

# turning points

How CUP stays responsive and builds momentum

2023-24  
annual report



**Community-University Partnership**  
for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families

# the director's story

**Since launching in 2000, CUP has grown from a small group of researchers and community partners into a wide network of academics, students, community members, and partner organizations in Edmonton and beyond. Karen Edwards has served as director of CUP since 2016.**

If you're reading this report, you're likely interested in how research can extend beyond the university to create meaningful change in the lives of our communities.

At CUP, close collaboration and reciprocity between researchers and community members can lead to better outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities. Our community-engaged research model, rooted in values of relationship-building and trust, is a time-tested way to build environments where research projects and solutions are created collaboratively by people inside and outside the university while empowering students to become the next generation of community leaders.

As the director, I'm privileged to lead an organization driven by values that inspire real engagement and change. Over the past four years we have worked alongside our Steering Committee to bring our 2020-2024 strategic plan to life. In this time, CUP has navigated several turning points. We have shifted with complex political and administrative environments, embraced opportunities to provide leadership in community-engagement, navigated funding constraints, and engaged in innovative research partnerships. In this report, CUP researchers and partners share the valuable insights gained from their experiences with partnerships, projects, sectors, and systems.

As we build our new strategic plan, CUP will need to navigate two additional turning points. First, we are seeing a rising demand for research and evaluation support from partners across the social serving, health, and education sectors. We must consider how we are able to keep pace with demand within our current operational model.

Second, CUP has a growing opportunity to be a leader and anchor for community-engaged research on campus and throughout the Edmonton region. As universities re-examine

the bias, power, and exclusionary nature of their histories, they are also seeking ways to engage beyond their walls, foster inclusion, empower learners, and collaborate. This is where CUP's community-engaged model serves as a bridge between the university's past, present and future. Our model fosters environments where expertise from various sectors can "expand academic thought, influence research paradigms, and contribute to better practices, public policies, and enhanced public life," as highlighted in the University of Alberta's 2023-2028 research and innovation plan, *Forward with Purpose*.

As we look forward, we are reflecting on our progress and the diverse perspectives that enrich our work. We are also asking questions about CUP's scope, purpose, and priorities. Regardless of future strategic directions, the stories of CUP researchers and partners consistently reveal that trust and strong relationships will remain the bedrocks of our work.

If anything in this report resonates with you or inspires you to learn more, I encourage you to reach out to CUP. Share your story or become part of our journey. Together, we can deepen our relationships and best navigate the turning points sure to come in years ahead.



KAREN EDWARDS, DIRECTOR OF CUP

# CUP's 2020-2024 strategic goals

## Background

CUP's 2020-2024 strategic plan guided us through the post-pandemic years, characterized by funding gaps across sectors, increasingly complex client needs, and a growing focus on social justice in our institutions. In 2020, CUP was also finding its footing in the School of Public Health after relocating from the Faculty of Extension.

Our strategic plan called on us to bring more research to policy discussions, expand our efforts to shape community-based research on campus, act on our commitments to equity, and continue momentum in key research areas.

## Leadership

**GOAL** | CUP is a recognized and sought-after leader in community-engaged research at the University of Alberta.

*CUP has become a backbone of community-based research on campus and a trusted partner for Edmonton's health and social sectors. We helped the university shape its latest research and innovation plan, and we continue seeking ways to sustain healthy, equitable environments where researchers and communities collaborate and co-create.*

—DEANNA WILLIAMSON, STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR

## Poverty

**GOAL** | Research and evaluation contributes to reducing poverty among families and communities.

*CUP researchers have been on the ground with communities, officials, and innovators, digging into very complicated questions about poverty and civil society. The social and non-profit sectors are considered responsible for society's most difficult problems, with the odds stacked against them. Moving alongside our partners as they attempt to coordinate long-term solutions to poverty has revealed how slow and difficult these efforts are, but also how necessary.*

—MARIA MAYAN, CUP ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

## Early childhood development

**GOAL** | Research and evaluation informs early childhood development (ECD) practices, programs, and policies.

*ECD has always been central to CUP's work, so we have deep relationships with non-profits, leaders, and advocates in the sector. Recently, we've focused on early learning and child care (ELCC), particularly when it comes to the rollout of the Canada-Alberta child care agreement, which has great implications for children and families. Thanks to CUP's research capacity, our partners have gathered data, fostered cross-sector dialogue, and are making policy recommendations to government partners.*

—MACKENZIE MARTIN, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

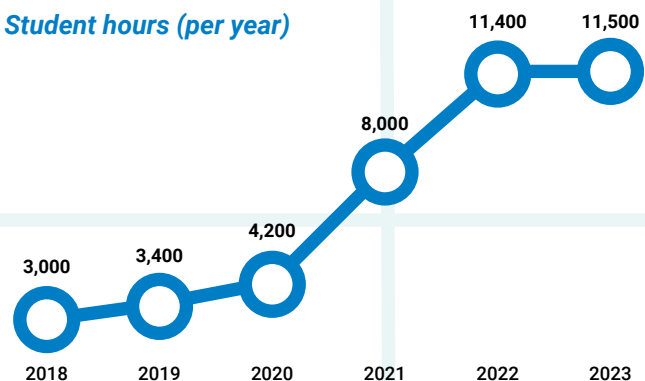
## Capacity-building

**GOAL** | Partners have the capacity to use research and evaluation effectively to make informed decisions.

*Since 2013, the Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN), CUP's biggest initiative, has given hundreds of students and organizations hands-on experience in evaluation and established evaluation as a core competency in the School of Public Health. As the demand for evaluation capacity among students, governments, non-profits, and funders continues to grow, we're turning our attention to long-term sustainability as we approach the end of a Tri-Council grant.*

—REBECCA GOKIERT, CUP ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

## Student hours (per year)



Students bring essential forms of research and evaluation capacity to community projects. CUP has seen a significant increase in the number of hours students spend supporting community projects, a trend driven by the influx of ECN projects and students.

# steering committee reflections

## Background

CUP's Steering Committee is made up of about 30 members from Edmonton non-profits, government agencies, and university departments. In 2023-2024, the committee was co-chaired by Kourch Chan, chief strategy officer for e4c, and Deanna Williamson, associate professor in the Department of Human Ecology.



