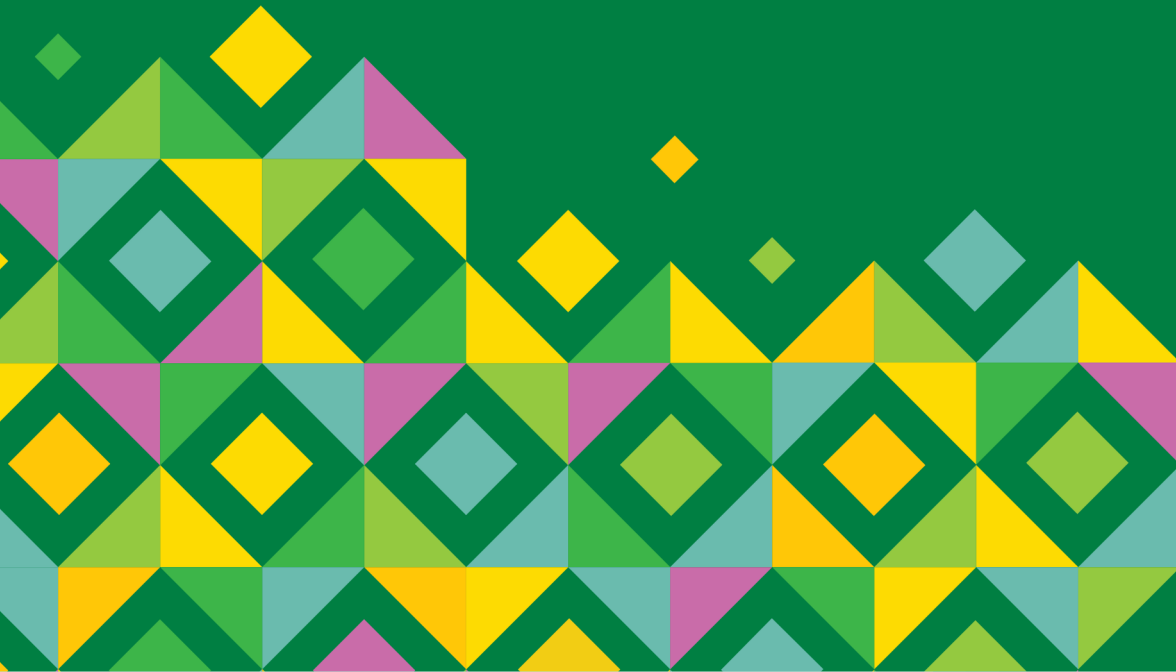




UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA



CENTRE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
ANNUAL PUBLIC REPORT
2025-2026

Shaping Healthier Communities

July 2026

CENTRE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The University of Alberta, its buildings, labs and research stations are primarily located on the territory of Néhiyaw (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Métis, Nakoda (Stoney), Dene, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Anishinaabe (Ojibway/Saulteaux), lands that are now known as part of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 and homeland of the Métis. The University of Alberta respects the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems and cultures of all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.



Centre for Healthy Communities

Scientific Director Message

Shaping healthier communities requires clear intention, sustained commitment, and collaboration to build the collective capacity needed to work across local and system levels towards positive change. Whether incremental or transformative change, it is the coming together of individual and collaborative efforts that make it happen.

This year, the Centre for Healthy Communities released its refreshed strategic plan (2025 – 2030), which outlines purposeful actions to lead collaborative, interdisciplinary research, engage in intersectoral collaborations to strengthen the health of communities, and amplify local and national engagement to share knowledge and inform policy and practice that promote healthy communities.

Aligned with [SHAPE](#), the University of Alberta's strategic plan, our 2025 – 2026 public annual report shares highlights of how we work with others. Together, we are shaping ideas and building trust with the shared goal of improving health and well-being for all.

Candace Nykiforuk, PhD, CE

Scientific Director, Centre for Healthy Communities

Canada Research Chair in Community Environments and Public Policy for Well-Being

Professor, School of Public Health

University of Alberta



**Engaging our partners to work together
to address critical societal questions.**

Charting a Transformative Course of Action

In the fall of 2025, we launched our 2025-2030 strategic plan, which charts a transformative course of action in three focus areas. Our focus on interdisciplinary collaborative research, strengthening evidence generation through engagement, and mobilizing knowledge to inform action through policy and practice are deliberate efforts to promote and sustain healthy communities.

