



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

Committed to improving the development of children, youth, families and communities.

# Impacts 2013

CUP's mission is to broker relationships between community members, policy-makers, practitioners, and researchers that will:

- generate and mobilize new knowledge about child and family development;
- identify and promote the use of evidence-based policies and practices for optimizing child and family development; and
- nurture a culture in which rigorous research, evaluation, and practice are valued as critical components in understanding and optimizing development.

CUP is committed to bringing benefits to our partners and the populations with which we work especially culturally diverse and marginalized groups such as Aboriginal peoples and immigrant/refugee children, youth, and families.



## Fulfilling Alberta's Commitment to Children and Families

(Led by Dr. M. Mayan)

Over the past year the Fulfilling Alberta's Commitment (FACT) to Children and Families Project has focused on facilitating collaborative efforts among partners to ensure that evidence from the Families First Edmonton (FFE) project is understood and applied toward effective practice, program, and policy development. Priorities include poverty elimination and examination of service coordination within and across systems.

In 2013, the FACT Workshop Series was launched. The workshops are designed to make people think about the application of the evidence within their own system as well as other systems. The workshops present opportunities to hear from people working in different sectors and to participate in intersectoral discussion and planning. Our 2013 workshops focused on services to low-income families and the application of findings around early childhood outcomes. Planning is currently underway for 2 Spring workshops that will focus on factors to help low-income families rise out of poverty as well as service usage and the cost to service systems of the service delivery models used in the FFE study.

At a meeting with Assistant Deputy Ministers and senior managers from Human Services, the FACT team discussed a knowledge mobilization (KM) strategy that could be used within the Ministry to ensure evidence reached frontline staff through to decision-makers.

In 2013, FACT released the report *How Community Support Workers Facilitate Transitional Aboriginal Families' Access to Health, Family Support, and Recreation Services* which outlines effective practices to assist Aboriginal families transitioning from a First Nations reservation or Métis settlement to an urban environment. The Aboriginal Initiatives division of Human Services is using the report to inform development of a competency profile for health and social workers who engage with Aboriginal families in their practices.

Our team has also started work on a collaboration handbook intended to provide resources on forming resilient and collaborative partnerships which would mobilize our learnings over the life of this longitudinal study.

Funding for the FACT initiative ends in June 2014 and additional funding options are being explored.

### FACT Impacts 2013

- Discussion of a KM strategy for Human Services.
- Developed a competency profile for Human Services health and social workers who work with Aboriginal families transitioning to the city from reserves or settlements.
- Offered professional development opportunities to enhance interdisciplinary support for low-income families including increased policy and programming literacy among academics and increased research literacy among community and government partners; training for students in CBR, KT, and complex data analysis techniques.

# Early Child Development Mapping Project

(Led by Dr. S. Lynch)

*The knowledge that the municipality has gained from the EDI data is shaping the preschool philosophy of the whole county, from the libraries to public health, Family and Community Support Services, school boards, and parks and recreation. (Recreation programmer, Strathcona County)*

The Early Child Development Mapping Project (ECMap) is the first province-wide, population-based study of early child development in Alberta. Since 2009, ECMap has worked closely with Alberta Education to collect information on the development of 70,200 kindergarten-aged children.

Provincial results show that:

- a higher percentage of kindergarten-aged children in Alberta are struggling developmentally than the Canadian norm,
- 46% are developing appropriately in all five areas of development,
- 29% are experiencing great difficulty in one or more areas of development compared to the Canadian norm of 25.4%.

The ECMap project has supported the development of more than 100 community coalitions across Alberta, which include parents, service providers, educators, business people, elected officials and policy

makers. Coalitions use the developmental data along with information about socio-economic status and community resources to gain a better understanding of how young children are doing and the factors that influence their development. This process puts a powerful tool into the hands of communities and the province for planning and policy-making.



## ECMap Impacts 2013

- Early development reports were completed for all communities across Alberta.
- Early development results are now being used by school boards, health authorities, libraries, parks and recreation departments and other organizations and government departments to plan and locate programs and services.
- Information on an additional 20,000 children was analyzed in 2013 to create a more complete picture of early development at the provincial and community level.