Members of CUP's Steering Committee at a reflective session in June 2024



## New strategic directions

CUP is crafting a new strategic plan to guide our work for the next four years. As CUP's most important link to the needs and knowledge of communities, the Steering Committee is closely involved in shaping our strategic direction. The committee started 2024 with an exploration of CUP's shifting context, which provided a foundation for a series of strategic planning sessions where committee members, CUP researchers, staff, and students shared ideas, aspirations, and visions for CUP.

*The Steering Committee's recent focus has been on understanding the organizational and systemic factors that affect our work, both at the university and community levels. We've encouraged people to bring more of themselves to the table, to see their personal and professional experiences as part of CUP's mission.*

—DEANNA WILLIAMSON, CO-CHAIR

*The Steering Committee is seeking ways to be more active in shaping the systems around us and showcasing CUP's uniqueness. Through our planning process this past year, we have been getting the perspectives of people across our complex environment to identify the things CUP does right and how CUP can best achieve its mission.*

—KOURCH CHAN, CO-CHAIR

## Shaping the conversation about social innovation

The University of Alberta's strategic planning documents increasingly include the concept of "social innovation" and highlight the university's mission of social betterment. The university's 2023-2028 strategic plan for research and innovation associates "social innovation" with intersectoral collaboration and community-led activities, while the university's Indigenization and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) plans call for the elevation of diverse knowledges and equity-based principles.

*For two decades, CUP has been an exemplar of what could be called "social innovation." Now, as the university formalizes its commitments, we can bring a wealth of experience. We can ensure community voices are not lost in the process. Instead of waiting around, CUP has been actively involved in early conversations about what 'social innovation' could mean at the U of A.*

—DEANNA WILLIAMSON, CO-CHAIR

*The community side of CUP represents the groups that most stand to benefit from the promise of social innovation. To me, social innovation isn't an abstract idea, but rather making well-informed changes with the best tools we have to improve basic indicators of well-being, such as child development, opportunity in life, and community cohesion. We see this kind of innovation across CUP projects, which use equitable models to improve services for vulnerable families or bring communities into policy discussions to elevate the sector as a whole.*

—KOURCH CHAN, CO-CHAIR



KOURCH CHAN,  
COMMUNITY CO-CHAIR



DEANNA WILLIAMSON,  
ACADEMIC CO-CHAIR

## The challenges of sustaining CUP

As CUP explores a new strategic direction, we must address the significant challenges to sustaining our unique model. Our structure depends on collaboration between university and community partners, supported by funding from foundations, governments, and research grants, as well as faculty and operational support from the University of Alberta.

*At this point, CUP has carried out the vision of its founders, having built lasting relationships with communities and become "institutionalized" to some extent at the university. But one thing we've learned is that we can't rely on assumptions about the best way to do things. As we mature, we'll need to "let go" of some areas of work and take up others without losing our core mission and values.*

—DEANNA WILLIAMSON, CO-CHAIR

*CUP is facing a series of inflection points. While our projects and student involvement have grown, we must consider what will keep CUP going in the long term, and how to make the most of our assets beyond grants—like relationships, shared values, and long-standing commitments. These are the elements that keep CUP vibrant and connected with the community and our partners.*

—KOURCH CHAN, CO-CHAIR

# early childhood development

## Background

Early childhood development (ECD) has been central to CUP's work since our founding, which was a direct response to community organizations expressing a need for tools to measure child outcomes. Since 2020, CUP has promoted the use of evidence in designing school-based supports, improving early learning and child care (ELCC) services, advocating for policy recommendations, and more.

## Better systems for children and families

Several CUP projects have aimed to bring community-based knowledge to discussions about programs and policies across the ECD and ELCC sectors.

- The **Journeys Project** (2021-2023) was a collaboration between ELCC and newcomer health leaders to better understand the first-hand experiences of ethnocultural families seeking ELCC services. CUP helped engage 30 parents, develop a guide for the sector, and share findings at a variety of community events.
- The **Early Childhood Educator Wage Grid** initiative (2022-ongoing) is a project led by CUP and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (AECEA) to develop and propose a wage grid for early childhood educators (ECEs) in Alberta. CUP researchers have met with ECEs, ELCC owners and operators, and governments. Researchers are working closely with the AECEA to advance policy recommendations.
- The Municipality of Jasper's five-year **Community Childcare Strategy** (released 2023) is based on CUP's research with residents, businesses, families, and child care operators in Jasper.

## The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

Since 2019, CUP has been collaborating with the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC), a volunteer group of ELCC leaders, operators, and practitioners advocating for a strong, publicly managed ELCC system. CUP is providing research capacity as the ECELC navigates major policy changes affecting ELCC, especially the Canada-Alberta bilateral child care agreement, which promises both \$10-a-day child care and

a healthy, values-based ELCC system to support it.

Over the past five years, CUP has connected the ECELC to postdoctoral fellows, researchers, students, and other knowledge mobilization experts, who have been active in working groups, produced over 20 publicly accessible briefs or reports\*, and led data-collection activities for the ECELC's biggest projects.

*We are providing evidence that the ECELC uses to ground discussions with policymakers, with the hope that this leads to well-informed decision-making. It's a healthy relationship. No one involved in the research work is hesitant to share suggestions or critiques. CUP and the ECELC have developed a space where we can express our minds, debate the evidence, and come together on a level playing field. It's really a model environment for analysis and collaboration.*

—MACKENZIE MARTIN, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

## Alberta Parent Survey on Early Learning and Child Care

Since 2021, the CUP-ECELC partnership has revolved around an Alberta-wide survey of parents and guardians. The survey, designed by CUP and funded by the ECELC and the Muttart Foundation, collected original data about parents' needs and preferences for child care in their communities. Since then, researchers have been analyzing the survey results through the lens of the five principles outlined in the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework: affordability, accessibility, flexibility, inclusivity, and quality.

The ECELC has released five reports on the survey results, along with executive summaries and one-page infographics to help readers digest key findings.



Members of the CUP-ECELC research team at a group discussion organized by CUP

\* [www.ecelc.ca/publications](http://www.ecelc.ca/publications)

## Mobilizing the research

The CUP-ECELC partnership is currently mobilizing the results of the Alberta Parent Survey. Along with creating publicly accessible reports with findings and recommendations, we presented results at a community event held by Child Care Now Alberta in February 2024. CUP also organized a knowledge-to-action workshop in September 2024, which brought together ELCC stakeholders to collaborate on developing recommendations for ELCC in Alberta. The workshop concluded with participants identifying next steps they can take to support the sector and advance recommendations.

