



## GRIT - Annual General Meeting 2024 Minutes

November 14, 2024, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

### Total In-person Attendance – 41

Karen Lynch, Debbie Couch, Amber Mack, Manish Rawal; Alison Rinas; Kristina Patterson; Maria Makowieck; Marilyn Armstrong ; Sarah Nychka; Twyla Bruce; Becky Gascoyee; Laura Blakley; Janice Comrie; Karen Schmitke; Barbara Lopetinsky; Jane Reid; Ed Wong; Shelby Engelking; Sheila Harrison; Susan Bayne; Melanie Nesimiuk; Jackie Cromie; Leanne Rose; Michelle Haver; Sandy Thompson-Hodgetts; Christina Cameron; Parveen Kalirai; Candice Quinlan; Zohair Ali Badani; Kaiser Javid Bhat; Stacy Grainger Schatz; Michael Wing; Stephanie Jones; Andy Akle; Freddie Martinez; Emily Keating; Barrett Westerlund; Doug Jewell; Danielle Gould; Irene Wood; Ivy Gwo

### 1. Meeting called to Order to Review and Approval of Agenda

- The AGM meeting was called to order at 5 p.m. by Chair Karen Lynch.
- Karen welcomed GRIT families, staff, and board members and thanked everyone for attending GRIT's Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Freddie made a motion to accept the 2024 AGM agenda as presented. Jane seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

### 2. Introduction of Guest Speaker

- Land Acknowledgement: Amber offered land acknowledgment.
- Guest Speaker Introduction: Amber introduced the guest speaker, Hussain Alhussainy, highlighting his lived-experience and educational background in disability studies and disability-rights activism. The speaker holds a BA (Hons) and is currently a SSHRC-funded MA student whose research is focused on the intersection of disability, institutions and politics.

Key Points from the Guest Speaker's Presentation:

- **Early Childhood Education as a Right:**
  - The speaker emphasized that early childhood education is a fundamental right for all children, including those with disabilities.
  - He pointed out that the current infrastructure is inadequate to meet the needs of children with disabilities, often leading to segregated classrooms and a lack of inclusivity.



- **Inclusive Education:**
  - The speaker advocated for moving away from specialized programs in Early Childhood Services (ECS). Instead, classrooms should be designed to be inclusive, enabling participation from all students, regardless of their abilities.
  - He emphasized leveraging the strengths of children from diverse backgrounds to create a more equitable learning environment.
- **Accessible Playgrounds:**
  - The speaker highlighted the importance of establishing accessible playgrounds to foster interaction, socialization, and inclusivity outside the classroom. This approach supports children with disabilities in developing life skills for everyday survival.
- **Advocacy and Policy:**
  - He stressed the need for policies that ensure all children, irrespective of ability, can access infrastructure and opportunities.
  - The speaker shared personal experiences and emphasized that IPPS may be ableist structures in and of themselves. Often students with disabilities do not have access to robust curriculum because of perceived deficits. importance of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) in supporting personal growth.
- **Barriers to Inclusion:**
  - Key challenges include stigma surrounding disability, a lack of cohesive policies, and societal misunderstandings of disability.
  - He urged attendees to address these barriers and foster a social understanding of disability to create an inclusive society.
- **Discussion and Comments:**
  - Karen resonated with the speaker's comments on the "sense of othering" often experienced by individuals with disabilities.
  - Amber and Karen expressed their appreciation for the speaker's insights and thanked him for his impactful presentation.

This discussion highlighted the ongoing need for advocacy, systemic changes, and a collective effort to create inclusive and equitable environments for all children.





### 3. Current Board Members

Karen introduced the current board members, including new student board director.

### 4. Review of Board Processes

- Karen reviewed the definition of a GRIT society member (including voting and non-voting members). Members are current parents, staff, the broader community, etc.
- Voting members include parents/guardians of children in GRIT and board members.

### 5. Approval of 2023 AGM Meeting Minutes

- Sandy presented the 2023 minutes on screen.