# First Nation Child Development Project (Led by Dr. R.Gokiert)

A collaboration between CUP, four First Nation communities of the Yellowhead Tribal Council, and the Yellowhead Tribal College is looking at healthy child development from a community perspective. Together, they have identified community strengths that support healthy development, and used this to inform early childhood stakeholders and programs within the communities. Data collection was completed in 2013, which included 2 rounds of Early Development Instrument (EDI) collection, focus groups with over 100 youth, adults and elders across the 4 communities, and the completion of a newly developed FNCD questionnaire completed by parents and teachers. The FNCD questionnaire was developed as a result of community conversations and focused on First Nation language, culture and spirituality.

All findings were shared with community research committees across the 4 participating communities. Community research committees have developed action plans for communicating the findings with parents with young children, service providers (e.g., education staff, health staff, interagency groups), as well as leadership and funders. Committees are also using it to enhance existing programming for children and families within their communities.

Moving forward, in 2014 our collaboration will focus on sharing project findings with the various stakeholders that each community has identified. In addition, the EDI and FNCD questionnaires will be collected for a final time this Spring and the 3-years of data will be aggregated and shared back with communities in Fall 2014 for community action planning.

## FNCD Impacts 2013

- Identified community strengths and desires in raising healthy First Nation children across 4 communities in Alberta.
- Developed a new questionnaire (FNCD) to measure aspects of healthy development identified by participating community youth, adults, and elders.
- Using 2 years of findings to develop communication plans, disseminate findings to relevant stakeholders, and ultimately enhance early childhood programming within the communities.





# CUP-WCHRI Partnership (Led by Dr. M. Mayan)

*This project was an example of a meaningful research involvement of the parents, equally as research participants and as stakeholders in the process of developing neonatal palliative care in the NICU.*  
(NICU Family Advisory Care Team Member)

CUP's partnership with the Women & Children's Health Research Institute (WCHRI) provides a range of capacity building opportunities for researchers, students, and community organizations that helps incorporate qualitative methods and the principles of community-based research (CBR) and knowledge translation (KT) into their research tool box. In 2013, the Partnership provided qualitative research expertise to six research teams (from the disciplines such as medical ethics, nutrition, rehabilitation medicine and neonatology). In addition to working on large research teams, the Partnership provided short term, individual consultations, including KT support, to fourteen students, researchers and community organizations.

The CBR Science Shop is a unique, hands-on research program for students and community partners that increases research capacity, knowledge, skills, and enhances community practice and policy in the areas of women and children's health. In 2013, the Science Shop supported 5 students from the Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science, the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, the School of Public Health, and the Department of Human Ecology. In 2014, the CUP-WCHRI partnership will continue to support students, researchers and community organizations involved in research to build capacity in qualitative research, CBR and knowledge translation.

## CUP-WCHRI Impacts 2013

- Researchers, students and community organizations have improved capacity to incorporate qualitative research methods into their research projects.
- Researchers, students and community organizations have improved capacity to integrate principles of community-based research and/or knowledge translation into their research design and conduct, which leads to better facilitation of research results into the practice and policy.



# Lifelong Learning (Led by Dr. S.A. Chapman)

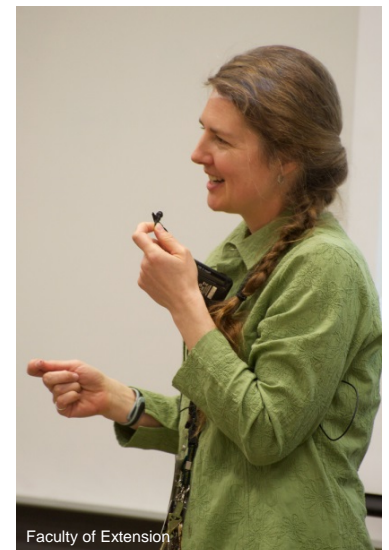
The Lifelong Learning (LLL) area supports educational opportunities in community-based research and evaluation (CBRE) and related areas, such as community engagement, partnership building, and knowledge mobilization for students, practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and evaluators. Through the LLL area, we facilitated:

- CBRE workshops with 150 participants (from community and academic contexts).
- The graduate course, Introduction to Community-Based Research and Evaluation with 14 participants from seven faculties (including 10 units) at the University of Alberta.