*The roll-out of the Canada-Alberta agreement has been complex. If researchers and communities have a voice early in the process, and throughout the process, they can contribute to ELCC policy that is evidence-based and responds to real needs across the province.*

—LAUREN LEES, RESEARCH ASSISTANT



CUP's knowledge-to-action workshop on September 26, 2024



CUP and partners at the Head Start Steering Committee meeting on July 8, 2024

## Ongoing research projects

Research associate Mackenzie Martin has led the development of CUP's ELCC projects since 2023, drawing on CUP's deep relationships and her international network of ELCC researchers.

- Currently, CUP is doing an environmental scan of parenting programs in Alberta, aiming to get a better sense of what local organizations exist and what they're doing. The results will help understand the research needs and priorities of community organizations delivering parenting programs in the province.
- CUP and Edmonton Head Start are working to identify Head Start's research and evaluation needs. We are now collaborating on plans for two research projects, including one to improve Head Start's engagement with parents.
- Mackenzie is working with Ozlem Cankaya from MacEwan University's early learning program to explore whether "loose parts play" is an accessible alternative to expensive toys when it comes to fostering cognitive development.
- Along with colleagues in Cape Town, South Africa, Mackenzie is leading a systematic review of teen parent groups around the world.

*We have a lot of projects and potential projects on the go. That comes with community-based research. If you want to ensure your research does something good for communities, you need to have a lot of conversations. It can take time, sometimes months, before researchers and partners reach a shared understanding of the research needs and limitations.*

—MACKENZIE MARTIN, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

# poverty

## Background

CUP's poverty-focused work is driven by a belief that community-based research can play a key role in society's efforts to address the root causes of poverty. Bringing researchers, sector leaders, and community members together is essential if we are to create more integrated systems, fully appreciate the complexity of poverty, and imagine long-term solutions.

While the need for solutions to root causes is clear, the path to such solutions is not. At a local level, concerted efforts to address "wicked problems" like poverty are often bold, innovative, and controversial.

## EndPovertyEdmonton

In 2014, CUP joined the Task Force to Eliminate Poverty created by city council. The task force led to the formation of EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) in 2017. In 2022, EPE became a non-profit organization focused on six "gamechangers" identified as critical to ending poverty. Over its life, EPE took on a variety of forms, and people involved experienced major hurdles related to governance, strategy, and being responsible for the incredible goal of "ending poverty in a generation." Nonetheless, CUP built strong relationships with community leaders and changemakers under EPE's umbrella.

Following community-based participatory research principles, we became integrated in teams pursuing the EPE "gamechangers" of Indigenization, Anti-racism, and Inclusive Economies. As EPE staff did the difficult work

of organizing people across systems to advance social and economic justice, CUP captured qualitative data and developed evaluation methods suited to our partners' shifting context.

*I'm an economist by training, and the participatory aspect of this project is very unique to me. While we evaluate EPE's work and help them process and learn from their actions, we've also become close colleagues and collaborators, helping to organize events and create space for community members to share ideas. Our partners feel it is easier to connect and relate to the Anti-racism work, for example, when we are moving alongside these efforts.*

—UCHECHI ANADUAKA, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

## Sunsetting of EndPovertyEdmonton

In February 2024, Edmonton city council decided to sunset EPE's funding, and EPE announced it would wind down current operations by the end of the year. This development will effectively end the CUP-EPE partnership. Over 2024, CUP researchers focused on final reporting for EPE and helping partners work through their next steps. Looking forward, we plan to share our insight from the EPE initiative and its implications with governments, non-profits, and researchers.

*My sense is that the Indigenization, Anti-racism, and Inclusive Economy gamechangers had gotten to a refined point, where EPE had experimented enough to have strategies that felt concrete. Since the sunsetting of EPE, people are continuing to do what they can to advance their goals given their current realities. My ultimate hope is that the positive momentum generated across the ups and downs of EPE can carry on in some form.*

—CLAIRE BRANDENBARG, RESEARCH COORDINATOR



CUP researchers Uchechi Anaduaka, Saba Nuzhat, and Claire Brandenbarg at the event "Taking the Pulse: Mapping the Anti-Racism Ecosystem for the City of Edmonton" in April 2024

## Edmonton Community Development Company

The Edmonton Community Development Company (ECDC), formed in 2016-2017, is the first organization in Edmonton to follow a community development corporation (CDC) model, in which non-profits work closely with communities in low-income neighbourhoods to promote economic development. The ECDC partnered with CUP in 2022 to evaluate the impact of its activities.

The CDC model was developed in the United States in





Members of the CUP-ECDC research team at a group discussion organized by CUP

the 1960s as a way for communities to guide their own development and address poverty. The model has rarely been used in Canada, beyond a few notable case studies, and there is scant research to help determine the model's usefulness in a Canadian context.

## Adapting to the ECDC's changes

Since its founding, the ECDC has undergone significant changes to vision and scope due to staff turnover, funding limitations, and varying opinions on how to achieve its mandate. At first, the ECDC's work focused broadly on economic opportunity, affordable housing, and financing community projects. Eventually, the organization concentrated its scope to several downtown neighbourhoods, including McCauley, with a focus on redeveloping residential "problem properties" and revitalizing community spaces like The Piazza, a small retail complex in Little Italy.

Because it was difficult to capture the ECDC's impact quantitatively, CUP researchers used a qualitative interview-based method that could better capture and analyze the specific benefits, limitations, and perceptions of the ECDC's work in McCauley. Researchers talked with residents, workers, law enforcement, and others to learn about how people understand the ECDC and generally experience socio-economic issues in their neighbourhood. After the ECDC narrowed its focus to revitalizing problem properties, CUP researchers reached out to businesses and homeowners.