Jane made a motion to accept the 2023 minutes as presented. Shelby seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

### 6. Board Accomplishments

- **Recognition of Board Members:** Karen expressed her gratitude to the board members for their dedication, hard work, and leadership throughout the past year.

#### Major Achievements:

- **New Bylaws Registered:** The board successfully registered new bylaws.
- **Investment Review:** A thorough review of the organization's current investments was completed.
- **RFP for Auditors:** The Request for Proposal (RFP) process for auditors was conducted, led by Debbie and the Finance Committee.
- **CEO Performance Review:** As part of the CEO's first year with GRIT, the HR Committee prepared a performance letter and shared it with Amber.
- **Engagement with GRIT Staff:** The board had the opportunity to engage with several outstanding GRIT staff members over the past year.

#### Appreciation for Amber:

- Karen specifically acknowledged Amber's exceptional work and leadership during the past year.
- Chair highlighted Amber's consistent delivery of excellence and commended her for her dedication to listening to and addressing the needs of the organization.





## 7. 2023-24 Year at a Glance (Annual Report)

- Acknowledgment of the AGM Report: Karen encouraged all members to read the AGM report, describing it as a "masterpiece" that reflects the organization's achievements and progress.

### Amber's Reflections:

- Amber expressed her gratitude to the board and staff for their trust and support.
- She shared how aligning personal values with work has made her role more fulfilling and enjoyable.

### Key Highlights from the AGM:

- Budget Growth: The overall budget has increased, reflecting growth in most of GRIT's programs.
- ECS Expansion: An additional 12 children have been included in the ECS program this year.
- Stollery Grant: The Stollery grant (Last year) will be utilized this year to further support organizational initiatives.
- Connecting Canada Program: The program expanded to 13 provinces but is concluding next year.
- Rebranding and Communication Strategy: The organization underwent a rebranding process and developed a new communication strategy to enhance outreach and engagement.
- IT Infrastructure Revamp: Significant improvements were made to the IT infrastructure, ensuring enhanced operational efficiency.

## 8. Audited 2023-24 Financial Statements

Debbie Couch presented the audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2024 and shared the following details:

- Revenue: The organization reported revenues of approximately \$9.2 million, an increase of \$1 million compared to the previous year.
- Revenue Sources: The majority of revenue was derived from the Government of Alberta, followed by Federal Government grants, investment income, donations, and fundraising.
- Expense Allocation: 88% of expenses were directed toward people and resources, consistent with the prior year, 8% was allocated to administration costs and 4% was allocated to building costs.
- Surplus: The organization achieved a surplus of \$56,783, reflecting a strong financial position and another successful year for GRIT.



Debbie made a motion to accept the audited financial statements as presented; Andy seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

## 9. Appointment of Auditors for 2024-25

- Debbie informed that Faber LLP successfully met all the criteria outlined in the recent Request for Proposal (RFP) process and secured first place in the evaluation.
- Debbie also confirmed that GRIT will continue its association with Faber LLP as auditors for the upcoming year.

Debbie made a motion to accept Faber LLP as the auditor for the 2024–25 fiscal year. Shelby seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

## 10. Nomination Committee Report

- **Acknowledgment of Departing Board Director:** Karen expressed heartfelt gratitude to Barbara O’Neill, a departing board director, for her contributions over the past year.
- **Introduction of New Board Directors:** Karen noted an overwhelming response to the board director posting, with an impressive number of prospective candidates. Following a thorough interview process, the following individuals were nominated as new board directors:
  - **Ed Wong**
  - **Sheila Harrison**
  - **Kaiser Bhat**
  - **Dr Joni Turville**

Directors continuing their terms or reappointed for the 2024-25 program year are Karen Lynch, Barrett Westerlund, Debbie Couch, Jane Reid, Andy Akle, Shelby Engelking, Sandy Thompson-Hodgetts, Freddie Martinez, Zohair Badami

Karen made a motion to accept the slate of Directors for 2023-24, seconded by Jane, and the motion was carried.

## 11. Adjourn meeting

Karen Lynch moved to adjourn the AGM at 5:53 PM, Seconded by Karen Schmitke.

