

2024/2025

ALIGN ANNUAL REPORT



TOGETHER, WE ARE BOLD. TOGETHER, WE ARE
EXPERTS. TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONGER.

A MESSAGE

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & PRESIDENT



Sonja Polz



Rebecca Chahine

In 2024–2025, ALIGN Association of Community Services experienced a year of transition, renewal, and growth. With a change in leadership and staffing shifts, this was a period of ensuring stability while embracing opportunities to strengthen our role as a collective voice for children, families, and communities across Alberta. Guided by our 18-month Strategic Focus Plan, which complemented the 2022–2027 Strategic Directions, ALIGN remained focused on advancing advocacy, system leadership, service excellence, and organizational sustainability.

Highlights of the year included strengthened government relations and advocacy in areas such as group care, foster and kinship care, Family Resource Networks, licensing transformation, workforce sustainability, and advancing improvements to FSCD services, with a focus on equitable access for rural families and Indigenous children and families. Membership grew by 20 percent, demonstrating renewed engagement and stronger connections across the province. The launch of our redesigned website in fall 2024 enhanced communication and knowledge-sharing and was followed by a successful 18th Annual Conference in winter 2025. ALIGN's Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework (ICUF) also expanded, with new offerings and Elder-led teachings, while the Empowering Futures gatherings advanced important conversations on child welfare sovereignty. The Well-Being Toolkit continued to evolve through the development of an Implementation Support Framework and national outreach, and Elder guidance is leading ALIGN toward hosting its first Winter Count in 2025.

ALIGN advanced its Occupational Health and Safety initiative through a successful Showcase Day, the establishment of Communities of Practice, and direct consultant support to agencies developing safety systems and preparing for COR certification. Importantly, ALIGN worked in partnership with Children and Family Services (CFS) and the Continuing Care Association (CCSA). ALIGN also worked with other government partners and stakeholders to ensure sector input informed the long-anticipated WCB code review.

As we move forward, ALIGN is well-positioned to build on the momentum of this transitional year. Our priorities will focus on deepening sustainability through member engagement, expanding access to ALIGN offerings: ICUF, the Well-Being Toolkit, and training opportunities, and continuing to strengthen OHS supports and sector capacity. With gratitude to our board of directors, staff, Elders, members, and partners, we look ahead with optimism and resolve.

Together, we remain one voice, so children, families, and communities thrive.



ALIGN MISSION

One voice, so children, families and communities thrive.

VALUES

- Excellence
- Courage
- Respect
- Commitment
- Collective
- Integrity
- Ethical
- Accountability

BELIEFS

- We believe children and families must live in safe, secure, healthy, stable and nurturing environments.
- We believe all families and communities have the strengths and capacities to grow and change.
- We believe each child and family must be provided the opportunity to maximize their potential
- We believe that children and families must have services based on the best knowledge, practices and wisdom.
- We believe in respect for the diversity, values and dignity of all people.

ALIGN BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-2025

EXECUTIVE

Robecca Chahine	President (2023)	Red Deer
Cheryl Whiskeyjack	Vice President (2023)	Edmonton
Pauline Smale	Past President (2023)	Edmonton
Bruce Rafuse	Treasurer (2024)	Red Deer

Elder

Beverly Keeshig-Soonias (Anishinaabe) (2016) Red Deer

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

South Region Representatives

Greg Schmidt (2019), Lethbridge
Shauna Cohen (2024), Lethbridge

Calgary Region Representatives

Brian Zelt (2024), Calgary
Danielle Ladouceur (2020), Calgary

Central Region Representatives

Bruce Rafuse (2018), Red Deer
Carrie Deering (2024), Red Deer

Edmonton Region Representatives

Sunny Thaleshvar (2023), Edmonton
Charles Wong (2024), Edmonton

North Regional Representatives

(NE) Rudy Newbury (2023), St. Paul/Athabasca
(NW) Jessica Beauchamp (2021), Grande Prairie

Indigenous Representatives

(North) Verna Longmore (2024)
(Edmonton) Aubrey Watson (2024)
(Calgary) Sarah Fuhrman (2019)

COMMUNITY MEMBER

Julie Mann-Johnson – U of C academic (2017)
Jenny McGrath – MacEwan academic (2023)
Michelle Briegel – Mount Royal academic and CYCCA (2023)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Chris Simonson (2022), Edmonton, (OHS Committee)
Danielle Ladouceur (2020), Calgary, (OHS Committee)

WELL-BEING



VISIT OUR WELL-BEING
TOOLKIT PAGE!

TOOLKIT

The interactive **Toolkit** includes resources to support child and youth well-being practice and assessment and a Well-Being Impact Portal to collect and share agencies' individual and collective impact.

PORTAL

This is the gateway from your agency's individual impact reflections into an overview of impact across the province and over time. All the tools are organized by the seven domains of well-being and by children and youth, caregiver, and agency and staff.

ALIGN WELL-BEING REPORT

The Well-Being Project was a three-year, three-phase initiative that resulted in the creation of a comprehensive Well-Being Framework, outlining principles of measurement and domains of well-being, as well as the development of an online Toolkit and Impact Portal to report agency outcomes at a provincial, sector-wide level.