*At first, we engaged early founders and leaders at ECDC to learn about the organization's story and understand its inner workings. Later, we met with many McCauley residents, often sitting down with anyone who would share their views. People were very receptive to us. We were able to do this research*

*because McCauley is such a tight-knit community. Without this research, no one would know the full story of the ECDC, including its challenges but also the benefits and changes it brought to McCauley.*

—AMBER ALI, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

*This project highlights a major obstacle to economic development in low-income neighbourhoods. The City of Edmonton has real concern for areas like McCauley, but it is also responsible for managing a city with limited resources and competing interests. For me, a core learning is that the overall system could benefit from the influence of organizations like the ECDC, which are aiming to address poverty at a community level and be self-sustaining.*

—LI YU, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

## The Town of Drayton Valley

In 2019, the Town of Drayton Valley initiated a zero-fee education program aimed at promoting rural revitalization and economic development. The town wanted to help residents access post-secondary learning while encouraging them to remain in Drayton Valley. Overall, CUP's research partnership with Drayton Valley will capture insights about how towns can use education to stabilize communities in the face of the volatile and declining oil and gas industry.

Over the years, CUP has gradually deepened our involvement in town planning and relationships with community colleagues. In 2023-2024, the project's biggest development was a growing focus on community development, specifically the link between local economic development and education. Partners have been discussing ways to support "community wealth building," an economic development model that focuses on keeping resources, wealth, and talent in a local area.

*We've seen an evolution in the zero-fee project, which was sparked by a drive to support rural revitalization. When a project aims to make a town as amazing as it can be, it's natural to start having conversations about wealth, the conditions that make places thrive, inclusive economies, and equity. Education opportunities are key to making communities that people want to live in, where they see a future for themselves.*

—MARIA MAYAN, CUP ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

# capacity-building

## Background

Organizations in the health, education, and social service sectors increasingly need to adopt strategic thinking and collect data to address complex issues and access funding. The largest initiative in CUP, the Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN), directly responds to a growing need for evaluative practices.\*

Since its founding in 2013, the ECN has greatly expanded its number of members across Edmonton and Canada, who have helped contribute to an array of experiential learning courses, public seminars, community-engaged events, and a repository of resources. Hundreds of organizations and students, both locally and internationally, have been part of the ECN's efforts.

*From a group of small, mostly local partners in Edmonton, the ECN has become a wide international network. In Edmonton, we maintain intimate partnerships with organizations, collaborators, and academics who are the heartbeat of the ECN. Looking forward, we'd like to build more strategic partnerships that can enrich our network.*

—REBECCA GOKIERT, ECN DIRECTOR AND CUP ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



ECN members co-presenting at the 2023 Canadian Evaluation Society conference in Quebec City



Students of SPH 563, a graduate course in the School of Public Health where students gain an overview of evaluative thinking and practice

## Building the infrastructure for evaluation learning

The ECN has pushed the needle on evaluation learning at the University of Alberta. Led by Rebecca Gokiart, the ECN developed new curricula that established evaluation as a key competency in the School of Public Health.

Rebecca also co-led the creation of the Master of Arts in Community Engagement (MACE) program, an interdisciplinary graduate degree that prepares students to practice in a variety of community settings, and developed experiential learning courses in the School of Public Health in which students co-create evaluation plans with community-based organizations.

Because of this infrastructure, the ECN can serve upwards of 30 organizations each year, alongside students training to build evaluation frameworks. ECN members are offering similar courses at the University of Manitoba, McGill University, the University of Ottawa, and Queen's University.

## UEval: a success story

In 2019, the ECN launched a one-week intensive course where students, community members, and service providers come together to learn about evaluation using real-life case studies and gain skills that can be applied in the government, non-profit, and social-serving sectors. All participating organizations come away with an evaluation plan at the end of the course.

UEval has served a diverse range of organizations, including the Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society, the Campus Food Bank, the Brain Care Centre, Spirit North, the Skillcity Institute, Cross Cultural Counselling, Alberta Justice, the City of Edmonton,

\*[www.evaluationcapacitynetwork.com](http://www.evaluationcapacitynetwork.com)

and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Recently, a greater number of organizations at UEval have had a focus beyond children, youth, and families, like Indigenous well-being, refugee health, seniors programs, and even traffic safety.

## Mentoring Youth and Young Adults from Care

A notable project to emerge from UEval is the Mentoring Youth and Young Adults from Care (MYAAC) initiative. During the pandemic, BGCBigs connected to UEval to evaluate its online mentoring efforts. The framework proved so valuable that the BGCBigs director shared it with the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP).

Through an ongoing partnership with AMP, the ECN has created tailored online courses for AMP organizations, called E-Eval and Pre-Eval. This effort led to the development of an evaluation framework for the new MYAAC initiative.

MYAAC is an Alberta-wide mentorship program focused on youth and young adults transitioning from care. Researchers from CUP and the ECN are working alongside MYAAC partners to evaluate the initiative, including integrating Indigenous and decolonizing evaluation practices.

## All in For Youth

Since 2016, the ECN and CUP have evaluated an initiative to provide wraparound supports to students in several inner-city schools in Edmonton as part of the All in For Youth (AIFY) project. Overall, the project aims to provide insights about AIFY's wraparound model and its impact on students, families, and service providers. CUP's analysis has demonstrated the positive impact of AIFY's interventions, and now partners are working to sustain the model, using analysis of longitudinal datasets to advocate for funding and demonstrate the value of the model to policymakers.

*Now that the framework has been established, the groundwork has been laid for the AIFY to become sustainable with adequate funding. If it grows, it can expand its reach and help more children and families escape the cycle of poverty.*

—PAULINE MACPHERSON, RESEARCH COORDINATOR

## Turning to questions of sustainability

A significant part of the ECN's funding has come from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) partnership grant, which is anticipated to end in 2026-2027. The SSHRC funding contributed to ECN's ability to be responsive and fund community-based projects.

*Nearing the end of the SSHRC grant is absolutely a turning point. The funding helped the ECN be nimble and integrate students into community projects. Luckily, some projects can use the initial funding as a springboard to access other grants. The New Canadians Health Centre, for example, has a lot of energy around it in terms of student-driven research, which helped the partners access Tri-Council funding and continue their innovative values-based evaluation in the refugee health space.*

—SHELLY JUN, RESEARCH COORDINATOR



CUP researchers and partners from the New Canadians Health Centre at the University of Alberta's Social Innovation Lectures

# leadership



Award recipients sharing their experiences with the CUP Steering Committee

## Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

From 2020-2024, many organizations made commitments to EDI in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of Black Lives Matter in the United States, and media reports on unmarked graves at former residential school sites across Canada. In 2020, CUP's Steering Committee built EDI into our strategic plan, and we embarked on a year of conversations in which we sought to articulate and live out our commitments to equity.

