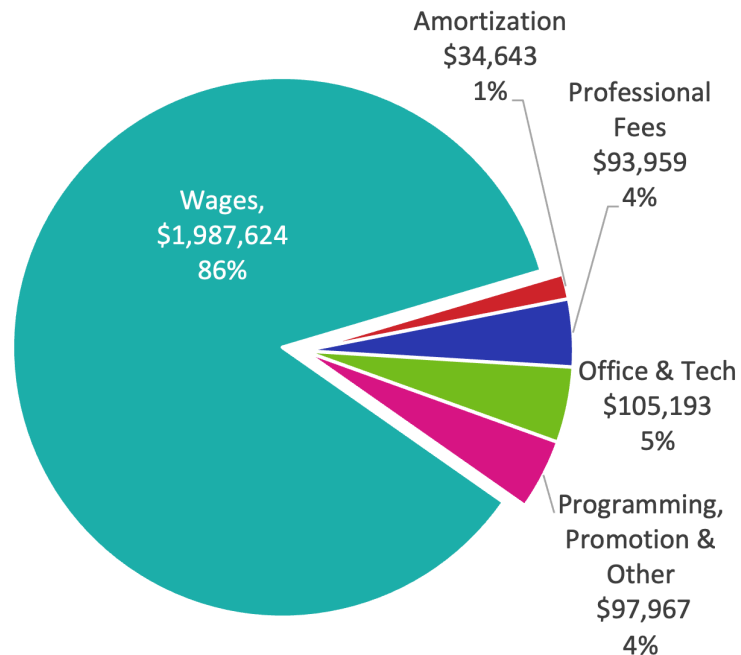


H&R MFRC Financials

Revenue



Expenses



H&R MFRC staff and 12 Wing CAF members with the centennial logo on the Cyclone at the 2024 RCAF Run.

Strengthening Our Team



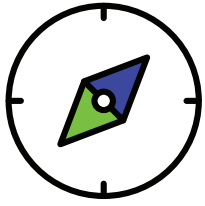
As a helping profession, we value a healthy workforce. This year, we further solidified our commitment to a psychologically safe and healthy workplace by developing and presenting a Well-Being Strategy to our team, with key principles including belonging and work-life harmony. We have a professional, talented and engaged workforce and value their contributions to advancing military and veteran family support. We thank every member of our team!

Throughout the year, other training included Gender Based Violence Intervention, Trauma Informed Practice and Conflict & Crisis Prevention Training.

In December, our team had some fun and got into the festive spirit, taking part in the "In The Box" trend for our holiday greetings on our social media. (to the left and right)

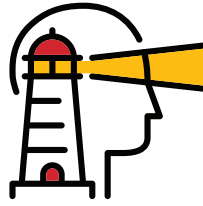


Mission, Vision & Values



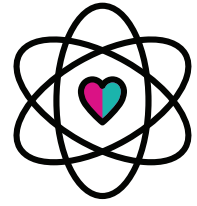
Mission

To strengthen the well-being of all those who share the unique experience of military life.



Vision

Strong, connected, resilient military families.



Values

Innovative
Compassionate
Inclusive

Looking Ahead

When educators, caregivers, school counsellors and administrators are informed about the factors affecting their military-connected children, challenges can be minimized, and the level of family support is strengthened.

Our Educators Supporting Military-Connected Students course will be used as a staff onboarding tool for our MFRC, as well as for other MFRCs across the country. Our intention is to share this resource widely. We are bringing it to Early Childhood Education institutions and reaching out to more schools to create a more supportive educational environment for military-connected children.

We support children to better understand and explore what it means to be a part of a military family, learning to adapt to new homes, staying connected during

times apart and embracing new adventures. We are accomplishing this through the upcoming publication of our Military Family Adventures book and offering Military 101 sessions to children and youth.

Evidence-based decision-making guides our planning, priorities, service offerings, service delivery, and practice. Evidence is gathered through a multitude of methods, with engagement being a critical element. We are creating a more formal engagement plan to ensure families inform, contribute and collaborate with us to support them. We will look to others who have created evidence-based frameworks to help shape our way forward, strengthening current practices and creating new ones to better engage and serve families.

Connect with us!

halifaxmfr.ca

  @hrmfrc