ALIGN's Well-Being Toolkit plays a transformative role in child and family services, helping to reimagine how we support children and their families across the continuum of care. Rooted in culturally affirming principles, the Toolkit centers Indigenous knowledge and practices, emphasizing the importance of cultural identity and community connection. This approach leads to more meaningful, effective services while respecting Indigenous ways of defining and validating wellness without requiring translation into Western metrics.

Over the past year, ALIGN advanced the Toolkit through the creation of an Implementation Support Framework and the facilitation of monthly Communities of Practice, which have provided consistent guidance and peer learning opportunities for agencies at every stage of adoption. Stewardship has been central to this work, moving implementation beyond a simple plan to an intentional, guided process rooted in care, accountability, and alignment with community needs. This collaborative

approach maintains momentum, builds organizational capacity, and ensures that progress is celebrated along the way—transforming implementation into a shared journey toward lasting well-being for children, youth, families, and communities.

Organizations adopting the Well-Being Toolkit can choose from three tailored tiers of support—Planting, Nurturing, and Harvesting—depending on their readiness and goals. Planting provides an introduction to the Toolkit through orientation, goal-setting, and basic planning, making it ideal for those exploring or piloting the approach. Nurturing offers full implementation support, adding staff training, skill development, and sustainability planning with access to the Impact Portal. Harvesting represents the most comprehensive option, embedding the Toolkit into long-term practice through policy integration, ongoing training, continuous improvement, and regionally specific outcome data. Each tier includes expert guidance from an ALIGN Implementation Consultant, a structured roadmap, participation in a Community of Practice, and tools to measure and share impact.

National promotion of the Well-Being Toolkit has sparked interest across Canada, highlighting ALIGN's leadership in advancing Indigenous-informed approaches to measuring and supporting well-being.



VISIT OUR ICUF PAGE!

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FRAMEWORK (ICUF)

ICUF FOSTER CARE SESSIONS

- 2 Sessions - Calgary & Central

ICUF SESSION FOR CORPORATE COMPANY

ICUF SESSION FOR DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

- 1 Session - 53 Participants

ICUF WEBINAR: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WITH UNIQUE STRENGTHS: IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DISCUSSING PERSPECTIVES IN DISABILITY

- 1 Session - 77 Registrants

EMPOWERING FUTURES: GATHERINGS FOR INDIGENOUS CHILD WELFARE SOVEREIGNTY

The Empowering Futures gatherings were held in Treaty 6 (Edmonton) and Treaty 7 (Calgary), bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders including Indigenous leaders, child welfare professionals, government representatives, and non-Indigenous allies. These gatherings, facilitated by ALIGN's Reconciliation Strategist, Tanya Tourangeau, provided an opportunity for meaningful dialogue on systemic barriers in child welfare and the ways in which Indigenous-led solutions can drive sustainable and culturally relevant change. The gatherings aimed to address Indigenous child welfare sovereignty through shared learning, dialogue, and solution building. Discussions focused on the reclamation of jurisdiction under Bill C-92. The challenges of funding and governance, and the role of cultural revitalization in ensuring the well-being of Indigenous children.

Participants engaged in in-depth discussions on several critical areas:

- Case Studies of First Nations at various stages of reclaiming jurisdiction under Bill C–92.
- Governance Strategies emphasizing traditional leadership models and the integration of Indigenous laws
- Financial Sustainability, including the need for multi-year, block funding agreements and Indigenous–led economic models.
- Cultural Revitalization, focusing on land-based healing, language preservation, and kinship care as essential components of indigenous child welfare.

Through dialogue, shared learning, and action-oriented discussions, Participants identified key themes necessary for meaningful change: indigenous governance and self-determination, cultural revitalization, business planning and financial sustainability, and systemic policy shifts. This report synthesizes these discussions and provides recommendations for moving forward, ensuring Indigenous children and families receive culturally appropriate care within self-determined systems.

Read the report here:

[ALIGN Report "Empowering Futures: Gatherings for Indigenous Child Welfare Sovereignty" April 2025 - ALIGN Association of Community Services](#)

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY (OHS)

ALIGN advanced its Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) work significantly this year:

- A highly successful OHS Showcase Day brought together agencies, Elders, government, safety partners and sector leaders.
- Communities of Practice were established, supporting ongoing dialogue and knowledge-sharing.
- ALIGN's OHS consultant continued to provide direct support to agencies in developing health & safety systems, preparing for COR certification, and building toward safety partnerships with government and WCB.
- Importantly, the consultant also worked closely with government partners, community stakeholders, and sector leaders to provide information and input as the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) undergoes a much-anticipated code review in our sector—ensuring member voices and frontline realities are represented in this critical process.

This initiative demonstrates ALIGN's leadership in building a safe, sustainable, and competent workforce—one of the most critical needs identified in our strategic directions.