In 2021, CUP received money from the Suncor Energy Foundation to create the **CUP Graduate Student Equity Award**. Opened to applicants in May 2022, the award provided 10 graduate students financial support for the

fall and winter terms and a chance to participate in a community of practice led by experienced community-based researchers.

To ensure the process was informed by community voices, CUP engaged our Steering Committee members in designing the award. We also heard from equity-deserving students, learned from other equity-focused awards at Canadian universities, and created an inclusive working group to adjudicate applications.

Created with the intention of doing something “different” and “dismantling” the conventional merit-based award model, CUP's award didn't require GPAs, letters of reference, full-time enrollment status, or Canadian citizenship. In addition to financial support, recipients were offered professional support, networking, and regular guidance.

*Despite the online environment after the pandemic, CUP was having personal, intimate conversations about injustice and inequity, where we developed a sense of mutual trust and made commitments to advancing EDI in our spheres of influence. We took a careful, step-by-step approach to creating the equity award. And we came away with a better understanding of the reflective, critical, and practical aspects of equity work.*

—KAREN EDWARDS, DIRECTOR OF CUP

## Reflections from an award recipient

*The application process for this award really allowed us to highlight our experience with community engagement, which was great because I didn't have many “traditional” academic experiences or publications that other funding agencies were looking for. This award helped me get my foot in the door of community-based research and get connected to unique projects, experiences that then helped me get one of those more traditional scholarships.*

*The kind of experiences we have early in our academic journey can really shape the career we have later on. Because of CUP's community of practice, I met an inspiring group of people at different stages of their journey, which cemented for me that personal experiences are valuable to research. Moreover, the experience led me to realize that community-based research can address a gap between what researchers and institutions create and what communities really need.*

*At first, I was unsure it would be possible to perform community-engaged epidemiological research. But I came to view my quantitative research skills not as a limitation, but an asset that can be put to use helping communities access quantifiable data they really care about. Thanks to this turning point, I've found incredibly rewarding work assisting with analysis on community-based research projects at Edmonton's Queer & Trans Health Collective.*



LUC SAUZE, CUP AWARD RECIPIENT

## The University of Alberta's strategic direction

In recent years, CUP has been increasingly responsive to strategic planning on campus, especially as it relates to community engagement and social innovation. CUP's model aligns well with several of the university's new strategic plans and goals.

The **Strategic Plan for EDI** (launched in 2019) details the university's ambition to have more equitable research and data-collection practices. **SHAPE** (2023-2033), the highest-level strategic plan at the university, calls for more collaboration with community partners and more opportunities for staff and students to engage with communities. **Forward with Purpose** (2023-2028) lays out the university's goals when it comes to social innovation, knowledge mobilization, and community-led research activities.

## Creating connection across campus

Part of CUP's role has always been connecting academic resources and capacity to research needs expressed by the community. Sparked by the university's strategic aspiration to "engage with purpose," CUP has begun sowing the seeds for a more structured interdisciplinary network of community-engaged researchers and community leaders.

Over the course of 2023, CUP convened meetings with university colleagues and community partners to better understand research interests, barriers, and the accessibility of resources. In the fall of 2023, we hosted a panel discussion on campus focused on the systemic and structural changes needed to best support community-based research.



The "Making Lightning Strike" panel hosted by CUP in October 2023, which brought Funke Olokude, André McDonald, and Omar Yaqub into discussion with David Phipps, VP of Research Strategy and Impact at York University and Network Director for Research Impact Canada

## Responding to requests for support

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, data has repeatedly emerged showing many non-profit and social service organizations lack the capacity to meet rising demand, let alone do research, evaluations, or other capacity-intensive activities. This is on top of the burnout, underfunding, and complex social issues these organizations face daily.

Within this climate, CUP has seen a steady rise in requests for support. In response, we have taken steps to improve our process for connecting organizations with academics or other experts in our network. CUP's "brokering" work has always been informal. In 2024, we began taking steps toward a more structured process, launched an online request form, and are actively seeking funding to expand this work.

**In 2024, the Edmonton Public Library contacted CUP to help assess the viability of a non-profit childcare centre at the Stanley A. Milner Library. CUP met with EPL to help streamline the request, consider the question of viability from various perspectives, and connect to assessment experts. Since reaching out to CUP, the EPL renewed its interest in a childcare centre and is considering proposals. CUP's support for EPL is an example of how our "brokering" work helps organizations improve strategic decision-making, enable good investments of time and resources, and build relationships across the sector.**

## Examples of student leadership

- Kirsty Choquette, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education, received a prestigious Mitacs award in 2023 for her work with the Evaluation Capacity Network, which involves understanding Indigenous approaches to child rearing at a First Nation in Alberta.
- Cristian Neves, a master student in the Master of Arts in Community Engagement program, received a 2024 Dean's Gold Medal from the School of Public Health.
- Augustine Botwe, a PhD student in the Faculty of Education, received a 2024 Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship in recognition of his work at the New Canadians Health Centre, where his research focuses on improving health systems and services for refugees.
- Jessica Haight, a doctoral candidate in the School of Public Health, received an Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES), a CIHR Doctoral Research, and an Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit (AbSPORU) Graduate Studentship for her research on primary care services for refugee families.