GOAL 1: Public Health Research Development

Engage researchers from diverse disciplines, professionals from across sectors who are working in practice or policy, and communities themselves to co-generate knowledge that advances healthy communities for all.

GOAL 2: Knowledge-to-Action

Work with communities and practice & policy professionals to enhance their use of different types of knowledge to catalyze action.

GOAL 3: Engagement

Foster authentic relationships that build trust and knowledge among researchers and practice & policy professionals to enhance their work to achieve their communities' healthiest potential.

The Centre for Healthy Communities adopts a broad definition of community, which includes formal and informal administrative or interest-based communities (e.g., municipality, group of engaged residents, school, workplace, organization, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, equity-deserving communities).



Shaping Healthier Communities through Research

We apply scientific research and experiential knowledge across our [five research thematic areas](#) to tackle pressing public health issues faced by communities. Below are some research highlights from the 2025-2026 year.

Examples of Research in Progress across the Centre for Healthy Communities Research Thematic Areas

Healthy Environments: Understanding support for water reuse activities across populations and sectors

Health Equity: Exploring Canada's electoral system as a contributor to social and health inequities

Healthy Municipalities and Workplaces: Partnering with the University of Alberta Faculty of Engineering to develop an active transportation infrastructure equity-informed prioritization framework for municipal decision-makers

Healthy School Communities: Developing a school health data system and a national framework for healthy school communities in Canada

Supporting Healthy Indigenous Communities: Restoring ancestral knowledge and cultural practices for promoting healthy Indigenous communities across the lifespan, starting in childhood

Shaping Actions to Support Financial Wellbeing

In early 2026, our [promotefinancialwellbeing.ca](#) website was soft launched and used as a platform to collect user feedback to improve its application in practice. This website aims to improve awareness and use of the Centre's evidence-based [Public Health Framework on Financial Wellbeing and Financial Strain](#) and companion [Guidebook of Strategies and Indicators](#).

We look forward to showcasing the finalized website and accompanying resources at our forthcoming Fall 2026 Innovation Forum: Advancing Financial Wellbeing in Canada - Working across Sectors for Greater Impact.

Financial Wellbeing Work Profiled:

These Centre for Healthy Communities developed resources were profiled in The [Chief Public Health Officer of Canada's Report on the State of Public Health 2025](#) (page 35), as a way to support intersectoral action for health equity relative to financial well-being.

Shaping Strategies for Addressing Inequities

Work being led by [EMERGE Research Lab](#) is drawing on the Centre for Healthy Communities' staff expertise to support qualitative data analysis. Specifically, this work has led to two recent publications focused on identifying strategies to address inequities in the public health system.

"In a team of epidemiologists working on the Ontario Public Health Indicator Database (OPHID) study, Dr. Ana Belon (CHC Senior Research Associate) is the sole expert in qualitative research. She has been instrumental in analysing qualitative data on equity-formed strategies to promote COVID-19 vaccination uptake undertaken by public health units in the province of Ontario."

Dr. Roman Pabayo
Professor, School of Public Health
Health Equity Research Thematic Area Lead, Centre for Healthy Communities

Publication Profile:

- (1) [Local public health unit priorities, actions, and barriers in addressing inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, Canada](#)
- (2) [Equity-informed strategies to promote COVID-19 vaccination uptake undertaken by public health units in Ontario, Canada](#)

Highlights of Outputs from the Centre for Healthy Communities' 2025-2026 Research Activities:

- 4 peer-reviewed publications
- 2 white papers
- 1 evidence-based tool for practice
- 5 active peer-reviewed research grants
- 3 active service contracts

New Centre for Healthy Communities White Papers:

- (1) [A review of workplace-led strategies to improve health for work-from-home workers](#)
- (2) [Community-led interventions to address social isolation among older adults: a rapid review](#)

Our research is directly supporting healthier communities by helping to address important and timely issues people are facing in their daily lives.

This is how we are shaping ideas and building trust.

Shaping Practice and Policy through Collective Capacity

Core to our work at the Centre for Healthy Communities is collaborating with various partners in government and non-governmental organizations to provide timely, evidence-informed information that can be used in policy and practice. The examples below illustrate the breadth of collaborative healthy communities projects underway.