ONLINE PRESENCE

Summary Website Report

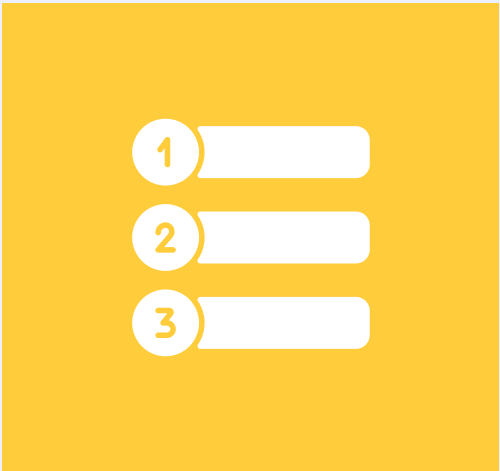
November 12, 2024 - August 25, 2025



The redesigned ALIGN website is now more member-focused, ensuring content is current, relevant, and easy to access. Analytics show that the most visited pages strongly reflect our key priorities and offerings, including the Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework (ICUF), the Well-Being Toolkit, the OHS Series, our events and conference, and membership information. Career postings, featured on every page footer and promoted on social media, continue to attract high traffic, while the Grants page and CS Caregiver Training page remain important assets for supporting members and engaging potential new ones. The Resource Library has been especially successful, drawing viewers seeking news, tools, and resources. Our recent addition of Popular Search Filters—covering topics such as C-92, advocacy engagement, workplace wellness, and foster care—makes it even easier for users to find what they need. This user-friendly and dynamic hub positions the website as a go-to source of up-to-date information across the human services sector.

Summary Website Report

November 12, 2024 - August 25, 2025



- **37,898** Total Visitors
- **88,456** Pages Viewed

Top 20 Pages Viewed

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1.Grants & Awards | 11.Empowering Futures Event post |
| 2.Home Page | 12.Enhancement Manual Update |
| 3.Events Page | 13.Sector Conference – Indigenous Wellness |
| 4.Resource Library Home Page | 14.Online Indigenous Advent Calendar |
| 5.CS Provincial Caregiver Training | 15.20 Great Ways for Children & Families to Celebrate Indigenous History |
| 6.Members Career Page | 16.ICUF Landing Page |
| 7.Well-Being Toolkit Page | 17.Become a Member |
| 8.About Us | 18.ICUF Promo in library |
| 9.ALIGN Association 17th Conference 2025 | 19.Members Directory |
| 10.ALIGN Online Training Intro to Child Intervention | 20.OHS Leadership |

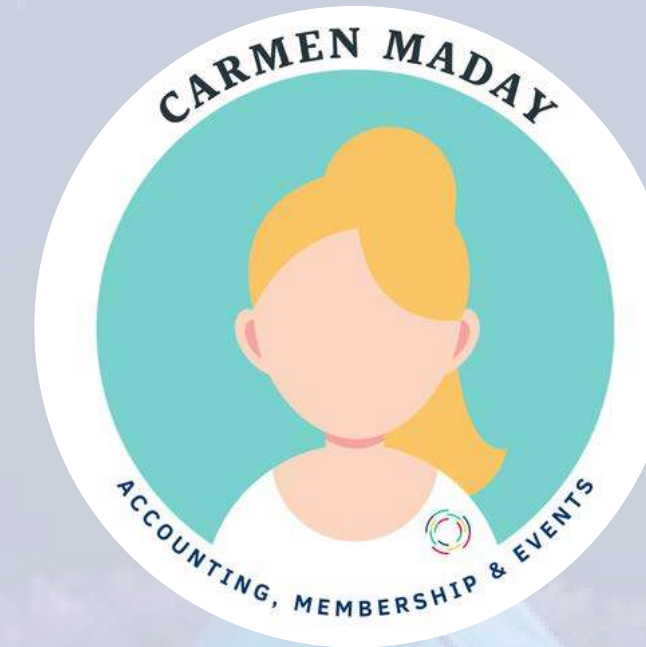
Top 5 Cities

Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Sherwood Park

Top Social Media Referrals

Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram

ALIGN'S 2024-2025 TEAM



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@align-association

ALIGN BRAND STORY

“When all the moving pieces come together perfectly and just work. It was like the stars were aligned...”

For centuries, people looked above at the stars for direction. The alignment of stars was used as a tool to understand where we are and to give us direction.

No matter where we are from, we come together to move forward. We are the collective voice for our membership agencies.

Together, we make an impact and create ripples in the human services sector. We advocate on behalf of our member agencies that support children and families in Alberta.

Together, we are a community.

Together, we are experts.

Together, we are stronger.

We are ALIGN - Together for Children and Families.

— ALIGN BRAND LOGO INFLUENCE —

We build connections and together, we are stronger. Just as stars cluster around each other, a collective is a group of entities that works together to achieve a common objective.

The logo alludes to constellations and the notion of stars aligning by referencing star trails. Star trails are a type of photograph that captures the apparent motion of stars in the night sky and shows individual stars as streaks. The flow of the lines creates concentric circles or a swirl. These connections represent the movement and accessibility of ALIGN while being expressive and open.



ALIGN

Association of
Community Services