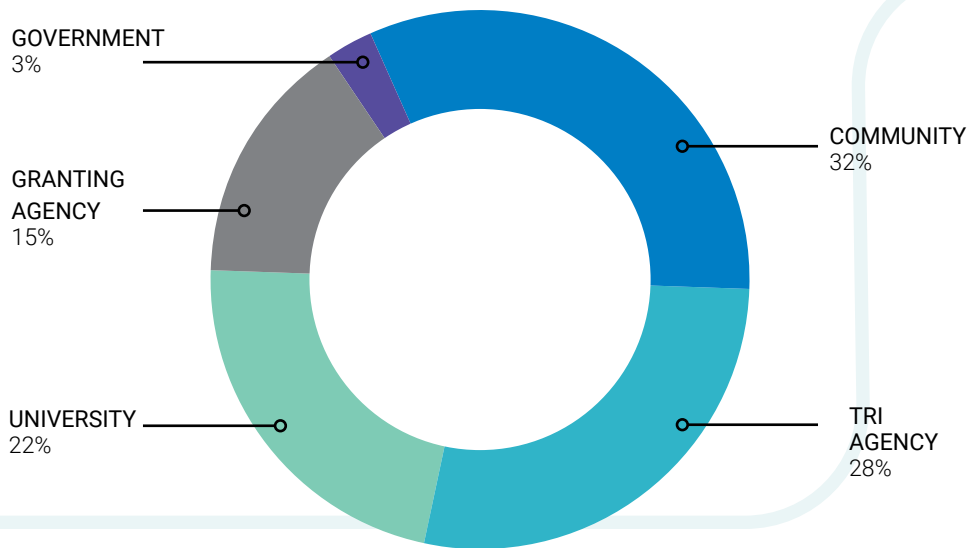
# Financials

For the past two decades, CUP’s work has been made possible through a unique investment model. Traditionally, CUP’s core operations, including administration, management, project development, and systems-level engagement, have been supported by university sources and external community grants. The long-term commitment of our partners has established CUP as a hub of excellence in community-engaged research that is sought after across the health and social sectors, the University of Alberta, and internationally.

The last few years have come with important turning points in the funding landscape. Sources of emergency pandemic funding have ended, non-profit

organizations continue to struggle to meet the ongoing and complex needs of their clients, and funders are making a cultural shift toward trust-based philanthropy, which aims to advance equity, shift power, and create reciprocal relationships with grantees. These changes have put new demands on our long-time community funders and call on CUP to reimagine our funding model as well.

As CUP navigates changes in investment, we continue to support collaborative research and evaluation projects that are responsive to community needs. In the 2023-2024 reporting period, CUP managed a total of \$2,128,878 million in combined project and operational funding.



# academic publications

Here are the publications and presentations CUP researchers contributed to during CUP's reporting period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

**Anaduaka, Uchechi, Alexa Ferdinands, Janelle Knoop, Sarah Barber, & Maria Mayan.** 2024. "Edmonton's Race-based Data Table: A municipal approach to addressing systemic racism through the collection and use of disaggregated, race-based data." DOI: 10.17269/s41997-024-00897-3. [Link](#).

Cluver, Lucie D., L. Baerecke, A. Ornellas, **Mackenzie Martin**, et al. February 2024. "A hybrid digital parenting programme to prevent abuse of adolescents in Tanzania: study protocol for a pragmatic cluster-randomised controlled trial." *Trials*, 25(1). DOI: 10.1186/s13063-023-07893-x. [Link](#).

Fang, Zuzi, **Mackenzie Martin**, L. Copeland, R. Evans, & Y. Shenderovich. July 2024. "Parenting Interventions During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review of the Rationales, Process, Feasibility, Acceptability, and Impacts of Adaptation." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* (accepted). DOI: 10.1177/15248380241266183. [Link](#).

**Ferdinands, Alexa**, O. Lavriv, M. Beckie, **Maria Mayan**. 2023. "Exploring collaboration within Edmonton's City Table on Household Food Insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Canadian Food Studies*. DOI: 10.15353/cfs-rcea.v10i3.627. [Link](#).

**Ferdinands, Alexa, Matt Ormandy, & Maria Mayan.** 2024. "Identifying and Responding to the Challenges of Sustaining a Tuition Support Program in a Rural Setting." *Journal of Rural and Community Development*. [Link](#).

**Ferdinands, Alexa, Matt Ormandy & Maria Mayan.** 2024. "A mixed methods exploration of students' experiences of taking part in a tuition assistance program in rural Alberta." *Theory & Practice in Rural Education*. In press.

Fierro, L., I. Bourgeois, **Rebecca Gokiart**, M. Searle, & **Melissa Tremblay**. 2024. "Strengthening Evaluation Capacity Building Practice Through Competition: The Max Bell School of Public Policy's Evaluation Capacity Case Challenge." *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*. DOI: 10.3138/cjpe-2024-0012. [Link](#).

**Gokiart, Rebecca**, M. Searle, **Kirsty Choquette, Rachel Zukiwsky**, I. Bourgeois, L. Fierro & **Melissa Tremblay**. 2024. "Evaluation Capacity Building: Experiential Learning Through Community-University Collaboratives." *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*. DOI: 10.3138/cjpe-2024-0003. [Link](#).

**Haight, Jessica, Rebecca Gokiart, & Jason Daniels.** 2023. "A collaborative, school-based wraparound support intervention for fostering children and youth's mental health." *Frontiers in Education*. DOI: 10.3389/educ.2023.1289408. [Link](#).

Kushnier, L., S. Nadin, M. E. Hill, M. Taylor, **Shelly Jun**, C. Mushquash, **Giulia Puinean**, & **Rebecca Gokiart**. 2023. "Culturally Responsive Evaluation: A Scoping Review of the Evaluation Literature." *Evaluation and Program Planning* 100:102322. DOI: 10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2023.102322. [Link](#).

MacLennon, D.S., **Maria Mayan**, D. Kynyk, & G. Lasiuk. 2024. "Incarcerated Men: Pain Experiences Shaped by Altered Independence and Loss of Autonomy." *Journal of Forensic Nursing*. DOI: 10.1097/JFN.0000000000000474. [Link](#).

**Martin, Mackenzie**, B. Steele, T. Spreckelsen, Y. Shenderovich, et al. March 2023. "The association between facilitator competent adherence and outcomes in parenting programmes: A systematic review and SWIM analysis." *Prevention Science*. DOI: 10.1007/s11121-023-01515-3. [Link](#).

**Martin, Mackenzie**, Y. Shenderovich, E.B. Carson, J. D. Smith, et al. September 2023. "The case for assessing and reporting on facilitator fidelity: Introducing the Fidelity of Implementation in Parenting Programs guideline." *Global Implementation Research and Applications*. DOI: 10.1007/s43477-023-00092-5. [Link](#).

**Ormandy, Matt, Alexa Ferdinands**, A. Nesdoly, & **Maria Mayan**. 2023. "A pilot study of Drayton Valley's Zero Fee Tuition program." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. DOI: 10.1080/10668926.2023.2295485. [Link](#).