Topic: Workplace-based interventions on employee cannabis use as it relates to fitness for work, harm reduction, and prevention

Partner: Primary Care Alberta

"I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the CHC team as a PhD trainee. Public health research is complex and nuanced, and participating in the rapid review of workplace interventions for cannabis use was no exception. I observed and absorbed how seasoned CHC researchers weaved dedication to rigour and commitment to translating the data into actionable insights for our research partner. I count myself fortunate to be evolving my research skills under the mentorship of researchers who are passionate about bringing quality evidence to inform impactful action in public health."

Whitney Ireland

PhD Student, School of Public Health

Graduate Research Assistant, Centre for Healthy Communities

Topic: Evidence synthesis to explore how community-level action on the social determinants of health impact modifiable risk factors for cancer and chronic disease

Partner: Primary Care Alberta

"Our team will use this evidence synthesis to guide applied, participatory research addressing the social determinants of health to prevent cancer and chronic disease, while advancing equitable health outcomes across communities in Alberta."

Dr. Christina Gillies

Cancer Prevention and Screening Innovation (CSPi), Public Health Evidence & Innovation (PHEI), Primary Care Alberta
Scientist, Centre for Healthy Communities

Publication Profile:

Community safety and well-being is a pressing concern in many Canadian municipalities. Recognizing this need, the Centre for Healthy Communities 2023 Innovation Forum explored this topic with participants from a wide range of sectors and disciplines. The calls to action generated at that Innovation Forum were recently published in the *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being*.

Calls to Action:

- (1) All levels of government need to invest and prioritize community safety and well-being
- (2) Intersectoral action at all levels of decision-making is needed to support action over the short and longer terms

In the summer of 2025, Centre for Healthy Communities hosted the inaugural Public Health track of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry's Global Health Science Program for visiting international students. Centre Scientists and their students led engaging lectures across a range of healthy communities priority areas, including for example 'One Health and the environment', 'health promotion and settings-based health', and 'Indigenous knowledge systems and wholistic health'.

Highlights of Outputs from the Centre for Healthy Communities' 2025-2026 Engagement and Knowledge-to-Action Activities:

- 4 commissioned evidence-based reports to inform policy and practice
- Over 65 meetings with partners and interest-holders to share knowledge, learn from different experiences, and build relationships
- 2 white papers
- 3 national webinars to share research knowledge and foster connections towards collective capacity
- 44 Scientists and Affiliate members
- 844 Stay-in-the-Know network members

The collective capacity that we foster through our engagement and knowledge-to-action activities and products are having direct impacts in communities, locally and nationally.

This is how we are shaping ideas and building trust.

This Year in the Spotlight: Shaping Municipal Actions to Support People Experiencing Homelessness during Extreme Weather Events

A key concern for municipalities is the intersection of adapting to extreme weather events (i.e., heat waves, extreme cold, and poor air quality due to wildfire smoke) and mitigating their devastating effects on people experiencing homelessness (PEH). The Centre for Healthy Communities is working with partners at the City of Edmonton to contribute much needed evidence on actions that municipalities can use to better support PEH during extreme weather, across Canada and internationally.

Spring 2024

CHC partnered with the City of Edmonton to help them address their need for more information on municipal best practices to support vulnerable populations during extreme weather events



January 2025

CHC's report helped to inform the City of Edmonton's Policy C620 – Supporting Vulnerable People during Extreme Weather Conditions



October 2025

CHC submitted a grant application to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to build on the work with the City of Edmonton



March 2025 - current

With CIHR funding, we are conducting a multi-method project to develop actions that municipalities can use to better support PEH during extreme weather events

Publication Profile:

The work completed in partnership with the City of Edmonton was profiled in a peer-reviewed publication in *Local Environment* in the Fall of 2025.

“As a postdoctoral scholar on a climate justice project at the Centre for Healthy Communities, I have had the incredible opportunity to work with an exceptional team developing research that is helping shape municipal interventions to support people experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events. Interventions to address the inequitable impacts for people experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events are among the many growing and significant climate justice issues for communities that require collaboration between community partners, including community-engaged research environments, which the Centre for Healthy Communities is providing.”

Miho Lowan-Trudeau, PhD

Postdoctoral Scholar (2024-2025), Centre for Healthy Communities

Timely applied research work on critical topics like this one strengthens the capacity of municipalities to take evidence-informed action on pressing concerns facing their populations.

This is how we are shaping ideas and building trust.



Thank You

Our work would not be possible without the commitment and participation of the Centre for Healthy Communities staff, members, collaborators and partners, Executive Committee, and Practice and Scientific Advisory Committee. It is through this broader community that we strengthen collective capacity towards a healthy and flourishing future for every community.

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