



Our History

The Early Days

Founded as the Associated Charities by Rev. D.A. and Ethel McKillop in 1910, carya has a long and unique tradition of responding to the needs of Calgarians through dynamic, innovative, leading-edge programs.

In the beginning, the agency assisted new settlers with food, clothing, shelter, employment and counselling and as Calgary's complex social service network evolved, the Associated Charities kept pace.

Over time, the agency took on a wide range of new initiatives to address the needs of the unemployed, widows and orphans, unmarried mothers, veterans and the aged. In the course of evolution, the Associated Charities became the Board of Public Welfare in 1922, reflecting its very active role in the early development of financial assistance programs for the poor.

Becoming Calgary Family Services

In 1941, the agency separated its financial assistance and family counselling services into two distinct agencies; the financial assistance portion was gradually taken over by The City of Calgary and in 1947 the counselling branch became the Calgary Family Service Bureau. It continued under this name until 1998 when it changed its name to Calgary Family Services Society.

To support and promote affordable counselling services, the agency assumed a strong leadership role in the formation of the Community Chest (now United Way of Calgary and Area) and the Council of Social Agencies. These were the first major collaborative community initiatives designed to facilitate coordinated service planning and the creation of a sustainable funding base for the not-for-profit service sector.

This commitment to working together with community partners to ensure that all Calgarians have access to the services they need continues as a cornerstone of Calgary Family Services' relationship with the community.

While in 1947 the Calgary Family Service Bureau consolidated its mandate to provide family counselling to those in need, it has continued a two-pronged approach to helping families including both counselling and physical care. In 1952, the Emergency Homemaker Services was initiated to assist young families and in 1967, it began to provide in-home support to help seniors stay in their own home. These services are still in place today. Our older adults programs have more recently expanded to provide a full spectrum of community-based services to address the needs of aging Calgarians.

Innovative work

Calgary Family Services was one of the first employers to require professional training for social workers and advocated for training as a prerequisite for all counselling roles. Later in the 1970s, Calgary Family Services also participated in developing national practice standards for homemakers. When the Faculty of Social Work was established in 1968, Calgary Family Services became recognized as a critical field training centre for both social workers and psychologists.

In 2005, Calgary Family Services became an accredited provider of continuing education for professionals engaged in human services work and sought to share their expertise with as broad a range of professionals as possible.

The Next 100

Calgary Family Services celebrated its centennial anniversary in 2010, making it one of the city's longest-serving social service agencies. After 100 years in Calgary, it was time to refresh our brand.

In 2014, we changed our name from Calgary Family Services to carya, which represents the hickory tree, known for its deep roots and strong, resilient wood.

For over a century, carya has been deeply rooted in the Calgary community, providing much needed support and care to people in all life stages. Changing, growing and evolving like the carya tree, we respond and transform to meet the needs of our community.

We are proud of our history of quietly serving Calgary's community. We're looking forward to the next hundred years with a brand that honours our past and gives us renewed focus for the future.