Searle, M., A. Cooper, P. Worthington, J. Hughes, C. Poth, & **Rebecca Gokiart**. 2024. "Mapping Evaluation Use: A Scoping Review of Extant Literature (2005-2022)." *American Journal of Evaluation*. DOI: 10.1177/10982140241234841. [Link](#).

Searle, M., J. Hughes, K. Carbone, L. Fierro, **Melissa Tremblay, Rebecca Gokiart**, & I. Bourgeois. 2024. "Learning from Evaluation Data: Discoveries from the Inaugural Evaluation Capacity Case Challenge." *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*. DOI: 10.3138/cjpe-2024-0005. [Link](#).

Searle, M., L. Fierro, J. Pinarski, L. Dixon, **Melissa Tremblay**, I. Bourgeois, & **Rebecca Gokiart**. 2024. "Meeting the Challenge: How the City of Kingston is Working to Propel Evaluation Growth." *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 38 (3): Special Issue. DOI: 10.3138/cjpe-2024-0006. [Link](#).

Steele, Bridget, D. K. Humphreys, **Mackenzie Martin**, et al. September 2023. "The Prevalence of Sexual Assault Among Higher Education Students: A Systematic Review With Meta-Analyses." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. DOI: 10.1177/15248380231196119. [Link](#).

Turlock, Landon & **Maria Mayan**. 2023. "How can Community-Based Participatory Research Address Hate Crimes and Incidents?" *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*. DOI: 10.15402/esj.v9i1.70794. [Link](#).

Yohani, S., A. Kirova, R. Georgis, **Rebecca Gokiart**, M. Taylor, & S. Tahir. 2023. "Creating Community Learning for Empowerment Groups: An Innovative Model for Participatory Research Partnerships with Refugee Communities." *Frontiers in Education*. DOI: 10.3389/feduc.2023.1164485. [Link](#).

### Grey literature and policy papers

**Anaduaka, Uchechi**, E. Ejebe & **Saba Nuzhat**. 2024. "Baseline Inventory of Anti-Racism Organizations: The Edmonton Context." EndPovertyEdmonton and the Community-University Partnership.

**Brandenburg, Claire, Janelle Knoop, Maria Mayan**. 2024. "EndPovertyEdmonton Inclusive Economy Evaluation: May 2022 to June 2023." EndPovertyEdmonton and the Community-University Partnership. [Link](#).

Ejebe, E. & **Uchechi Anaduaka**. 2024. "Anti-Racism Ecosystem Mapping Project: Progress Report." EndPovertyEdmonton.

**Gallimore, Abi & Nashid Rahman**. March 2024. "Culturally Responsive & Decolonizing Evaluation: A Network Conversation." ECN EvalByte. [Link](#).

**Haight, Jessica, Pamela Mellon, Jason Daniels & Karen Edwards**. 2024. *All in For Youth Year 7 Evaluation Report*. [Link](#).

**Knoop, Janelle**, K. Bruno, **Claire Brandenburg**, K. Boucher & **Maria Mayan**. 2024. "EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenization Evaluation: May 2022 to June 2023." EndPovertyEdmonton and the Community-University Partnership. [Link](#).

**Lees, Lauren, & Mackenzie Martin**. Impact report 2022-2023: Advancing early learning and care in Edmonton through rigorous research, high-trust relationships, and policy leadership. Published by the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. [Link](#).

**Martin, Mackenzie, Ping Lam Ip**, Jeffrey Bisanz, & **Lauren Lees**, and Christopher Smith. 2023-2024. *Reports on the Alberta Parent Survey on Early Learning and Child Care*, published by the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care:

- "Parents' Views About the Accessibility of Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta." [Link](#).
- "Summary: Parents' Views About Accessibility." [Link](#).
- "Parents' Views About the Quality of Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta." [Link](#).
- "Summary: Parents' Views About Quality." [Link](#).
- "Parents' Views About the Affordability of Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta." [Link](#).
- "Summary: Parents' Views About Affordability." [Link](#).

**Ormandy, Matt, Maria Mayan, & Alexa Ferdinands**. 2023. "Final research report: Examining the outcomes of zero-fee education in building a resilient, inclusive economy in rural Alberta." Future Skills Centre.

**Scott, Sarah, Kourch Chan**, April MacDonald Killins, **Karen Edwards**, and the Edmonton Head Start Society. 2023.

"Understanding & Supporting Complex Behaviours in the Early Learning Classroom: Our Journey of Learning and Action at Edmonton Head Start Project, 2019-2022." Published by the Community-University Partnership and the Edmonton Head Start Project. [Link](#).

**Yu, Li, Amber Ali, & Maria Mayan**. 2023. "Edmonton Community Development Company: Phase 1 Report." Community-University Partnership.

**Zukiwsky, Rachel**. September 2023-April 2024. Sections in Alberta Mentoring Partnership's monthly Mentoring Minute newsletter.

**Zukiwsky, Rachel, Kirsty Choquette, Lauren Alston, Rebecca Gokiart**, & Alberta Mentoring Partnership. 2024. "Mentoring Youth and Young Adults from Care (MYAC) project: Evaluation framework."

### Presentations and conferences

**Anaduaka, Uchechi**, A. Oladosu & S. Katsande. April 2024, July 2024, August 15. "Harnessing artificial intelligence to support the mental health of pregnant women and new mothers in low- and middle-income countries." MQ Transdisciplinary Grants: First Convening Meeting, Second Convening Meeting, and Dissemination Workshop. Accra, Ghana.

**Anita, Ewan**. 2024. "Supporting Black Early Childhood Educators." Roundtable event. The Early Childhood Coach.

**Anita, Ewan**. 2024. "The importance of self-care while working in the field of social work." Online webinar. Northern Caribbean University.

Bisanz, Jeff & **Mackenzie Martin**. February 2023. "Parents' views on the affordability and accessibility of early learning and child care in Alberta: Reports 1 and 2 of the Alberta Parent Survey on Early Learning and Child Care." Community presentation for Child Care Now Alberta.

**Botwe, Augustine, Cristian Neves, Anja Dzunic**, A. Velasquez, T. Ladha, **Rebecca Gokiart**. June 2023. "Using evaluation to strengthen a principles-based refugee community health centre in Edmonton, Alberta." Canadian Evaluation Society 2023 Conference. Quebec City.