The LLL area has been studying CBRE experiential learning from the past seven years through a project (funder: Faculty of Extension) called Reflecting on Feelings and Emotions in Graduate, Experiential Learning about Community-Based Research (CBR). We are documenting critical reflection and dialogue among graduate students and their university mentors about their participation between 2009 and 2013 in the WCHRI/CUP Summer Studentship in Community-Based Research. The project will inform graduate-student capacity building in the development and implementation of curricula, the practice of CBR, and the growing scholarship of engagement.

## LLL Impacts 2013

- Six students completed the graduate CBRE Certificate Program (as it was incubated by CUP) which builds students' CBR and evaluation capacity.
- Sherry Ann co-authored a publication 'Questioning the meaningfulness of rigour in community-based research: Navigating a dilemma.' (International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 12, 551-569, 2013) based on the outcomes of a multi-year study exploring how we facilitate learning about CBR.



# Evaluation Capacity Network (Led by Dr. R.Gokiert)

Over the past year, a network of community, university and government partners have been working to enhance evaluation capacity and align evaluative thinking among early childhood development (ECD) stakeholders in government, community, funding organizations, and academia. This Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN) will support intersectoral dialogue to enhance understanding of the diverse perspectives of evaluation language, methods, and outcomes; foster the development of common measures and expectations for ECD program evaluation; as well as provide evaluation knowledge, skills, and support to stakeholders in government, community, funding organizations, and academia to produce relevant and informative evaluations.

The Network's efforts have been primarily focused on nurturing new and existing partnerships, learning more about the multifaceted efforts to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of early childhood initiatives across the

province, developing the foundation for Network related research and capacity building opportunities, and securing funding opportunities. They have successfully engaged over 20 provincial and national partners from various sectors such as provincial and territorial governments, academia, and community based ECD organizations.

## ECN Anticipated Impacts

- Foster provincial and national evaluation partnerships.
- Support intersectoral dialogue of evaluation practice and application across the province.
- Develop complimentary evaluation training opportunities to address community identified issues and gaps.

# Youth Engagement (Led by Dr. Y. Iwasaki)

Over the past year, the Youth Engagement team has worked collaboratively with 16 youth leaders (aged 16-25) from diverse backgrounds including Aboriginal and immigrant youth leaders from across Edmonton in order to mobilize youth-driven actions that will transform support systems to better meet the needs of high-risk youth.

Over a series of meetings and discussions, youth leaders have developed a framework of youth engagement focused on relationship building, co-learning, mutual understanding and respect, and the use of strength-based, growth-oriented approaches at various system and community levels.

There are over 20 partner agencies from the non-profit sector, government, school boards, and two universities interested in how this 'engagement' framework can help them more effectively support high-risk youth living in marginalized conditions such as poverty, homelessness, social exclusion, mental health challenges, abusive behaviors, school drop-out, and/or stigma.

By giving voice to high-risk, marginalized youth and mobilizing youth's talents and lived experiences into actions, support agencies are better able to provide supporting neighborhoods, schools, & communities as well as inform the development of policy & practice.

# Conducting CBR with Vulnerable Populations (Led by Dr. H. Stack-Cutler)

This new CUP project will focus on the considerations and best practices necessary to create collaborative, respectful, and positive environments in which to conduct community-based research (CBR) in partnership with vulnerable populations. We will look at best practices at all stages of the research process including planning, recruitment, data collection and analysis, results, knowledge mobilization, and follow-up. The project will help us understand the factors that hinder meaningful and beneficial research participation for vulnerable populations and the dynamics CBR researchers and community partners need to consider when responding to the needs and complex environments of vulnerable populations. Key informant interviews will begin in March and April and will allow participants to share their experiences and practices of what works well in engaging and partnering with others as well as an opportunity to reflect on their current practices.

Interviews with families and on-line surveys with CBR researchers and community partners will take place following key informant interviews.

## Anticipated Impacts

- Enhanced research methods that will improve collaborations between researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and vulnerable families.
- Improved professional practice.