**Evaluation Capacity Network Decolonizing Evaluation Team**. January 2024. "Decolonizing Evaluation: A Network Conversation." Webinar. Evaluation Capacity Network.

**Ferdinands, Alexa, Matt Ormandy & Maria Mayan**. June 2024. "Exploring rural food environments with youth in Canada." World Public Health Nutrition Congress. London, United Kingdom.



**Ferdinands, Alexa, Matt Ormandy & Maria Mayan.** May 2024. "How do youth in a rural, resource-based community in Alberta experience their food environments?: An exploratory qualitative study." Canadian Nutrition Society Annual Meeting. Edmonton.

**Gokiert, Rebecca,** M. Searle, F. D. Portelance, K. Carbone. November 2023. "Promoting equity through community-engaged evaluation." Summit on Equity, Assessment, and Evaluation: Bringing Theory and Practice Together. Paper presentation. Online.

**Haight, Jessica,** J. Daniels, & **Rebecca Gokiert.** May 2023. "Fostering Children and Youth's Mental Health through a Collaborative, School-based Support Intervention." Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE): 51st Conference. Toronto.

**Hassan, Roshan, Amber Ali, Li Yu, & Maria Mayan.** March 2024. " 'Just Being Able to Walk': Understanding the Immediate Effects of Placemaking." Poster presentation. 2024 KSR Faculty Research Day. Edmonton.

Kammerer, E., P. Candelaria, J.K. Khangura, **Maria Mayan,** et al. June 2024. "Report of health equity factors in North American randomized controlled trials studying pediatric pain management interventions in the emergency department: preliminary results of a scoping review. Poster presentation. Department of Emergency Medicine Research Day. University of Alberta. Edmonton.

Kammerer, E., P. Candelaria, J.K. Khangura, **Maria Mayan,** et al. June 2024. "Pain experiences in pediatric emergency care of children who are marginalized: results of a scoping review." Poster presentation. ENRICH Annual Symposium. Vancouver.

**Keys, Kirsty,** M. Searle, I. Bourgeois, P. de Vos, L. Fierro, **Rebecca Gokiert,** & **Rachel Zukiwsky.** June 2023. "Using experiential learning opportunities as a responsive approach to evaluation capacity building with communities." Canadian Evaluation Society 2023 Conference. Quebec City.

**Keys, Kirsty, Rachel Zukiwsky,** T. Tourangeau, K. Daniels, Alberta Mentoring Partnership, & **Rebecca Gokiert.** June 2023. "Weaving Indigenous perspectives and approaches into community-based evaluation capacity building." Canadian Evaluation Society 2023 Conference. Quebec City.

**Martin, Mackenzie** et al. May 31. Symposium: Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Large-Scale Implementation of a School- and Community-Based Parenting Program to Reduce Violence Against Children: Results from the Furaha Adolescent Implementation Research Study. Washington, D.C.

**Martin, Mackenzie** et al. October 25. Symposium: A Mixed Methods Evaluation of a Parenting Programme to Reduce Violence Against Adolescent Girls at Scale via Schools and Community Centres in Rural and Semi-Urban Tanzania, hosted by the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Congress. Edinburg, United Kingdom.

**Mayan, Maria, Matt Ormandy, A. Nesdoly & Alexa Ferdinands.** January 2024. "We came here and it's a lot better': Finding success in an outreach education program." Hawaii International Conference on Education. Waikoloa, Hawaii.

**Mayan, Maria.** May 2024. "The Future of Qualitative Inquiry." Keynote address for the International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry. University of Illinois.

**Neves, Cristian, Augustine Botwe, A. Velasquez, T. Ladha, Rebecca Gokiert.** July 2023. "Looking back, moving forward: An innovative refugee community health centre in Edmonton, Alberta." North American Refugee Health Conference. Paper presentation. Calgary.

**Ormandy, Matt, Alexa Ferdinands, Lesley Hodge & Maria Mayan.** May 2024. Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation Northern Dialogues 2024 Conference. Yukon University, Whitehorse.

Searle, M., J. Hughes, P. Worthington, K. Carbone, F. Daniel-Portelance, & **Rebecca Gokiert.** June 2023. "A Promising Approach for Learning the Practice of Evaluation with Community." Canadian Evaluation Society 2023 Conference. Quebec City.

**Smith, Mary-Frances.** 2024. "Early Childhood Educator Voices from the Sector." Community presentation for Child Care Now Alberta. Edmonton.

Worthington, P., A. Cooper, M. Searle, J. Hughes. **Rebecca Gokiert** & C. Poth. April 2023. "A scoping review of evaluation use: An ever-growing field." Annual meeting of the American Educational Research. Paper presentation. Chicago, Illinois.

# steering committee membership 2023-24

**Kourch Chan** Co-Chair  
Chief Strategy Officer  
e4c

**Deanna Williamson** Co-Chair  
Associate Professor  
Department of Human Ecology

**Jeff Bisanz**  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Alberta

**Gloria Chalmers**  
Community Member

**Krysta Fitzgerald**  
Deputy Executive Director  
Boyle Street Community Services

**Martin Garber-Conrad**  
Community Member

**Hannah Goa**  
FRN Coordination and Evaluation  
Multicultural Health Brokers  
Co-operative

**Wendy Hoglund**  
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Department of Psychology

**Beth Hunter**  
Social Planner, FCSS Liaison  
City of Edmonton

**Elaine Hyshka**  
Associate Professor  
School of Public Health

**Jeff Johnson**  
Interim Dean  
School of Public Health

**Tehseen Ladha**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Pediatrics

**Owen Livermore**  
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Edmonton Public Schools

**Annette Malin**  
Director, Strategic Initiatives  
United Way of the Alberta Capital  
Region

**Michelle Maroto**  
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Edmonton Immigrant Services  
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**Christina Rinaldi**  
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**Jordana Salma**  
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**Farha Shariff**  
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**Cheryl Shinkaruk**  
Manager: Programs and Projects  
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**Ivan Simic**  
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**Christopher Smith**  
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**Liana Urichuk**  
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PolicyWise for Children & Families

**Tanya Voth**  
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Research Institute

**Dori Wearmouth**  
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Alberta Health

**Sophie Yohani**  
Professor  
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